

# Young Authors at Work: Literature Response Journals



*Reading stories aloud in class is a great way to get young children excited about and engaged with literature. If you are looking for ways to help preschoolers comment on and retell information from stories, literature response journals encourage children to draw, write, and talk about the books you share with them.*

## Introduce literature response journals after the class has discussed a story.

- Invite the children to put their ideas about the story on paper. Start with some suggestions: “You could draw what you think one of the characters looks like. You can make a drawing of something that happens in the story. You can try writing some words, too.”
- Give each child a pencil and a sheet of paper. You might want to make booklets for them by folding and stapling several sheets of paper, or keep a file folder for each child’s journal pages. Children can also use clipboards if they are writing and drawing while sitting on the carpet.
- Begin with 3-5 minutes for responses. Lengthen or shorten the time allotted depending on how long children take to finish.
- Explain that each journal entry includes the date when it was written. Some teachers provide a date stamp that children can use to date their entries. Others print the day’s date where children can see it and copy it.
- If a child wants to write a caption, let them dictate or help them sound out words.
- Let children decorate their file folders or journal covers.

## Use the journals to spark discussion.

- Spend time with each child throughout the week to look at his or her response journal and to talk about what is in it. “I see you added a picture of a dog and the letters ‘D’ and ‘G’ to your entry today. Tell me more about what you were thinking about the book when you wrote this.”
- Invite children to share journals with others in the classroom. After a child explains one of her entries, ask, “Who has a question or something to say about Mary’s journal entry?” Make a schedule to assure that each child gets a turn weekly.
- Set aside time for pairs of children to discuss their journal entries.
- Keep your own journal of drawings and captions. Share entries after the children finish theirs, so they do not think they should copy your work.

## Extend the journal activities.

- Invite children to make up new endings to a story. Children may enjoy working in small groups to think of creative new conclusions.
- If reading a book over several days, ask children to draw what they think will happen next. Let them share their predictions with classmates.
- Encourage detailed entries by offering crayons, colored pencils, or special papers.

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Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this tip sheet are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Illinois State Board of Education.



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