

## What does it mean to make connections to a text?



**Text to self connections:** This text reminds me of...

- myself: my personality, opinions, values, beliefs, activities, hobbies, experiences
- people I know: my family, friends, coaches, mentors, community members



**Text to text connections:**

This text reminds me of...

- things I've read, like novels, short stories, poems, magazine articles, blogs, websites, comics
- Things I've viewed, like movies, TV shows, video games, art, photographs, documentaries

**Text to world connections:** This text reminds me of...

- current events and/or historical events—things happening in the real world
- facts and information about the world from math, science, social studies, applied sciences/skills



**Now that I've made some connections, how do they help me to better understand the text?**

## English 9 Reading Workshop: Letter-Essays

### What is a letter-essay?

A letter-essay is an informal kind of essay, written in paragraphs, where you talk to me about a novel you have read (or are almost done reading). It should be *at least* 500 words long, which is about 2 typed and double-spaced pages. Your letter-essay is due \_\_\_\_\_.

### What do I write in a letter-essay?

Once you've chosen a book to write about, return to the book and skim through it. Select at least one passage you think is significant, in terms of the book's theme, problem, character development, or plot, or the author's writing style. The passage should show something *essential*.

In your letter-essay, once you have given the title of the novel and the author, and perhaps explained why you chose it (or abandoned it), quote (copy) the passage you chose into the letter-essay, and write about what you think it shows about the book, the author, or your own reading.

Other things you can write about in your letter-essay include:

- What you noticed about how the author wrote
- What you think the themes or big ideas might be
- What surprised you about the book
- Questions you had about the author, characters, plot, or voice
- Things you noticed or questions you had about yourself as a reader
- Connections you made between the book and your own life, or another book you read

**For more detailed information, see the template of a letter-essay, which explains what goes in each paragraph.**

Below are some sentence prompts that might help you with your letter-essay. The important thing to remember is that you are **not** re-telling the story of the novel; instead, your letter-essay should tell something you learned from the story you read, or something you learned about yourself as a reader after completing the book.

Remember that this is a **letter**-essay, so it should begin with a greeting, and a closing (*Sincerely*, or *Yours truly*,), followed by your signature and printed/typed name. Put the date at the top.

### Sentence Prompts for Letter-Essays

I liked the way the author...

I don't get why the author...

I'd compare this author to...

The main character...

The narrative voice...

The climax of the plot...

The resolution of the main character's problem...

I'd say a theme of this book is...

I understood...

Why did...?

I rated this one \_\_\_\_ because...

I was surprised when/angry about/satisfied with/moved by/incredulous at...

I was struck by/interested in/convinced by this passage: "...". It shows \_\_\_\_\_ about this author's writing.

I noticed how the author...

If I were the author, I would have...

This book reminded me of...

The character development...

The structure of this book...

I wish that...

The genre of this book...

I didn't agree with...

I couldn't understand...

This is how I read this book:

## English 9 Letter-Essay Template

October 2, 2020

Dear Ms. Spence:

Paragraph 1: In this paragraph, you must:

- introduce the book: give the title, author, and the genre of the book.
- introduce yourself as a reader: (e.g. what drew you to the book; who recommended it to you and why; what you typically read and how this book fits or is different from that; how this book helped you with your reading goal; and/or why this book was challenging for you)

Paragraph 2: Introduce the passage you have chosen from the novel. Tell who says it (a character or the narrator), where it comes in the book (very beginning, in the middle, after the climax), and, if needed, a little about what happened that led up to this passage.

Next, accurately quote the passage you chose. The passage should:

- Be a *maximum* of 100 words long, indented on both sides, with page #
- Show something important about the book (e.g., character description, story climax, important thoughts/feelings, an example of the author's style, etc.)

Paragraph 3: In this paragraph, write about what the passage shows about the book—see the examples given above about what the passage might show about the book. This part of the paragraph should NOT re-tell the passage; rather, you should explain why the passage is important. This part of the passage paragraph should be the longest—longer than the introduction to the passage, and longer than the passage itself!

