

# Teacher to Teacher

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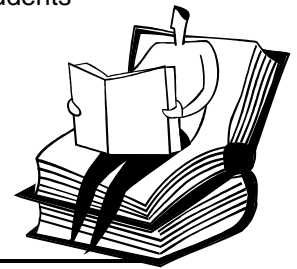
## 10 Ways for Students to Respond to Their Reading

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The State of Ohio defines reading comprehension as the process of constructing and extending meaning. When readers construct meaning, they determine the author’s message. When they extend meaning, they make connections between what they have read and something else, such as connections to their lives, to other texts, to problems that they need to solve, etc. Together, constructing and extending meaning allow students to “read with understanding,” an important part of passing the GED test and dealing with text in everyday life.

Response activities can support constructing and extending meaning. Here are ten activities that students can complete after they have read either non-fiction books on a GED topic or fiction books for their own enjoyment. Written response activities have the additional benefit of fostering students’ writing growth.

You may want to introduce these brief activities one at a time. Then, when students are accustomed to each, you can offer choice. Posting these ideas on a classroom wall or making a sheet for students to keep in their reading logs/ journals will serve to remind them of their options.



### 1. “I” Poems (Kucan, 2007)

Students select a character from something they have read. They write “I” poems from that character’s perspective. They may select any of the following to develop lines for their poems:

- I am \_\_\_\_\_
- I wonder \_\_\_\_\_
- I hear \_\_\_\_\_
- I see \_\_\_\_\_
- I want \_\_\_\_\_
- I pretend \_\_\_\_\_
- I feel \_\_\_\_\_
- I touch \_\_\_\_\_
- I worry \_\_\_\_\_
- I cry \_\_\_\_\_
- I understand \_\_\_\_\_
- I say \_\_\_\_\_
- I dream \_\_\_\_\_

For example, imagine that students have read *When Marian Sang* (Ryan, 2002), a picture book about Marian Anderson. The first few lines of an “I” poem about this book could be as follows (Kucan, 2007, p. 523):

*I am Marian Anderson.  
I wonder if the racism will stop.  
I hear singing all the time in my head.*

Quick response activities (Rasinski & Padak, 2004):

2. After an independent reading period, hold a brief sharing session in which a few students read their favorite parts aloud (these could be marked with sticky notes as students read). You may want to follow up by asking students why those parts are favorites.
3. Ask students to “say one thing” about or “say one thing I learned” from their reading. Alternatively, they may want to “write one thing” or “write one thing I learned” in their journals or logs.
4. Play “Around the Room.” Announce some aspect of a story (e.g., time, location, main character, conflict) and have students tell just this about their books.
5. Use large sticky notes inside front covers of books in your classroom library for students to (a) write brief reviews or (b) indicate how much they enjoyed a book using a star system (4 stars... no stars). Students may

want to keep track of their reading by making charts that contain title, author, and number of stars (see above). They could write about the ratings in their reading logs/ journals.

6. Ask students to write in their reading logs or journals: "What happened in my book today," "what's going to happen next," "my favorite character is," or other general prompts. For nonfiction materials, students could make a list or order a list of important ideas.
7. A name poem or acrostic uses letters of a name (a character, for example) or word (key concept, for example) to begin the lines of a poem. To write one, students think of a key word related to their reading, write it vertically on a sheet of paper, then complete the poem by adding words or phrases such that each line begins with the appropriate letter.

Here, for example, is a Name Poem about spiders:

*Spin webs of silk*  
*Predatory; they prey on insects*  
*Invertebrates*  
*Digestion begins with the spider's bite*  
*Embryos live in egg sacks*  
*Recluse spiders are quite poisonous for people*

8. Diamantes are brief poems that get their name from their diamond-like shape:

Noun  
Adjective      Adjective  
-ing verb   -ing verb   -ing verb  
Adjective      Adjective  
Noun

Here, for example, is a diamante based on Katherine Paterson's *Bread and Roses, Too* (2006), a young adult novel about the famous mill strike in Lawrence, Massachusetts, in 1912:

Bread  
Hungry   Underpaid  
Singing    Joining together   Persevering  
Persistent      Courageous  
Strike

9. Venn diagrams are useful for comparing two objects, ideas, characters, etc. See [http://literacy.kent.edu/eureka/strategies/venn\\_diagrams.pdf](http://literacy.kent.edu/eureka/strategies/venn_diagrams.pdf) for more information.
10. Ask students to sketch something in their logs or journals and then, if they wish, to share these with each other. The ability to create mental images while reading is a powerful comprehension strategy. To make these mental images readers use their own personal background knowledge to add information that goes beyond the information presented in the text itself. Ask students to sketch a setting, an event, or a character for fiction. Ask them to create a chart or diagram that

represents information found in a nonfiction piece.

## References

- Kucan, L. (2007). "I" poems: Invitations for students to deepen literary understanding. *The Reading Teacher*, 60, 518-525.
- Paterson, K. (2006). *Bread and roses, too*. New York: Clarion.
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- Ryan, P. (2002). *When Marian sang*. New York: Scholastic.