How to use Reading Journals in Class

Semesters 2 – 8

1. *Ask students to purchase a book that will become their READING JOURNAL. It can only be used for writing reading journal entries in – it's not for normal class work.*
2. *Take students to the ETP students' library. Explain the graded readers section. These are the thin story books that have a color on the spine of each book (purple, green, white, and so on). The color shows the level of the book. A poster is on a bookshelf wall showing the order of colors from easy to difficult. Students should start with the* ***easiest*** *level. They should keep reading books from that level until it is comfortable to read WITHOUT A DICTIONARY. Then they should go up one level. The aim is to read a lot of simple books to improve reading fluency. The aim is NOT to read one difficult book each few months. After the teacher has shown the students how to use the graded readers, they should ask students to visit the library that night (when a librarian is present) and borrow their first book.*
3. *For homework, students should read at least one book. More is fine. (The teacher might announce a reading competition for the semester – where the student who reads the most will win a prize.) For each book, the student should answer the questions in the form below (see end of document) in their READING JOURNAL. They should not spend too much time summarizing the story (one paragraph maximum). They should give most attention (1/2-1 page or more) to writing about their thoughts, feelings, and opinions about the story.*
4. *At the beginning of next class, all students open their reading journals on their desk (put a pen in at the correct page so it's easy for the teacher t find).*
5. *Then students stand up and find a NEW partner. Partner one talks about the story they read. They must quickly (3 minutes maximum) summarize the story, then spend 5 minutes talking about thoughts, feelings, opinions, ideas related to the story. Teacher should explain that it is not a retelling exercise – it is a chance to quickly summarize, but mainly to talk about opinions and feelings. Then partner two does the same.*
6. *It should take students about 15 minutes to retell and provide thoughts and opinions about their story. While students are retelling, teacher walks quickly around the class marking each reading journal entry to show they have seen it. If there is time, they can ensure that students are giving sufficient space to thoughts and opinions. Students are more likely to write summaries (or worse, copy blurbs from the back of the books!) – so they will need to be encouraged from the beginning to focus on thoughts and opinions.*
7. *At the end of semester, teacher collects all of the reading journals and assigns a score. They might also give out a prize for most books read.*

\* Note: Some students might write about other stories they have read (for example, stories from writing class might be seen in the reading journal). While this is okay, and should not be discouraged, it should be ON TOP OF students' library reading. Students need to read AT LEAST one library book each week.

\*\* Note: To encourage students' reading, tell them about the story of Dawa Drolma, an ETP student who went to study at Duke University, and then went on to do her MA at North Carolina State University. Dawa Drolma came into ETP with no English. She went from the bottom to the top of her class in 6 months.

HOW?

She read 80 library books in her first semester. She read easy books, and lots of them.

Challenge students to read 80 books!

READING JOURNAL FORMAT

This is a rough guideline for students to use. It doesn't need to be followed exactly. It may help students to structure their thoughts in the first semester of reading journal activities.

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| **Date** |  |
| **Book Title** |  |
| **Book Author** |  |
| **Number of pages in book** |  |
| **Color (level) of book** |  |
| **Story Summary**  What happened in this story? Summarize in one paragraph or less. Don't copy any words. Just write your own words. Use past tense.  **Useful phrases:**   * This story was about\_\_\_\_(two people who…)\_\_\_\_ * The author wrote about…. * In this story, the characters \_\_\_\_(past verb)\_\_\_\_\_ |  |
| **What did you think after you read this story? Why?**  **Useful phrases:**  I thought….  I thought that …. because …… |  |
| **How did you feel after you read this story? Why?**  **Useful phrases:**  I felt …..  I felt …. because….. |  |
| **What is your opinion of this story? Did you like it or not? Why?**  **Useful phrases:**  I liked this story because…  I didn't like this story because… |  |
| **What ideas did you get from reading this story?**  **Useful phrases:**  After I read this story….  I had an idea after I read this story. My idea was that…. |  |