

The Phantom Tollbooth

by Norton Juster, illustrated by Jules Feiffer

To Milo most everything seems to be a waste of time, and learning seems to be the biggest waste of all. Milo simply doesn't understand why he needs to solve word problems or learn geography or be able to spell. He always wants to be where he isn't, and he's never satisfied when he gets where he's going.

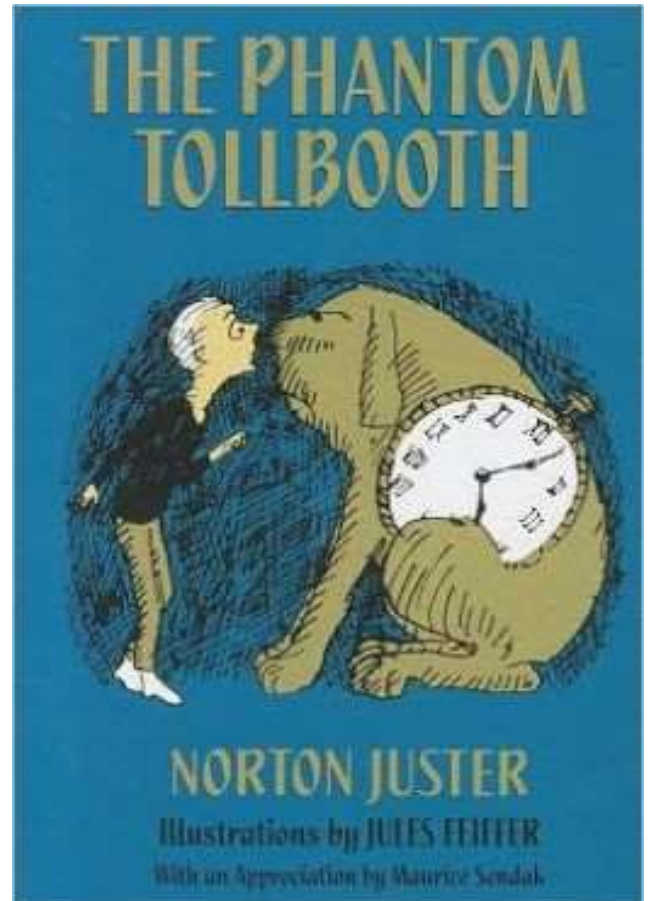
One day after school, Milo discovers a large package waiting for him in his room, a "GENUINE TURNPIKE TOLLBOOTH." Since Milo has nothing better to do, he assembles the tollbooth, pays his fare, and begins his journey to the Lands Beyond. Milo is joined by some unusual friends, and the company is drawn into a quest to rescue Rhyme and Reason. Along the way, they learn what happens when you jump to Conclusions, and they question whether words or numbers are more important for Wisdom.

About the Author

Norton Juster, an architect, planner, and professor, has written many celebrated children's books, including *The Hello, Goodbye Window*, which won the Caldecott Award, *The Dot and the Line*, and *The Odious Ogre*. *The Phantom Tollbooth* has been named one of the National Education Association's "Teachers' Top 100 Books for Children," and readers of *School Library Journal* named the book one of the "Top 100 Chapter Books" of all time. Mr. Juster lives in Amherst, Massachusetts.

Getting Started

You can find *The Phantom Tollbooth* at your local or school library, or at local or online bookstores. It's also available as an ebook for your iPad, Kindle, or Nook.



While You're Reading

Every good story is full of captivating characters, timeless and timely themes, significant settings, pivotal plot points, and vivid vocabulary that combine to engage our brains and our hearts. In this section of the website, you will find activities that invite you to dig deeper into each of these literary elements for a better understanding and enjoyment of the book.

To aid your investigation, save our Writing While You Read guide (see page 14), with helpful tips on keeping a reading journal and annotating a book while you read.

