

Reading Notebook Prompts: Transfer of Skills to Choice Books

Focus	Fiction Notebook Prompts: Transfer of Skills to Choice Books
Plot and Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What event or conflict gets the story started right away? Why would the author start there? • What was the most important event in the story so far? Why? What prompted the main character to act as he or she did? • What was the climax of the story? How do you know it was the climax? • What hardships did the main character have to deal with? • What are two or three of the turning points in the story? • What scenes got left out? How do you know they happened even though they weren't explicitly written? • What parts of the book move slowly, and what parts move quickly? • How much time passes throughout the entire book? Where does time move the fastest? Slowest? Why did the author write it that way? • What is the flow of chapters? Why did the author tell the story in that order? • How does tension build throughout the text? How does the author make you want to keep reading, or when does the author lose you? Why?
Character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the author paint a picture of this character? • What are the multiple, even conflicting, characteristics of the main character? How do you know these are characteristics and not just one-time emotions? • What conflicts does the character face? How does he or she resolve them? • Who is the antagonist in your book, and how does this character shape the decisions of the main character?

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How does the main character grow or change across the book?• What is the single most important decision the main character makes in the story? Why?• Write an obituary for one of the characters.• Tell about one of your favorite characters in the book. What makes you like him or her?• Refer to one section of dialogue and discuss what is said and what is not said. What does that teach you about the characters?• What factors, relationships, and events shaped the main characters the most?• Try answering any of the above questions for minor characters in your book.• Do any minor characters become more like main characters or key players by the end? How does their role shift?• Who is a minor character that the book could not exist without? Why?
Setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How does the author introduce details of setting? How do you learn about where this story takes place?• What is significant about this story's setting other than time and place? For instance, what are the cultural values, social hierarchies, and unspoken rules?• How does the author make this setting believable? How does the author make an unfamiliar place feel familiar, like you can picture it in your head?• Show how a character is affected or changed by the setting. How does he or she act differently based on different environments?• Why might the author have chosen this setting? How does the setting play a crucial part in how the story unfolds? What aspects of the story could not exist in a different setting?• Describe how the setting impacts multiple characters in different ways.

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Symbols	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What special value do any of the symbols carry for one character, and how is that value different for another character? Show your thinking in a table, or graph if you prefer. • How does the symbol help advance the plot or show character change throughout the book? Give specific evidence to back up your thinking from more than one place in the book. • You found a repeating image. What is the larger theme or idea that the author is getting to by bringing up that image again and again?
Foreshadowing and Flashbacks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Were there clues that led you to believe something would happen? • Share a short excerpt or refer to a passage that includes foreshadowing. Describe how the author plants a seed for something to come. • Looking back at foreshadowing “clues,” how might you notice these on a first read in a future book? What patterns of foreshadowing make you think it’s a hint of what’s to come, not just a random description or detail? • Does the author use shifts in time? Cite a place in the book and explain why the author might have used time shifts there. What new information does the flashback or flashforward provide?
Title	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the title fit the book? Does your understanding of the title change throughout the book? • Is the title of the book a good fit? Why or why not? • If chapters are titled, how do they help you predict what might happen? Is there a pattern to the chapter titles? How do they fit with the book’s title?
Narrator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who is the narrator in the story, and why do you think the author chose this narrator? • Is the book written in first or third person? Share an example from the text to show how you know.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• If the author changed between narrators, who are they? Why do you think the author told the story from multiple perspectives?<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ How do the perspectives rotate, and why do you hear from some voices when you do?
Theme	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What does the main character learn, what realization does he or she have, or how does he or she grow across this text? Explain how that can serve as a theme to this book.• Identify a theme in this book in a complete sentence, not simply a word. What does the author seem to be saying about that theme?• Identify another theme in this book. What does the author want the reader to consider about that big idea?• After you've looked at more than one theme, which is the most important? Why?• What was the author showing about life through this story?• What can be learned from this novel?• Revisit one of your initial theme statements. Does it still hold true? How has your thinking changed about the theme now that you have read more of the book? Revise your theme statement.• What caused the plot to end as it did—luck, hard work, coincidence, skill, ideas, or others' influences? Or some combination thereof? How does the cause of that ending contribute to the overall theme?• Do you see a theme in this book that you have also seen in another book? How might that theme extend to your life? What would your life's "theme" be in relation to the book's?• Is the theme a cliché, or is it realistic? Why?
Language and Word Choice	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does this author use a formal or informal kind of language? What impact does that have on the book? Does it change throughout? Why?• Jot down words that intrigue you as you read today, then look them up on your phone.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If your book has a lot of words that you don't understand, write about how that's affecting your reading. What do you do to help? What parts do you choose to reread or not? Would you choose another book that is this difficult again or not? Why? • Jot down words as you read today that are essential to understanding this text. Explain why those words are particularly significant. • Choose a descriptive passage and jot down the language that makes that passage come to life in your mind. Which nouns, verbs, and adjectives stand out? Why did the author choose those words over others?
Connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What other books have you read by this author? How are they similar, and how are they different? • Finish one of these prompts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This book reminds me of . . . (my life, family, experiences, places I've been) ○ I understand how the character feels because . . . ○ I can connect with . . . because . . . ○ This book is similar to/different from . . . (genre, text structure, theme, plot, character, use of language) ○ This book is similar to/different from . . . (something I've seen on TV, a current event, a newspaper article, a topic in another class, real-world happenings, a conversation) • If the theme of one text carries over into others, how does each author revise that idea in his or her text? • If you see characters that are similar to other characters, do they fall under archetype patterns? Why or why not? • If this book references other texts, stop and jot those references down. Then go back to them and look them up if you need to. Why does the author include those? What do they mean in relation to the larger text?

