

Sixth Grade: Common Open Response Writing Questions for Literature Class

Main Questions

Character development is important and good books will often have characters “change” over the course of the story. Choose a character and explain how that character is different by the end of the novel. Be sure to use at least two pieces of evidence from the book to back up your ideas on what the character was like when we first met them and what they are like by the end of the story. Also, explain why it was important for the character to change through the course of the book.

Setting plays a large role in any story. Where a story takes place — the time, the environment, the location, etc. — will often shape how the story is being told and what happens. Identify the main setting of the novel and explain its importance to the story. Why did the writer choose this setting for this book? Be sure to include evidence from the novel to support your answer.

The **theme** of a book is the overall message of the story. It is often explained to the reader through a lesson that is learned by the main character. Identify the theme of the novel and explain how the characters in the book come to learn this lesson. Make sure you use evidence from the novel to support your answer. Also, in your answer, be sure to reflect on why the writer chose this particular theme to develop a story around. Why is this theme important to a reader?

Plot development is how the story unfolds over the course of the novel (remember: Exposition/Rising Action/Climax/Falling Action/Resolution). The main element is the **climax** of the story, which is the “main event” of a book when everything comes together for a dramatic moment or decision by the main character. Identify the climax of the novel and explain why you chose it as the climax. Include evidence from the book to support the idea that this is the main event of the story.

Others

Symbolism is the use of a concrete image to represent something abstract (not seen). One example might be the American flag, which is a physical object that represents the United States of America. Identify the use of symbolism in the novel and explain how the writer used that symbol to tell the story. Make sure you provide evidence from the novel to support your answer. And, explain why you think the writer chose this particular symbol for this story.

Foreshadowing is when the author leaves clues for the reader early in the story. It is often only later in the story that these clues make sense to the character and the reader. Identify at least two elements of foreshadowing in the book and explain how these clues became important as the story progressed. Be sure to back up your ideas with evidence from the book. Also, explain in your answer why you think the author used foreshadowing in this novel.

It often helps a **reader to connect with the experiences of a character**. Choose a character from the novel and write about experiences that you have had in your life that seem similar to the experiences of the character in the book. The experiences may not be exact, but you should be able to understand the emotions, reactions or actions of the character based on your own life experiences. Be sure to support your answer with evidence from the novel and from your own life