Reading Journal Prompts

- On page 9, the author writes, “When [Milo] was in school he longed to be out, and when he was out he longed to be in. On the way he thought about coming home, and coming home he thought about going.” Have you ever felt that way? If so, how did you overcome that feeling? How do Milo’s feelings about school compare to your own? How are his feelings different from yours?
- We learn a lot about Milo in the first chapter of this novel. In your Reading Journal, make note of at least five different examples of Juster’s characterization of Milo. These examples might include things that Juster tells us directly about Milo (like the quote above on page 9), or they might be things that Milo says or thinks, which we, as readers then have to interpret. Then write an adjective to describe Milo based on each example. Can you relate to Milo as a character? Is he a likeable character? Why or why not? As you continue reading (rereading) note how Milo is growing and changing throughout the story.
- At the beginning of Chapter 2, as Milo passes through the tollbooth, he finds himself “speeding along an unfamiliar country highway” with “neither the tollbooth nor his room nor even the house...anywhere in sight” (16). Milo then thinks, “What a strange thing to have happen,” and the author quickly adds “(just as you must be thinking right now),” which is itself a little strange! In literature, this technique is called a “self-conscious narrator” and in theater or television, it’s called “breaking the fourth wall.” The technique is not particularly common now, particularly in books, but it was often used by 19th century novelists, like Charles Dickens. What do you think an author is trying to do by inserting a statement like the one Juster uses here? What is the effect on you as a reader?
- Milo’s first stop in the Lands Beyond is the land of Expectations, which is an early example of something to look for throughout your reading (or rereading) of the novel: the author playing with language. Your Reading Journal will get a workout, but make note of instances of puns (humorous wordplay) in the novel. Often Juster will be playing with an idiom, which is an expression that can’t be taken literally, like “it’s raining cats and dogs.” Sometimes Juster will be punning with other expressions, like “going beyond expectations,” and with the names of places, like the Doldrums. For each example of wordplay you find, think about what the author is doing with the expression, how it works (or doesn’t work) in the story, and why.
- In the land of Expectations, Milo quickly meets some unusual characters, including the Whether Man, Tock, the watchdog, and the Lethargians. Names are often significant in a story, and in *The Phantom Tollbooth*, the names are often examples of more wordplay. Juster plays with homonyms – like whether and weather – or takes a familiar word more literally than we typically do – like a watchdog with a watch for a body. In your Reading Journal, make a list of the character names as you meet them, and then note wordplay or other things

that strike you about those names. Think about why a particular character in a particular place has a particular name. In some cases, you may need to read or say the name aloud to fully understand all the fun Juster is having!

- The **denotation** of a word is its definition, and the **connotation** of a word is what the word suggests. Synonyms may have the same denotation but different connotations. For example, “house” and “home” have very similar dictionary definitions, but one of those words typically connotes warmth, happiness, comfort, and belonging. Which one?

In Dictionopolis, the King Azaz’s advisors each say “the same thing in a slightly different way.” What are the different connotations of the greetings the advisors give Milo? Make note of other places where the connotations of the advisors’ words differ.

- Tock and Humbug become Milo’s traveling companions, sticking with him throughout his adventures. How are Tock and Humbug similar? How are they different? How do they each influence Milo? Why do you think Juster uses both of them in this way, instead of giving Milo just one sidekick?



- Are you keeping up with all the puns and character names? Officer Shrift is “the shortest policeman Milo [has] ever seen” (59), explaining Chapter 5’s title, “Short Shrift.” Giving something “short shrift” is an expression that originated hundreds of years ago, with one of the first appearances in literature in Shakespeare’s *Richard III*. Conduct some research on this term, and then make notes in your Reading Journal about the appropriateness of this name for Officer Shrift.
- Pay particular attention to “Faintly Macabre’s Story” (Chapter 6, pp 71 – 79), as it provides an important history lesson for the kingdom of Wisdom, including the story of the founding of Dictionopolis and Digitopolis. Make a list of the similarities and differences in these two cities, and add to that list as you continue reading (or rereading) the novel. What is most important in each city? Why? How do you know? In what ways do these cities represent the way you think about words and numbers? About language arts and math? In which city would you be most comfortable?
- At the banquet in Dictionopolis, King Azaz reels off a list of things that the members of his cabinet can do, including making “mountains out of molehills,” making “hay while the sun shines”, and leaving “no stone unturned.” These expressions are more idioms, and we can assume, in the world of *The Phantom Tollbooth*, that these cabinet members are literally doing these things. Continue to look for creative uses of language and note them in your Reading Journal. Research the history of these and other idioms to discover how these expressions developed their current meanings.

- Near the end of the banquet, the king serves a special treat – “half-baked ideas.” Of course “half-baked ideas” is another idiomatic expression. Both the Humbug and Tock provide advice to Milo about eating half-baked ideas (91). Compare and contrast their advice to Milo. Why do you think both the Humbug and Tock talk about half-baked ideas making Milo (or anyone) sick?
- In Digitopolis Milo says that he doesn’t think numbers are very important, which infuriates the Dodecahedron. Why do you think Juster chooses to have numbers found, not made? How does this compare to words in Dictionopolis? Do you find the Dodecahedron’s explanation about the importance of numbers convincing? As you continue reading (or rereading) the book, what do you think the author is trying to tell us, as readers, about the relationship between words and numbers?



