

# Workshop 1

## Responding as Readers

### Introduction

For many years, Dr. Judith Langer has been studying how readers interact with texts and what the implications for teaching are, so that teachers can help students become more fully literate. Through the eyes of English and language arts educators, teacher educators, researchers, and writers, you have the unique opportunity to step back from your professional life and reflect about your relationship with literature: why you love to read, what your reading habits are, what you enjoy about reading, and how stories are woven into the tapestry of your life.

In this first program, you will become acquainted with key panelists who will appear throughout the workshop. These individuals share their joy of literature by discussing its value, the power of story, and how literature permeates their lives and brings meaning to their world.

### Key Points

- Why do we read literature?
- Effective readers build rich envisionments when they read literature.
- Envisionments or understandings are text worlds in the mind, including the hunches, predictions, and suppositions that people have every waking moment. These ideas are constantly changing as readers interact with people, society, and texts.
- What is the value of literature?
- How is story important in our lives and cultures?
- What are our reading habits?
- What do we read and what books do we value?
- What is literature? How does it permeate our lives in significant ways?

## **Learning Objectives**

After viewing this program, you will be able to:

- Reflect upon your own reader's biography, in order to understand how literature has permeated your life, what your reading habits are, why you value literature, and why you read.
- Consider ways of celebrating literature in your own classroom.

## **Background Reading**

In preparation for this workshop, you may want to read Chapter 1, "Literary Thoughts and Literate Mind," in Dr. Judith Langer's *Envisioning Literature*. (*Envisioning Literature*, by Dr. Judith Langer, from the Teachers College Press, Columbia University. Copyright 1995. ISBN 0-8077-3464-0.) This chapter highlights three classrooms and how literature plays a significant role in fostering personal empowerment for students as they use their literacy skills to develop understandings of texts, themselves, and the world around them. Here, Langer also points out the role of literature in everyday life and the power of literature to embody the human experience.

You may also be interested in the panelists' Reader's Biographies found in the "About the Contributors" section of this guide, pp. 10-14, and the article by Dr. Langer found in the Appendix of this guide: "A Response-Based Approach to Reading Literature."

For other resources, look under "Additional Reading" for "Workshop 1. Responding as Readers" on the *Conversations in Literature* Web site at [www.learner.org/envisioningliterature/](http://www.learner.org/envisioningliterature/).

# Workshop Session (On-Site)

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## Getting Ready ..... 30 minutes

### Journal Writing: Reader's Biography Pre-Write (15 minutes)

Reflect upon your own reading history. Consider your earliest memories of reading, how reading has been a part of your life, why you read, what are your reading habits, what texts you enjoy reading, and any favorite authors or books that come to mind. Start gathering ideas by using a web as shown on the activity sheet, or by listing your ideas in your *Conversations in Literature* workshop journal.

**Site Leader:** Distribute the **Reader's Biography Pre-Write** activity sheet to assist the participants with this activity.

### Sharing and Discussion (15 minutes)

Share your pre-writes and discuss:

- Why do you think literature is valuable?
- How is literature a part of your life?

## Watch the Workshop Video..... 60 minutes

### Viewing and Discussion

Now you will view the video program "Responding as Readers," in which a combined panel of teachers, writers, researchers, and teacher-educators share their thoughts about the value of literature and how it has permeated their lives. Dr. Judith Langer also introduces the concept of envisionment building and the processes through which effective readers interact with literary texts.

As you view the video program, consider the questions below.

**Site Leader:** If you are watching on videocassette, you may pause at the segments indicated below to give participants opportunities to discuss, reflect, and interact with the program. If needed, rewind and replay segments of the program so that viewers can thoughtfully examine all pertinent information. If you are watching a real-time broadcast, have participants consider the questions as they view the program, and discuss them later.

You may select any or all of the questions below to discuss, as time permits and according to the interests of your participants.

### Segment One

**[Site Leader:** Pause just after tours of panelists' bookshelves and before Dr. Judith Langer begins to discuss studies in Silicon Valley.]