Paragraph 4: In this paragraph, share your thinking on one or two things about the book other than the passage. Some ideas you can choose from are:

- What you noticed about how the author wrote—his or her style, point of view, vocabulary, etc.
- What you think the themes or big ideas might be
- What surprised you about the book and why
- Questions you had about the author, characters, plot, or narrative voice
- Things you noticed/learned about yourself as a reader; questions about yourself as a reader
- Connections you made between the book and your own life, or another book you read

Be sure to have examples to support your ideas. You might include a couple of quotations to illustrate your points!

This paragraph can be split into 2 paragraphs if you have a lot to say and/or if you write about two of the above topics.

Paragraph 5: Use a short paragraph to wrap up your letter-essay. You can write a recommendation (or warning!) about the book, sum up your thinking about it, discuss how it impacted you, give it a rating, suggest a follow-up title, share a realization you had about the book or yourself as a reader...etc! Again, you may wish to include a quotation to support some of your ideas.

Sincerely,

*A. Reader*

A. Reader

## Humanities 9 Criteria Rubric for Letter-Essays

Aspect	Emerging (1)	Developing (2)	Proficient (3)	Extending Expectations (4)
<b>Content x 2</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ideas &amp; connections</li> <li>Details</li> <li><u>Quotation</u> <u>other than</u> <u>passage</u></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ideas are not developed and are often unclear</li> <li>too few or too many (irrelevant) details given, or details are unclear</li> <li>may quote too much or not at all</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ideas are straightforward and clear but are unevenly developed</li> <li>some details are given to support ideas but are occasionally irrelevant</li> <li>has quotations but may be irrelevant</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ideas are fully developed, thoughtful, and show some depth</li> <li>relevant details support and clarify ideas</li> <li>quotations are appropriate and support and clarify ideas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ideas are thoughtful, well-developed, and show depth and some insight</li> <li>well-chosen details, including several additional relevant quotations, effectively support and clarify ideas</li> </ul>
<b>Organization</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Letter format</li> <li>Introduction</li> <li>Body: passage analysis &amp; thinking</li> <li><u>Transitions</u></li> <li>Conclusion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>struggles with letter format</li> <li>introduction may be missing or very minimal</li> <li>body is minimal or poorly developed and focuses on retelling; passage analysis missing or minimal</li> <li>choppy flow; does not introduce quotations</li> <li>no/minimal conclusion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>attempts letter format but may have some difficulty</li> <li>introduction has minimal book/reader information</li> <li>body includes passage analysis; some thinking about the book evident but focus is on retelling</li> <li>transitions &amp; quotation introductions somewhat effective</li> <li>conclusion brief/unclear</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>correct use of letter format</li> <li>introduction gives info about book &amp;/or reader</li> <li>body includes passage analysis and develops additional thinking about the book; retells only as needed for clarity</li> <li>uses transitions &amp; introduces quotations</li> <li>concludes appropriately</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>precise use of letter format (no errors)</li> <li>introduction has engaging info about book &amp;/or reader</li> <li>body includes well-developed passage analysis and deeper thinking about the book</li> <li>smooth flow throughout</li> <li>conclusion is engaging &amp;/or satisfying</li> </ul>
<b>Writing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sentences</li> <li>Words</li> <li>Spelling &amp; Punctuation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>many incomplete, run-on, or unclear sentences</li> <li>words are often used incorrectly and may confuse the reader</li> <li>spelling and punctuation errors are basic, repeated, and distracting to the reader</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a few incomplete, run-on, or unclear sentences</li> <li>words are usually used correctly but may distract the reader</li> <li>spelling and punctuation errors are noticeable and sometimes distract the reader</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>sentences generally make sense/are correct</li> <li>words are used correctly and sometimes for effect</li> <li>spelling and punctuation are generally correct and errors do not distract the reader; may try to use punctuation for effect</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>sentences are correct and effective</li> <li>words are used correctly and effectively</li> <li>spelling and punctuation are generally correct and errors are minor; may use punctuation for effect (takes risks)</li> </ul>

Comments:

Total: /16