- As you probably know from language arts, the theme of a story is the “big idea,” a statement the author is making about how people and the world work. A novel may have multiple themes, but typically there is one major theme that is most important. Review the notes in your Reading Journal. What is the major theme of *The Phantom Tollbooth*? What are other themes in the work? If you’re having trouble, you might consider thinking about ideas like authority, conflict, learning, and thinking itself. But remember these ideas are topics, not themes. A theme is a statement, so you would want to take one of these words and write a sentence. For example, “The most effective way to resolve conflict is to _____,” could be a theme for this novel. Or you might ask yourself, “What does this novel say about thinking [or “authority,” or “conflict”, or “learning”]?” The answer to that question would be a theme.
- This book is, like many other books, a quest story. How is this quest story like others you’ve read? How is it different? Read (or reread) Chapter 20 (pp 253 – 256) carefully and then reread Chapter 1. How is Milo different after his trip to the Lands Beyond? In what ways is he the same? Review your Reading Journal to find places where you noted that Milo was growing and changing.
- In *The Phantom Tollbooth*, Milo is magically transported from our world to a fantasy world, where adventures take place but time seems to stand still in our world. What other stories, novels, or films use a similar technique? How is *The Phantom Tollbooth* similar to those stories? How is it different? Why do you think these kinds of stories are so popular? What can an author accomplish with this technique that he or she can’t accomplish with a story either set entirely in our world or entirely in the fantasy world?

Getting to the Root



English is a living language. It changes and grows all the time. One of the best ways to understand the history of the English language and to unlock the meanings of unfamiliar words is to learn Latin and Greek word parts. As you study biology, you will learn more and more of these word parts, and once you know them, you will begin to recognize them in all kinds of words—and you'll find that your knowledge of those word parts will help you decipher the meanings of unfamiliar words.

Roots are the "base" of plants, and Latin and Greek roots form the base of many English words. For example, the Latin root *audi* means "to hear." How many modern English words can you think of that include the root *audi*? Next, take a look at each root below. Beside each root is a word containing that root.

Next, take a look at each word part below. Beside each part is a word from *The Phantom Tollbooth* containing that word part. You can find the word in context on page number in parentheses.

- **ject—dejected** (9)
- **mono—monotonous** (22)
- **son—dissonance** (133)
- **magn—magnitude** (189)

1. Can you determine the meaning of the root from your knowledge of the word beside it?
2. If not, think of other words that you know that also contain that root. What do those words have in common? Based on that common element, can you figure out the meaning of the root?
3. If you're still stumped, check out this [list of Latin and Greek roots](#).
4. Now that you know the meaning of the root, how many words can you generate that use the root?
5. Once you understand the meaning of the root, you'll find that even your understanding and appreciation of familiar words will deepen and grow when you think about how that root works in those words.

Words, Words, Words

The Phantom Tollbooth is full of great words. Below is a list of some of the words from the book that may be unfamiliar to you, along with the page number on which each word appears in the story. Be sure to follow the steps below for other words in the book that are new to you.

- effusive (18)
- ruddy (13)
- indignantly (26)
- conciliatory (27)
- miscellaneous (38)
- reticence (43)
- tumult (45)
- macabre (67)
- disconsolate (68)
- arbitration (77)
- famished (82)
- promontory (102)
- maestro (124)
- abolish (149)
- admonished (174)
- ominous (200)
- maliciously (204)
- haughtily (205)
- precariously (225)
- dismal (238)



Before you look these words up in a dictionary—or ask someone what they mean—try working through the following steps:

1. Generate a list of other words that share one or more of the same word parts. What do the words on the list have in common? Are there any clues from those commonalities that you can use to help figure out the meaning of the unknown word? Hint: Some word parts—as they appear in English words—have multiple meanings as we look back at the Latin and Greek, in part because of changes that have occurred in the words over the years. For example, does the "ped-" in "pedestrian" mean the same thing as the "ped" in "pediatrician"? Where there is possible confusion, context clues (see step 2) are extremely important.
2. Go back and reread the word in its context. This context includes the sentence in which you find the word, but you should also read one or two sentences both before and after the appearance of the word. What context clues do you find that might unlock the meaning of the word for you?
3. Make your best guess at the meaning of the word.
4. Look up the definition in [a dictionary](#). Be sure to also look for information about the word's origin. This information will often contain the Latin or Greek word from which the word is derived.
5. How close was your guess?