- What are some of the reasons that you read literature?
- What do you think are the qualities of effective readers? What observable traits do you notice in your own students? In yourself?
- How is literature and reading an integral part of your life? Share some anecdotes.
- Is there a particular story that is your favorite? Why do you have such a personal connection with it?
- What questions or thoughts are raised as you view the video?

# Workshop Session, cont'd.

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## Segment Two

[**Site Leader:** Pause after Dr. Judith Langer refers to the book *Remembrances of Things Past* by Proust and just before her interview.]

- What are some of your favorite places to read?
- What type(s) of literature do you enjoy reading the most? Authors?
- What books would we find on your bookshelves at home? Which ones do you especially treasure and why? Which ones would you like to read again?
- What questions or thoughts are raised as you view the video?

## Going Further ..... 30 minutes

### Discussion

Discuss as many of the questions below as time permits. You may want to answer more of the questions in your journals as homework.

- What else would you include in your reader's biography, after listening to the readers in the video?
- What do you have in common with the panelists introduced in the video?
- How would you define "literature?" Explain.
- How is story important in our lives, communities, and cultures?
- Are there any stories in your own community or family that have been passed down to you? What do you gain from them? What stories are important to your students?
- Reflect upon your own students. How do they feel about reading literature? What do you think impacts their attitudes towards reading literature?
- What works would you include in your own literary canon? This can include must-reads for anyone, favorite selections, and important historical and cultural pieces. What ones would you include in a canon for your students?
- What do we gain from interacting with literature as individuals, as a community, and as a culture?

# Between Sessions (On Your Own)

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## Homework Assignment

### Journal

In your workshop journal, respond to the following:

Using your Reader's Biography Pre-Write, attempt to write a completed reader's biography or select a few topics to write about from your pre-write.

### Reading

In preparation for Workshop 2, you may want to read the poem "Oranges" by Gary Soto, which can be found in the anthology *Literature: An Introduction to Reading and Writing*, 5th edition, Edgar V. Roberts and Henry E. Jacobs, Prentice Hall. Copyright 1998. ISBN 0-13-010076-5.

The workshop Web site contains links to more information about the author. Go to the *Conversations in Literature* Web site at [www.learner.org/envisioningliterature/](http://www.learner.org/envisioningliterature/) and click on "Workshop 2. Envisioning" and "Background Reading."

You may want to read Chapter 2, "Building Envisionments," Chapter 4, "The Classroom as a Social Setting for Envisionment Building," and Chapter 5, "A Practical Pedagogy," in *Envisioning Literature* by Dr. Judith Langer.

For other resources, look under "Additional Reading" for "Workshop 2. Envisioning" on the *Conversations in Literature* Web site at [www.learner.org/envisioningliterature/](http://www.learner.org/envisioningliterature/).

## Ongoing Activities

### Channel-Talk

You are encouraged to participate in an email discussion list called Channel-TalkLitConversations. Send comments and questions regarding the workshop to other participants around the country. Comments can also be viewed on the *Conversations in Literature* Web site. Go to [www.learner.org/envisioningliterature/](http://www.learner.org/envisioningliterature/) and click on "Channel-Talk."

# Between Sessions, cont'd.

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## Extension: Classroom Connection

### Activity One: Teacher Discussion and Sharing

How do you foster a love for reading in your own classroom? Share some classroom anecdotes and experiences.

What can you do in your own classroom to bring the joy of reading literature to your students?

What would your students include in their readers' biographies? What would you want them to include?

### Activity Two: Sample Student Activities

Ask your students to write their own reader's biography. As an extension to this, ask them to create a collage that represents their reader's biography.

Ask your students to bring in their three favorite books for small group book discussions.

Ask your students to present a book commercial or read aloud for their favorite book.

Ask your students to create a "book in a box" where they gather five or six objects that represent their favorite book. Students can share these, along with their favorite books, in small discussion groups.

Ask your students to impersonate their favorite fictional characters individually, in pairs, or in groups.

