

Below are three sample reading responses from past grade 5 students. These represent responses children are able to write later in the year, not in September. These are exemplar responses we are using as a benchmarks for students. Be sure to check the reading journal for guidelines for writing your response!

The Golden Compass
by Philip Pullman

I finished The Golden Compass by Philip Pullman. It is number one in his Dark Materials series. It is fantasy. It is about a girl named Lyra Belacqua who lives in a world different from ours and how she runs around Jordan College until the Gobblers come. Gobblers are people who steal kids and no one knows what they do with them. Lyra's friend is stolen by the Gobblers and after that Lyra leaves Jordan College for the first time!

Outside Jordan College she joins up with a lady who she thinks is nice but is actually bad. She runs away from her and goes with the Gypsies (nomadic boat people) to the north to save children from the Gobblers. On her trip she meets and makes a lot of long lasting friends.

I loved this book! I thought it was even better than Harry Potter. I was hesitant to start it because I thought it would be hard to read but it was not. It was stupendous! It was very exciting and a lot like Harry Potter because of the magic and the make-believe creatures. It was so well written I almost thought what the author was saying was true.

One very important event was when Lyra got the alethiometer. An alethiometer is a truth teller or a fortune teller, you just ask it a question and it will show you the answer. This is very important because it helps her through the whole series of books.

I think the author's message is that you have a destination in life and you have to follow it!

Philip Pullman used Lyra, the main character to represent any kid. She lives in a struggle of good and bad. She wants to save her friends. Lyra also has the sort of problems and fears any kid would have. Lyra is also someone any kid would want to be. She is a hero, she lives in a land full of talking animals, and she has a daemon (daemons are little creatures that can take any form, they are born and die with you, and you can talk to them inside your head). Every kid would love to have one because they would be great company and fun.

I think the author was lonely as a child and that is why he made up daemons. I also think he would want to have all this happen to him. I also think he was a child with many dreams and a big imagination!

Lily's Crossing
by Patricia Reilly Giff

Lily's Crossing so far is about a girl named Lily in the 1940s, in the days of the war. She befriends a boy named Albert who's a Hungarian refugee. His sister Ruth was left behind in Europe, and Lily told him she could help him - only that was a big lie in the way she told him.

I don't think I could be like Lily - for one thing she tells lies - I'm not saying I never lied, but she tells big ones I know would get me into trouble later. Also, Lily is really brave at times. Like once in the middle of the night, Lily heard noises, so she hopped in her rowboat, spied on people, got caught, and snuck back. I would never ever do that.

And the last thing: Lily loves the sea, and to me it's okay, but I like plants and forests more than the sea. The sea is beautiful, and I really like it, I just like the land and ecology systems better. I dislike one thing about the sea, though...swimming in it. I think it's too salty. Fresh water is much, much better in my opinion.

I really like this book because it gives an unusual perspective of the war - that of a kid my age, seeing that even though the parents say everything is going to be the same after, it won't be. Also Lily isn't exactly a goody-two-shoes. It almost reminds me of Sammy Keyes in that way. Have you read them? They're mystery novels for kids and they're really good and really different. It's not every day the heroine lies to the police!

Bridge to Terabithia
by Katherine Paterson

The author develops the main character Jess really well. He does this several ways. In the very first sentence in the whole book he writes about how early Jess got up to run. That made me automatically put him in my mind as a very ambitious and hard working (at what he wants to work at) person. Also when Jess is running he pushes himself harder and harder to be the fastest in fifth grade. That made me think of him as a very determined person.

The second way the author develops the character is with all the internal dialogue. You find out what he thinks about his sisters and his Dad and Leslie. For example, this is a quote from the book on what he thinks about his sisters: “Those girls could get out of work faster than grasshoppers could slip through their fingers.” You really feel like you know him when you read this thoughts. Through Jess’s thoughts you learn he is struggling to find a place at home, with all his sisters squawking at him, and in school because he doesn’t really have friends.

The author describes what Jess looks like really well. He describes him when he is running. This is what the author says. “His straw-colored hair flapped hard against his forehead and his arms and legs flew out every which way. He had never learned to run properly, but he was long-legged for a ten-year-old, and no one had more grit than he. He had to let that puny chest of his know who was boss.” I get the picture that Jess is a lanky, smallish 10-year-old boy. From Jess’s dialogue with himself and his family I see he is a southern kid in a poor family that works hard on his family farm. He is trying to find a way to stand out as the fastest runner in the fifth grade. The author really developed, introduced, and described the main character Jess so he was a really strongly pictured person in my mind, almost like he was real. I think that is what makes this book so good.