Explore

Our world is full of connections—between people, places, and events. In this section of the website, you will find activities that uncover some important connections—in math, history, and science—between *The Phantom Tollbooth* and our world!

Math

To Infinity and, well, you know...

In Digitopolis Milo asks the Mathemagician to show him the biggest number there is. At first the Mathemagician is confused, but when Tock clarifies that Milo is interested in "the number of greatest possible magnitude," the Mathemagician turns the question back to Milo: "What's the greatest number *you* can think of?" (189-190). When the Mathemagician tells Milo to add one to the greatest number he can think of, and to continue adding one, he's talking about the abstract mathematical concept of infinity, with roots going back to the ancient Greek philosopher Zeno.

- [Learn more about infinity.](#)
- A paradox is a statement that seems to contradict itself but might also be true. Zeno developed several famous paradoxes, and when the Mathemagician asks Milo to continue dividing small numbers in half, he is exploring the same problem as one of Zeno's paradoxes, Achilles and the Tortoise. Wrestle with [this famous philosophical thought experiment!](#)

Numbers never lie, or do they?

On his way up the stairs to the land of Infinity, Milo, who has become "quite accustomed to being addressed at the oddest times, in the oddest places, by the oddest people" sees "one half of a small child who [has] been divided neatly from top to bottom." The child explains that he is actually .58, "a little bit *more* than a half" and that he is part of "the average family...mother, father, and 2.58 children" (193-196). Juster is having a little fun with statistics, a branch of mathematics used in politics, sports, science, psychology, economics, and many other fields. You probably see statistics almost every day on the news, online, or in commercials.

- Learn more about different [numbers used in statistics](#), like mean and median.
- Learn about how to [collect and analyze data](#) for an experiment that will use statistics.
- Milo gets confused when the ".58 child" begins talking about averages. Are statistics always "true"?
- Discover [how statistics can be manipulated](#) and how to avoid being misled by statistics.

History

Cartography

Take a look at the map of the Lands Beyond found at the very beginning of the book. How is this map similar to other maps you've seen? How is it different? Cartography, or the art of map-making, is a very old art form, with the earliest known maps appearing on Babylonian clay tablets from around 2300 B.C.E.



- Learn about the [history of maps and cartography](#).

- Not too long ago, your parents might have had a map or atlas in the car when setting out on a road trip. Now many people have replaced maps with GPS navigation systems. [Learn how these modern day "maps" work.](#)

- Today maps can provide all kinds of different information. Check out [this interactive map-making tool](#) from National Geographic, and see what you can learn about our world and your part of it through the map views you create.

It's About Time

On the way to Dictionopolis, Tock explains his name and family history, and, in the process he provides a history of time. "As they [drive] along, Tock continue[s] to explain the importance of time, quoting the old philosophers and poets..." (34).

- Take "[A Walk through Time](#)" and learn about the history of time measurement.
- Learn more about a couple of "old philosophers," [Plato](#) and [Immanuel Kant](#), who thought and wrote about time.
- There is an entire category of poems dedicated to making the most of time. These poems are called *carpe diem* poems, from the Latin for "seize the day." The term originated in the Odes, by Horace, a Roman poet, and many "old poets" have written *carpe diem* poems. Read "[Arise](#)," by Ella Wheeler Wilcox, and "[First Fig](#)," by Edna St. Vincent Millay. Head back to your Reading Journal and write a response to each of these poems. What is the poet saying about life? What instruction or challenge is the poet offering the reader? How does the poem relate to *The Phantom Tollbooth*?

