

## Lesson Plan: Creating a Reading Journal

By [Sarah Sahr](#)

So many of us understand the joys of getting lost in a really good book. One of the highlights in my teaching career is watching students get lost in a really good book. Sadly, due to standards and curriculum, rarely do we find time to allow our students to simply read for pleasure. Below, I have created a basic reading journal to help students put to words how they react to different parts of a story. This reading journal is made for students who read fiction. You could try using it with nonfiction, but explaining some of the literary elements might get complicated.

<b>Objective:</b> Students will be able to document their reactions to a piece of fiction
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<b>Audience:</b> Intermediate adult or secondary students
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<b>Materials:</b> Reading journal
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### Journaling Preparation

In getting students ready to start journaling, it would be best to help students find a book they will actually enjoy. However, if your class is reading a novel together, feel free to use this journal. Everyone will need a copy of the journal. I would suggest having students create a title page. The title page should include the book's title, author, year published, publisher, student name, and a due date. To make the title page more appealing, a student could draw a picture, but it's not necessary. Once everyone has a copy, go through the journal page by page to make sure everyone knows what's expected of him or her. Here's a brief outline:

#### Pages 1–2: Reading Log

It is important that each time students sits down to read their books, they document what page they are on. This is required so students don't lose track. You could also hand out bookmarks, if you have enough.

#### Pages 3–4: Word Log

Like with all new books, there are bound to be words students don't understand. Take a moment to explain *context clues*. Encourage students to make definitions of their own. As a last resort, students can use a dictionary to look the word up. Under no circumstances should students use a translating dictionary.

#### Page 5: Questions

As students read through the wonderful pages of their book, they are bound to have questions. If a question arises, the students should immediately write it down in their journal (including page number). As students continue to read, their questions might be answered. If possible, students could write the answer in the question box, but only if the answers become available as they read the story.

#### Page 6–7: Plot Changes

Here is where some time should be taken to explain *literary elements* to students. Here, questions are used to indicate definitions for the elements. This may not work for your students, but it might give you a starting point:

1. Setting: Where is most of the story taking place? Is there more than one location? List them.
2. Characters: Who are the people in your story? Are they human? If not, what are they?
  - a. Protagonist: Who is the “good guy”? Is there more than one?
  - b. Antagonist: Who is the “bad guy”? Is there more than one?
3. Narrative Hook: What was the one event at the beginning of the story that forced you to read more? Was it more than one event?
4. Conflict: What’s the problem the characters are facing?
5. Rising Action: What are the events that move the story along? Are there any major events?
6. Climax: What happens near the end of the story that changes the characters forever? What happens after that?
7. Resolution: How is the conflict resolved? Did all characters get what they wanted?
8. Point of View: Who told the story? Did he or she do a good job?

### **Page 8: Character Exploration**

This is a chance for students to delve deeper into the character who changed the most in the story. Even if the book does not give a good physical description of the character, have students describe what they think he or she looked like.

### **Page 9: Favorite Parts**

It might be a good time to introduce the idiom, “it’s a page turner!” Hopefully, your students have enjoyed so much of this book that they are able to write down countless favorite parts.

### **Page 10: Boring Parts & If I Could Have Changed Something...**

Ideally, your students’ books won’t have any of these. But if they do, make sure they write them down. And, if they have any ideas on how the book could have been better, they can put them here as well.

### **Use Your Best Judgment**

Please remember, this generic journal is designed to be vague. Modify it in any way you see fit. Maybe you’d like to make a place for students to explore character relationships. Maybe it would be useful to draw out a plot line. It’s totally up to you. If your whole class is reading a book together, have specific questions on theme or character development. If there are some key words you want students to understand, create a page for them.

You can find past *TESOL Connections* lesson plans and activities in the [TESOL Connections archives](#), or you can visit the [TESOL Resource Center](#). From there, search Keywords “TESOL Connections,” and you will find about 20 resources with my name on them (Sahr, Sarah).

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