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Reflections: A Student Response Journal



*The Witch of
Blackbird Pond*
Elizabeth George Speare

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ISBN 978-1-60389-675-7

Item No. 202298

Response Journal

To The Student

Although we may read a novel, play, or work of non-fiction for enjoyment, each time we read one, we are building and practicing important basic reading skills. In our ever-more complex society, in which reading has become more and more crucial for success, this, in itself, is an important reason to spend time reading for enjoyment.

Some readers, however, are able to go beyond basic reading techniques and are able to practice higher thinking skills by reflecting on what they have read and how what they read affects them. It is this act of reflection—that is, stopping to think about what you are reading—that this journal is attempting to encourage.

To aid you, we have included writing prompts for each section; however, if you find something that you wish to respond to in the book more compelling than our prompts, you should write about that. We hope you enjoy reading this book and that the act of responding to what you have read increases this enjoyment.

After you read the indicated sections, choose the questions to which you will respond. Keep in mind that there are no right or wrong answers to these prompts, and there is no one direction in which you must go.

Chapter One

1. Kit is traveling on the *Dolphin* from her home in Barbados to America in 1687. She does not know anyone aboard the ship but has made friends with the captain's wife, Mistress Eaton, and admires the captain's son Nat. Just before the ship reaches shore, Nat decides to talk to Kit. Kit is both "surprised and flattered" by his attention.

As Kit, write a diary entry describing this encounter with Nat.

2. When Kit first goes ashore at the port of Saybrook, three plainly-dressed women stare at her, making her feel self-conscious. Imagine that the three women huddle together and discuss Kit's appearance. Keeping in mind what you know of Puritan society, write a page-long conversation the three might have about Kit's appearance and behavior.
3. Kit thinks to herself that there is "something strange about this country of America," something that Nat at John Holbrook seem "to share and understand" that she does not. Write a detailed, descriptive paragraph about a time when you had just entered an unfamiliar environment and felt that everyone knew something that you did not. How long did the feeling last?

Chapter Three

8. When Kit arrives unexpectedly at her aunt's house, she is welcomed by the surprised family. Then she reveals the truth: she is not visiting; she has come to live with them. Consider how each member of the Woods family feels about this revelation. In four short but detailed paragraphs, write as each member of the Woods family in turn, describing "your" thoughts so far about Kit, her unexpected arrival, and how it will affect your family.

Chapter Four

9. On Kit's first day in Wethersfield, she finds that her style and way of being clash with the Puritan system of values. Her fine clothes, for example, are considered unacceptably vain. As Kit, write a letter home to a friend in Barbados describing the ways in which Wethersfield's values are different. Be sure to mention how Puritans view gifts, women, slaves, and beauty.
10. Imagine that a Puritan girl is suddenly transported into your home from the Connecticut of 1687. In one or two paragraphs, from her point of view, write a description of the styles, behaviors, and values that "you" find surprising as you look around the house and meet its inhabitants. For example, you might start begin, "There's a girl here whose hair is hanging wild and loose and whose arms and legs are uncovered..."
11. At the end of the chapter, Kit overhears Judith complaining to her mother about Kit. Kit is hurt by Judith's words, but rather than confronting Judith, she climbs into bed and tries to hide her pain. Write about a time when you overheard or found out that someone had been saying negative things about you. Did you confront the person? Why or why not? If you prefer, write about a time when someone overheard *you* saying something hurtful about him or her. How did it feel?

Chapter Seven

18. Kit is astonished and panics when she learns that William, with whom she feels she has nothing to talk about, has decided to seriously court her. Judith is unsympathetic, saying, “Seems to me you’re pretty choosy” and “Don’t you know William is able to build the finest house in Wethersfield if he wants to? Does he have to keep you amused as well?” Clearly, Judith and Kit disagree as to what characteristics are most desirable in a romantic partner or in a marriage. What is your opinion? Is William “right” for Kit? If not, who else in the novel do you think might be? Explain your answer.

19. As William, write a diary entry describing a typical evening visiting Kit at her home. Try to imagine what William is thinking about her and about their future together.

Chapter Eight

20. Most of us have a special place that touches and moves us the way the meadows move Kit. In one or two detailed paragraphs describe the place that means the most to you. Include a physical description of the place, but also describe how you feel when you are there. Try to include details from all five senses in your description.

21. Kit considers what life would be like if she married William, thinking that perhaps she could endure her current task of weeding the onion field “if the future offered an escape.” Write a letter to Kit giving her your honest opinion of her reason for considering marriage to William. Consider both whether *you* would ever marry someone to escape from an unhappy home life, and whether you think Kit’s life with William would be happier than her life with the Woods.

Chapter Nineteen

54. Kit is disappointed to discover that William is not present in the courtroom to speak in her defense. As William, write a letter to Kit explaining why you decided not to come.
55. As Prudence, write a diary entry describing how you feel about testifying at the trial and about the prospect of having your father's protection against your mother's abuse.
56. At the end of this chapter, Kit refuses to press charges against Goodwife Cruff for slander. In similar circumstances, would you have made the same decision? Explain your answer in at least a paragraph.

Chapter Twenty

57. Kit tells William that they will not make a good match. He reluctantly accepts her decision. What do you suppose William is thinking as he walks home alone? Is he merely sad, or is he angry with Kit for not being willing to bend a little? Keeping in mind what you know of William, relate the thoughts he might be having in one or two paragraphs.
58. It is interesting to note the ways in which the characters in *The Witch of Blackbird Pond* grow and change as the novel progresses. In this chapter, for example, Kit exhibits a new patience when she resists her impulse to tell Mercy that John loves her. As Kit, write a letter to a friend in Barbados describing the ways you have matured or changed since arriving in Connecticut.