Science

A Sensory Symphony & an Odd Oath

- In Chapter 10, "A Colorful Symphony," Alec leads Milo out of Reality and to an enormous symphony orchestra. And when Alec asks Milo, "Isn't it a grand sight?", we get a bit of foreshadowing about this orchestra's concert, which Alec says, "you don't listen to...you watch" (119-121). Philosophers, musicians, and artists have long been interested in the relationship between sound and color, and color-music organs and, more recently, laser light shows at concerts explore these connections. But in our reality, there is also a medical condition, known as synesthesia, from the Greek *syn*(together) and *aisthesis* (sensation). For people with synesthesia, stimulation of one sense or part of the brain leads to an involuntary experience and association in a second sense or part of the brain. For example, some synesthetes perceive letters or numbers as having colors. [Learn more about the neuroscience of synesthesia.](#)
- Dr. Kakofonous A. Dischord says to Milo, Tock, and Humbug, "I only treat illnesses that don't exist: that way, if I can't cure them, there's no harm done - just one of the precautions of the trade" (138). Dr. Dischord's statement is a strange twist on the Hippocratic Oath, a centuries old promise doctors make to themselves and their patients. Read the [Hippocratic Oath](#). Is this oath still important and relevant to us today? What changes, deletions, or additions would you make to improve the oath for 2018?

Saving for the Future

In the Silent Valley (Chapter 12), Milo learns about the Soundkeeper, whose job was to release sounds in the morning and gather "old sounds, to be catalogued and filed in...vast storage vaults." After a sound was used, it "would be carefully placed in alphabetical order and neatly kept for future reference." But as people began to ignore sounds, the Soundkeeper became worried, since "a sound which is not heard disappears forever and is not to be found again" (147-148).

- When you think of extinction, you probably think of animals, and you probably don't think about sounds! But scientists are worried about plant species "disappearing forever" too. The Soundkeeper's vault is similar to the [Svalbard Global Seed Vault](#) in Norway. Learn more about the [history and mission of the seed vault.](#)
- What else would you want to keep in a vault to ensure its survival for the future?



Reflect & Connect Prompts

In Duke TIP's online Book Club, the "Connect" prompts provide an opportunity for students to share their ideas about the book with other Duke TIP students. You may choose to record your responses to these questions in your Reading Journal, or you can use them to talk about the book with friends or classmates who have also read it.

Why Learn?

Milo says, "I can't see the point in learning to solve useless problems, or subtracting turnips from turnips, or knowing where Ethiopia is or how to spell February." He thinks "seeking knowledge" is "the greatest waste of time of all" (9).

- Have you ever felt that your school experience was just a series of learning useless facts? In your opinion what is learning supposed to be like? Why is it important?
- Is "seeking knowledge" the purpose of education? Why or why not? If not, then what *is* the purpose of education?
- How have your best teachers helped you to see the point of what you were learning? What is the most interesting, useful, or meaningful thing you've ever learned in school? What made that particular lesson so memorable for you?
- How is the idea of "seeking knowledge", and Milo's attitude toward it, an important one throughout *The Phantom Tollbooth*?

Great Expectations

The Whether Man tells Milo that "some people never go beyond Expectations" (19). In *The Phantom Tollbooth*, Expectations is a place along the road to your actual destination, but for us, expectations can shape how we perceive ourselves, our experiences, and others.

- As a place, Expectations is really neither good nor bad in the novel, unless of course you stay there. In the way we think about and understand expectations, how can expectations be helpful to us? How can they be not so helpful?
- What does it mean to go beyond expectations? What are the possible consequences of never going beyond our expectations?
- Share a time when you've gone beyond expectations. What was your motivation? How did it make you feel?

The Clock is Tocking...

"When they began to count all the time that was available, what with 60 seconds in a minute and 60 minutes in an hour and 24 hours in a day and 365 days in a year, it seemed as if there was much more than could ever be used. 'If there's so much of it, it couldn't be very valuable,' was the general opinion, and it soon fell into disrepute. People wasted it and even gave it away," Tock tells Milo, explaining his job as "seeing that no one wasted time again" (34).

- How is it possible to give away time? What is the difference between wasting time and giving it away? Which one would be worse?
- Clearly Tock suggests that giving away time is a bad thing, but in what ways might "giving away" time be positive?
- How would you determine whether someone was wasting time or using it well? What is something that you do that others might consider a waste of time but that is valuable to you? What makes it a valuable and productive use of your time?

Lightning or Lightning Bug?

When Milo suggests that King Azaz's cabinet members "use just one" word, they tell him, using lots of words, that it's not their job to make sense, that "one word is as good as another," and that using all the words means "you don't have to choose which one is right" (40). Later, after spending time in the Word Market and getting into some trouble with Officer Shrift, Milo says, "You can get in a lot of trouble mixing up words" (65).

Mark Twain, the famous 19th century American writer and humorist, had a very different view of words than the king's cabinet members. Twain wrote, "The difference between the almost right word and the right word is really a large matter - it's the difference between the lightning bug and the lightning."