## Additional Reading

For other resources, look under "Additional Reading" for "Workshop 1: Responding as Readers" on the *Conversations in Literature* Web site at [www.learner.org/envisioningliterature/](http://www.learner.org/envisioningliterature/).

# Activity Sheet:

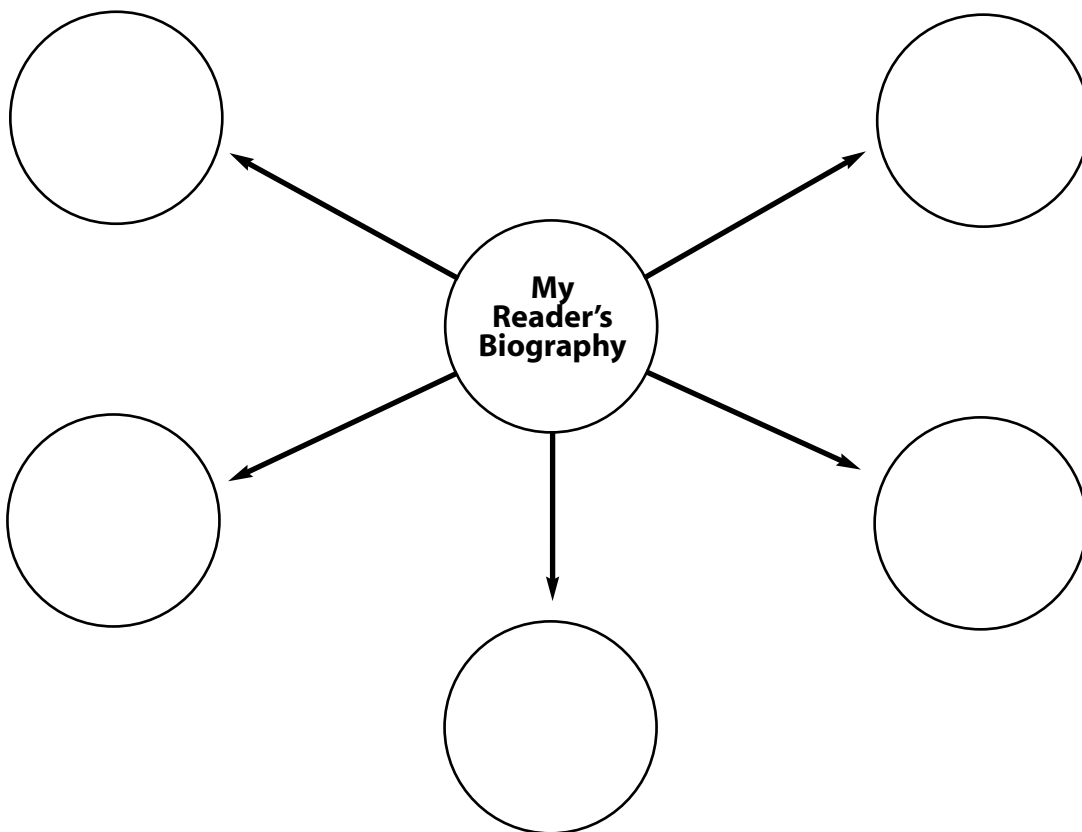
## Reader's Biography Pre-Write

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Reflect upon your own reading history. Consider your earliest memories of reading, how reading has been a part of your life, why you read, what are your reading habits, what texts you enjoy reading, and any favorite authors or books that come to mind. Start gathering your ideas by using the web below or by listing ideas. Use your *Conversations in Literature* workshop journal for this purpose.

### Suggested Key Topics To Consider

- Earliest memories of reading
- How reading has been a part of your life
- Memories of being read aloud to
- Your first book(s)
- Why you read
- Where you enjoy reading/reading habits
- What texts you enjoy reading
- Favorite authors or books from childhood, adolescence, and the present
- Favorite fictional character(s) you most identify with
- A place from fiction you'd like to visit
- Books you would still like to read
- Books you would enjoy reading again
- Important family stories or stories that have been passed down from generation to generation



# Notes

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