

Lesson 1: FOCUS. Reading Worksheet B

Recommended Level: II

Books that Make You Think, Books that Make You Feel



Some books challenge your brain. Others touch your heart. Some books do both!

What book have you read lately that got you thinking about things you never thought about before? What book's character made you shiver in fear or shake with laughter, clench your fists or want to hug your kid brother? What one, special book was so powerful it became a part of YOU?

Thinking and feeling are two sides of the same "brain" coin. Exploring how and why you respond to books—either through thoughts or emotions—is a key to understanding yourself.

Below are excerpts from two winning letters from past LAL contests. After reading each excerpt, discuss what thoughts or emotions did the trigger within the readers.

Dear Mrs. Lowry,

... with each passing paragraph, each turned page, each new chapter, I realized *The Giver* was different. I couldn't understand why your characters had no recollection of animals. I didn't understand the Ceremonies of Age. I didn't understand what was meant by Release. Release. When I got to that part of your book, I became frightened... I have a younger sister. I reread the passage, hoping I had interpreted it wrongly. But your chilling words were still on the page...

It wasn't until the end that I realized this book was a warning to this generation and to the next, to ten generations from now and 100 generations from then. It is up to us to make sure that our children's children will always be able to ride a sled down a snowy hill. . . .
R. Pynn, Brooklyn, NY

Dear Mr. Sleator,

I believe there must be 'creatures' living on other planets, and frequently argue this point with friends. Your book *Interstellar Pig* made me think so hard it was difficult to concentrate on anything else. I'm not going to tell you how well written or how much fun your book is. I really want to tell you what went on in my mind as I read it and how I reacted.

Even though I am a 12-year-old girl, I felt like the main character, a teenage boy. When Barney played the interstellar game, I whispered where he should move next. When he was fighting off the extraterrestrials, I was helping him. My mind was in the book, even though my body was not. . . .

Lindsay, Wauwatosa, WI

Directions: Read the Level II national winning letter from LAL 2003 below. What new thoughts or emotions did the books trigger within the reader? After discussing, complete the activity that follows.

Dear Norton Juster,

I noticed one day that I always seemed to be waiting for something; 3:00, the weekend, the summer holidays. I willed the days to go by faster, worked as quickly through my schoolwork as I could to get it over with. I took as many shortcuts as I could get my hands on. School was an enormous bore, and many a time I wondered the point of it all—what use will it ever be to me to learn how many protons there are in an atom of carbon? Is it really so important to understand the

difference between a direct object and an indirect object? I began to wonder why I went to school at all.

Then I read *The Phantom Tollbooth*.

In the beginning, Jilo's attitude toward life aggravated me like an itch you can't reach; but as I read on, I began to realize that my own attitude was not all that different. This new spark of thought inspired me to read on. I couldn't help but laugh out loud upon reading Milo's aberrant conversation with the Whether Man, and I so loved the part