- What are all the things that you would have to consider that would make a word "right"?
- What kind of trouble can someone get in for mixing up words?
- Words can be powerful, but they can also lose their power. What gives a word its power? What robs a word of power?
- In the Word Market, words are bought and sold. What is the single most valuable word you can think of - a word that you would give all you had to keep and be able to use? What makes that word so valuable to you?

All in How You Look at It

Alec Bings, who grows down, tells Milo, Tock, and the Humbug, that his people "always see things from the same angle," but he also tells Milo that "Everyone should have his own point of view" (106-107). Alec then points to a bucket of water, and says, "from an ant's point of view it's a vast ocean, from an elephant's just a cool drink, and to a fish, of course, it's home" (108). Juster uses Alec here, and the world's smallest giant (among other things) in Chapter 10, to explore the important issue of perspective.

- Do you agree with the statement that "everyone should have his own point of view"? Why or why not?
- Do you think it's important to understand an ant's point of view? What about an elephant's? What about your friend's or classmate's perspective? Why or why not?
- How can you balance your own point of view with understanding the perspectives of others?

- Have you ever had an experience that caused you to change your perspective? What factors contributed to this change for you?
- Do you think we do a good job of understanding others' perspectives? Why or why not? How would our world be different if we were better at this?

Mistakes – Problems or Opportunities?

When Milo, Tock, and the Humbug finally reach the castle where Rhyme and Reason are being held, Rhyme asks how long their journey has been, Milo answers, "[W]e would have been here much sooner if I hadn't made so many mistakes." Reason replies, "You must never feel badly about making mistakes...as long as you take the trouble to learn from them. For you often learn more by being wrong for the right reasons than you do by being right for the wrong reasons" (233).

- Do you agree with Princess Reason's reasoning here? Why or why not?
- James Joyce, a famous Irish novelist, said, "Mistakes are the portals of discovery." Share a time when you learned a valuable lesson from a mistake. What did you discover - about yourself, about others, and about the world - that you wouldn't have discovered if you hadn't made the mistake?

Mission: Impossible?

When Milo and his friends return with Rhyme and Reason, King Azaz and the Mathemagician reveal the "one very important thing about [the] quest" that they hadn't been able to tell Milo before: "It was impossible," [says] the king.... 'Completely impossible,' [says] the Mathemagician." They both say, "...if we'd told you then, you might not have gone - and, as you've discovered, so many things are possible just as long as you don't know they're impossible" (247).

- How was Milo able to accomplish the impossible? What factors contributed to his success?
- Do you think King Azaz and the Mathemagician were correct that Milo would not have gone if they had told him the task was impossible? Would you have gone? Why or why not?
- Can you think of other examples in which people have accomplished the "impossible"? How did they do it? Who or what helped them to succeed?

Keep Reading

A few thoughts on books and reading...

"When I have a little money, I buy books; and if I have any left, I buy food and clothes."—Erasmus

"I cannot live without books."—Thomas Jefferson

"Outside of a dog, a book is man's best friend. Inside of a dog it's too dark to read."—Groucho Marx

What's next?

We hope that you enjoyed reading *The Phantom Tollbooth*, by Norton Juster. Check your email for information about our next book club selection. In the meantime, if you are looking for a new best friend—and aren't inside a dog—here are some books you might enjoy. Don't forget to use the tips from Writing While You Read (see page 14) to deepen your enjoyment and understanding of these books too.

- *Navigating Early*, by Clare Vanderpool
- *The Apothecary*, by Maile Meloy
- *The Apprentices*, by Maile Meloy (sequel to *The Apothecary*)
- *The City of Ember*, by Jeanne DuPrau
- *The People of Sparks*, by Jeanne DuPrau
- *The Prophet of Yonwood*, by Jeanne DuPrau
- *The Diamond of Darkhold*, by Jeanne DuPrau
- *The Mysterious Benedict Society*, by Trenton Lee Stewart
- *Chasing Vermeer*, by Blue Balliett
- *The Lightning Thief*, by Rick Riordan
- *Fever 1793*, by Laurie Halse Anderson
- *Treasure Island*, by Robert Louis Stevenson
- *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*, by Brian Selznick



Writing While You Read

Have you ever read every word on a page, and turned every page, but when you finished reading, you couldn't remember anything that you had read? If so, you're not alone! Reading can be relaxing, but sometimes we make the mistake of thinking that reading is passive, when it should be active. This doesn't mean you need to run while reading – that might not be a good idea. Writing as you read, however, makes reading active. This process involves some effort, but the payoff for that effort is a deeper understanding and greater enjoyment of the books that you read.

