

# Young Authors at Work: Literature Response Journals



*Are you looking for ways to help preschoolers comment on and retell information from stories? Literature response journals encourage children to draw, write, and talk about the books you share with them. (See Illinois Early Learning and Development Benchmarks 2.B.ECa, 5.B.ECa, 5.B.ECb, 5.B.ECc, and 19.A.ECe.)*

## Introduce literature response journals after the class has discussed a story.

- Invite the children to put their ideas about the story on paper. Start with some suggestions: “You could draw what you think one of the characters looks like. You can make a drawing of something that happens in the story. You can try writing some words, too.”
- Give each child a pencil and a sheet of paper. You might want to make booklets for them by folding and stapling several sheets of paper, or keep a file folder for each child’s journal pages.
- Begin with 3-5 minutes for responses. Lengthen or shorten the time allotted depending on how long children take to finish.
- Explain that each journal entry includes the date when it was written. Some teachers provide a date stamp that children can use to date their entries. Others print the day’s date where children can see it and copy it.
- If a child wants to write a caption, let him dictate or help him sound out words.
- Let children decorate their file folders or journal covers.

## Use the journals to spark discussion.

- Spend time with each child throughout the week to look at his or her response journal and to talk about what is in it.
- Invite children to share journals with others in the classroom. After a child explains one of her entries, ask, “Who has a question or something to say about Mary’s journal entry?” Make a schedule to assure that each child gets a turn weekly.
- Set aside time for pairs of children to discuss their journal entries.
- Keep your own journal of drawings and captions. Share entries after the children finish theirs, so they do not think they should copy your work.

## Extend the journal activities.

- Invite children to make up new endings to a story.
- If reading a book over several days, ask children to draw what they think will happen next. Let them share their predictions with classmates.
- Encourage detailed entries by offering crayons, colored pencils, or special papers.

## For related Web resources, see “Young Authors at Work: Literature Response Journals” at <http://illinoisearlylearning.org/tips.htm>.

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Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this tip sheet are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Illinois State Board of Education.



29 Children's Research Center  
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign  
51 Gerty Dr. • Champaign, IL 61820-7469  
Telephone: 217-333-1386 • Fax: 217-244-7732  
Toll-free: 877-275-3227  
Email: [iel@illinois.edu](mailto:iel@illinois.edu)  
Internet: <http://illinoisearlylearning.org>

Illinois State  
Board of Education