

***Spare Parts* - Reading Response Journal**

Reading Response Journals (RRJs) are an informal space for you to explore the readings as well as your own reading process. The first step to writing an RRJ is to read carefully, taking notes on the text as you go. RRJs should include the following:

1. A brief summary of the chapters (5-8 sentences) including major events, characters, and important information about setting (place and times)

Lorenzo Santillan, and Christian Arcega had very different journeys in coming to America: One of them (Lorenzo) was dropped on his head as a baby and came over with his mother, father, and older brother Jose for medical help to make sure he was alright. The other (Christian) simply took a nap as a young child and woke up in a car to find that his family had just driven across over the border.

They both had a passion for mechanics but found them in very different ways: Lorenzo was simply fascinated with a makeshift auto repair shop that his Godfather ran out of their driveway, while Christian declared at the age of five that he “wanted to build a robot” and took every opportunity to create or to take apart a device to see if and how it worked.

They both also had problems with bullying and found it hard to try to fit in a culture that was at times different from their own. Christian’s journey and interests (along with good study skills) brought him to Carl Hayden Community High School, a local high school with a marine biology program started as an attempt to lure students of different ethnicities to the school in the mid 1980’s.

While their journeys were different, the two students had one thing in common: at very early age they wanted to learn how things worked and how they could create them. Lorenzo grew up dreaming of working with his brother and godfather in “the shop”, while Christian grew up learning English and under the tutelage of Bob Vila’s home improvement show “Home Again”.

Eventually, Christian’s journey led him to the marine biology teacher at Carl Hayden Community High School, Fredi Lajvari, an excitable and unorthodox man who told Christian something had been waiting his whole life to hear: he had helped some of his previous students build robots.

2. Your response to the reading (5-8 sentences) including your opinions about and reaction to the assigned chapters. This section is a place to think deeply about the book and the emotions and complex ideas it brings up for you.

I thought it was very interesting how Christian said he wanted to “build a robot” even though he had never been exposed to the concept, it was something that just seemed to be wired into him.

I also like how his family nurtured his interest and didn’t stifle it: It’s unbelievable to think about how his life would have turned out if his family hadn’t seen his interest and the gift he had as a good thing.

I’ve always thought it’s very important for a family to recognize a gift a child has and to nurture it. At an early age I think it’s very important for someone to show that they care about what you care about and can support and understand your passion. It’s huge for a child to know that he’s heard and that someone cares about something he does. Even the simple gesture of letting him watch Bob Vila’s home improvement show when I’m sure other people in the house would have I’m sure rather seen something else was a sign they seemed to care.

And even if his family wasn’t wild about his fascination with taking apart and creating things, it’s good that they didn’t seem to speak against it or malign his fascination. I think that’s something equally important, it can be just as damaging for a parent to not see the gift their child has as it is encouraging for a parent to completely buy in to what their child loves.

3. 2 discussion questions. These should be open-ended questions that could lead to an interesting conversation, not fact-based yes or no questions.

1. Do you think students would learn better if their teachers were more upbeat and taught in an unconventional way like Fredi?

To some degree, yes. I would say quite a lot of kids (especially in a setting before college) have problems learning in a environment that might be opposite their personality and the way they learn. At the same time though, part of the purpose of school is to prepare us for real life and not everything in real life will be easy. Everything we will have to learn will not be taught or explained to us in a way that makes perfect sense. So I think a balance is needed in order for everyone to thrive equally well.

2. Why do you think Lorenzo and Christian were bullied so much as children?

I think it’s because they were different. Some kids are aware that some people look or sound different and will make a statement about them that may come across as mean or rude although it’s not meant that way. Some kids though will intentionally say things that are mean-spirited and hurtful.

Power is also big part of why people bully other people, especially if that person is different from the bully. It’s easy to draw attention away from the bully’s own insecurities by making fun of someone else’s differences.

4. An explanation of your reading process. How did this week’s reading go for you? Discuss specific sections that made you confused or questions that you have about the text. Point out strategies that helped you overcome challenges in your reading. Choose one or two of the following prompts to develop your ideas:

While I was reading,

I felt confused when ... so I

I was distracted by... but then I...

I started to think about...because...

The time went quickly because...

I figured out...by...

I finally understood...
I remembered that earlier in the book...
I was reminded of...

I felt confused when I was reading the part about the history of the school. It was a little confusing when they were talking about how the district banned bussing and then later “desegregated”. It was odd because I knew in 1985 it could not have been the desegregation that went on in the ‘60s. I went online (beyond wikipedia) to see if I could get anymore information and I found an actually copy of a bill dealing with some of the issues that were mentioned but it didn’t make much sense.

I eventually found an article written about the entire history of segregation in Phoenix and it had my answer. In 1953, “enforced” segregation was outlawed. However, because of location, students were still very likely to go to a school that was almost exclusively made up of people of their own race or class. In 1985 (the period the book mentions) the school district passed *intentional* measures to make sure that all people in Phoenix had equal access to educational programs and made magnet schools a bigger part of the education system.

5. 3--5 “significant words” from this particular reading—words that you feel are important to understand the text, or that you have decided to learn to develop your academic vocabulary. Define the words you choose and explain why you chose them.

1. *Busing*: Transporting a group of children of a particular race to a school with children of another race in order to promote diversity and integration.

2. *Magnet School*: A school open to anyone in a particular district that intentionally offers and focuses on programs in a very specific field. In order to appeal and draw in people from different backgrounds, the only criteria is that is student is interested in that field.

3. *Dreamers*: The two main characters in this section had big dreams and did all they could to help them come true. Christian and Lorenzo always had something they loved to do or study in the back (or front) of their minds that really captured their imagination.

As far as the other two words I chose, I found them very helpful in trying to understand the backstory given in the section about Carl Hayden High School.

You will receive complete credit on every RRJ (20 points) by thoughtfully completing the steps as described above, looking at the rubric to check completeness, and by turning your RRJ in on time. The RRJs are a space for you to think through the readings without having to worry too much about grammar, organization, and the other requirements of more formal writing assignments. However, do follow basic rules such as capitalizing I and using appropriate language.