Two strategies for being an active reader are keeping a reading journal and annotating your books.

How do I keep a reading journal?

Below are some suggestions of things that you might write in your reading journal. Experiment with them. You may find that one strategy works really well for you, while others don't work at all. There's really not a right or wrong way to keep a reading journal, as long as you use it as a place to explore your thoughts, reactions, and questions as you read.

What Do I Write?

Write a brief summary, in your own words, at the end of each chapter or section. Include the main ideas or concepts of the chapter, major events in the plot, and any new information that you learn in the chapter.

Do you meet a new character? If so, what is the character like? How do you know? What are the reasons behind what that character says and does? How is the character like other characters in the book? How is the character different? Does this new character remind you of characters you've read about in other books?

Does the setting change? If so, how does the new setting compare and contrast with the previous one? Why does the setting change?

Create your own title for the chapter. If the book includes chapter titles, you might write about why the author has chosen that particular title for the chapter. How does it relate to the main ideas or concepts, major events, and character action in the chapter?

Respond to the chapter. What is the most interesting thing in the chapter? What did you learn that you didn't know before? Do you agree or disagree with the choices the author is making about plot and character? Why or why not? What do you think is going to happen next? How can you connect what is happening in the book to other things you've read? To other things you know? To your own experience?

Identify words that you don't know. Some of these words may just be new to you; others may be jargon, terminology that is used in a particular field or academic discipline. Look these words up in a dictionary, write down their definitions in your notebook, and be sure you understand their meanings and how the author is using them. Often these words are some of the most important in the reading.

Make note of passages where you are confused and/or have questions, and be sure to include a page number. Once you finish the chapter, you can return to the passages. Perhaps further reading clarified the confusion. If not, you know exactly which points in the text to further research or to ask questions about.

Write down striking or unusual use of language. Often writers use particular words, expressions, or sentences in ways that we wouldn't have thought to use them, and the effect can really jump off the page at us. If you come across a passage that seems really cool to you, write it down in your reading journal.



Throughout the online book club activities, you will find activities that are specifically labeled "Reading Journal." When you see that label, read the writing prompt, and respond to it in your reading journal. These prompts will usually ask you to write about a personal connection to what you've been reading. For example, a journal prompt might ask you to write about a time when you found yourself in a situation that is similar to a situation of one of the characters in the book.

To Write or To Type, That is the Question!

Your reading journal doesn't have to be a hard-copy, hand-written one, but there are some advantages to using an old-fashioned journal:

- The physical act of writing promotes a stronger memory for new words, phrases, and strategies you will be learning
- The hard copy notebook can evolve into a collage, a scrapbook, even a work of art that represents your creative, messy, overflowing mind!

How and where you keep a reading journal is much less important than actually doing it! So find an old notebook that may be buried in your desk, ask mom or dad if you can buy an inexpensive composition book, or create a new folder on your home computer and get started!!



How do I annotate a book?

As the word suggests, annotating a book involves making notes or other types of marks that help you focus on particular words or passages that seem important, are often repeated, relate to other things you've read, or simply interest you as a reader. An active reader annotates a text by doing any or all of the following:

UNDERLINING

Specific words that convey significant events or elements of the story's characters, plot or theme

VERTICAL LINE ALONG THE MARGIN

This helps the reader quickly find an important passage underlined, or to highlight a paragraph or other section too long to underline.

* ASTERISK/STAR/DOODLE ☆

Placed in the margin, this device is reserved for the most important, special ideas, events or elements of the book. There would be no more than a dozen of these in the entire book; by flipping through, one could easily find once again the most significant passages in the text.

4. NUMBERS

Placing numbers in the margin can help count a set of related points or ideas the author is listing.

P.#32 PAGE NUMBERS

Often indicated by "p. #" or "Cf. #" next to the number, this indicates an idea or element is connected to another on different page of the book, and should be considered together.

CIRCLES

These serve the same function as underlining key words or phrases, but may be reserved for the **BIGGEST** ideas or facts in the book.

Of course, all of these strategies involve marking in the book. So if you're planning on annotating your book, we recommend that you have your own copy – librarians take a very dim view of writing in books that belong to the media center/library!