

Reader's Response Assignment

Choose a chapter from the reading. Using the accompanying response as a model, write your own reflective response to the chapter. You should have a total of three responses for the chapter:

1. An introduction that explains one of the themes in the chapter.
2. A well-developed personal connection to the chapter that includes concrete examples.
3. A concluding paragraph that sums up the response.

Notice that the only use of "I" or any other first person pronoun is when you make a personal connection between your own life and experience with the text.

Model Response to Literature

The following model is a response on the theme of "talking dogs" from Chapter III of *The Way to Rainy Mountain* (p. 20):

(1) In chapter III the three voices are tied together by the importance of dogs to the Kiowa. The storyteller emphasizes the early days before the Kiowa had acquired horses. This would be at the beginning of their journey before their contact with the Plains tribes. He emphasizes how closely the people used to live in contact with nature. The statement "That was a long time ago, when dogs could talk" emphasizes this close relationship. Early hunters and gatherers had to read and understand the behavior of animals in order to survive. Hunters today must be able to understand the "language" of dogs in order to understand their signals. Anyone who has ever hunted with a dog knows that man and dog do indeed "talk" to each other.

The historian points out how the Kiowa honored the importance and bravery of the dog by naming their principal Warrior Society "Real Dogs."

After acquiring horses, the dog was not as important to the Kiowa, but Momaday, speaking in his own voice, comments on the number of dogs around his grandmother's house, and shows the change in the role of the dog from protector, guardian and burden bearer to companion.

(2) When I was growing up on the farm, we always had English Shepherds, also known as Border Collies. These dogs were developed in Scotland for herding sheep. We had no sheep, but we did have cattle, and those little dogs were amazing at herding the cattle in for milking, branding, shipping, or moving from pasture to pasture. We communicated with the dogs by hand signals, whistles and words. We talked to the dogs and the dogs talked to us. When I was thirteen, my great uncle received a severe head injury while changing a tire on a car. The metal part blew off and struck him in the head. He suffered permanent brain injury and had to come live with us for the rest of his life. He loved to walk and would wander off down the country road. One of our old dogs, Nicki, appointed herself his guardian and accompanied him on all of his walks. She walked beside him, between him and any traffic, and if he wandered too far toward the center of the road, she gently "herded" him back to the side. If he became disoriented, Nicki would lead him home. The communication between that old dog and that old man, for me, mirrors the communication between the man and the dog in the Kiowa legend.

(3) Hunters, shepherds, cattle herders, all can attest to the importance of dogs in their work and the close communication that develops between man and dog. Even those who have only had dogs as pets have experienced the times their dog sensed their mood, shared their joy, or offered comfort in their sorrow. While not as important to survival to modern man as it was to the ancient Kiowa, the close relationship between human and dog still exists.