



Expository Writing Sustained Silent Reading Guidelines

One day per week students will engage in Silent Sustained Reading (SSR) and journaling. Why? Consider the following research:

- In 38 of 41 studies, students given free voluntary reading time did as well as or better in reading comprehension tests than students given traditional skill-based reading instruction.
- Reading as a leisure activity is the best predictor of comprehension, vocabulary and reading speed. Kids who do the most recreational reading become the best readers.
- When it comes to vocabulary acquisition, SSR provides the best investment of reading time.
- SSR results in better reading comprehension, writing style, vocabulary, spelling and grammatical development.
- SSR provides student with an opportunity to develop a recreational reading habit; habitual, recreational reading increases comprehension and vocabulary acquisition.
- SSR is necessary to allow students an opportunity to build their background knowledge.

Statistics are taken from *The Power of Reading: Insights from the Research* by Stephen Krashen.

Also consider what Stephen King, a prolific and well-loved American author, has to say about the power of reading and its effect on writing:

“The real importance of reading is that it creates an ease and intimacy with the process of writing; one comes to the country of the writer with one’s papers and identification pretty much in order. Constant reading will pull you into a place (a mind-set, if you like the phrase) where you can write eagerly and without self-consciousness. It also offers you a constantly growing knowledge of what has been done and what hasn’t, what is trite and what is fresh, what works and what just lies there dying (or dead) on the page. The more you read, the less apt you are to make a fool of yourself with your pen or word processor” (150).

King, Stephen. *On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft*. New York: Scribner, 2000.

Your participation in Silent Sustained Reading is not an optional activity. Rather, it is one of the core pieces of this class, and it will be graded accordingly. If you wish to receive full credit for your SSR participation, you will need to do the following:

1. Come to class with a book that will provide you with enough reading material for the duration of the class period. Students may not read magazines, newspapers, or materials for other classes during SSR. Silent Sustained Reading is a time for students to engage in *sustained* reading of a book (fiction or non-fiction) of their choosing.

2. Read and journal silently for the entirety of the period. Students may not socialize, use any sort of distracting technology, sleep, or work on any other materials. Failure to remain on task during SSR will result in a reduced Learning Skills mark.
3. Turn in your journal when it is due. All journal entries must be in ONE notebook, which will be your journal for the whole semester. If you are absent on a day the journals are collected, you are responsible for turning in the journal on your first day back to class. Students write one journal entry per 25 pages of SSR, and each journal entry is worth ten points. At the end of the semester, the five lowest journal scores will be dropped, and the remaining journal scores will be entered as a summative grade. Students may not work back or ahead on journals. The journals that are completed on the due date will be scored for the current marking period.
4. To receive an A for SSR, students must read at least 50 pages per week and complete at least two journal entries per week. Students should regularly schedule SSR as part of their homework obligations for the class in order to meet the 50 page-per-week requirement.

Receiving Credit for SSR: How do I write a journal entry?

Edmund Burke said, "Reading without reflecting is like eating without digesting."

If you want to be granted credit for the reading done in this class, you will need to adhere to the following directions when writing your journal:

1. The journal entry must be 5-7 sentences in length.
2. Each journal entry must represent 25 pages of SSR reading.
3. The journal entry must begin with one of the prompts that I have provided you with (see below).
4. The journal entry must include the title of the book, the date and the pages covered (see example)
5. The journal must be kept in a single notebook. This notebook cannot be used for any other function. Any journals that are written on freestanding pieces of paper will not be counted towards your total.
6. Journal entries must be legible. Anything that I cannot read will not be granted credit.

The following example is a template for a journal entry. Please consider it when writing any journal entry for which you wish to receive credit.

Title of book: *Sold*

Page read: 1-25

Date: May 1

When I was reading this section of the book *Sold*, I felt sick. This is the story of a 13 year old girl from India who was sold into child prostitution by her worthless stepfather for the equivalent of three hundred dollars, all of which would be spent to fund his drinking habit. I can't even begin to understand how one person would do this to another, much less a family member. I think that this man's decision to sell the main

character reveals something bigger than just a personal weakness due to addiction. It also shows how the culture values men and women differently.

Evaluation: This journal would receive full credit. Here are the reasons why:

1. It is set up appropriately, listing the title, pages read and the date.
2. It is a minimum of five sentences and represents 25 pages of reading.
3. It starts with one of the prompts provided.
4. It reveals a student's REFLECTIONS on a book, not just a retelling of a story.

Possible prompts:

- After reading this section, I started to think about...
- One connection I made while reading this section was...
- I really didn't like it when...
- I love/hate it when the author...
- I got confused when...
- One idea I see developed in this section is...
- After reading this section, I can picture...
- I figured out that...
- I first thought...but then I realized...
- When I was reading this section I felt...
- After reading this section, I think _____ will happen next because ...
- I feel this story is like others I have read because ...
- Following this section this section, I learned ...
- I could relate to this section because...
- I can connect this section of the book to the world in this way ...

“No matter how busy you may think you are, you must find time for reading, or surrender yourself to self-chosen ignorance.” - Confucius