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**Expressing Opinions about Music**

**Instructions:** Everyone has an opinion. However, it is not a valid opinion unless you can back it up with some good reasons. To help you start to express your opinions in a valid way, fill in the chart regarding how you feel about different types of music. Make sure you fill it in completely so you can more easily complete the writing portion of this assignment.

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| **Song/Artist** | **Do you like this music? (Yes/No)** | **What does it remind you of?** | **How does it make you feel?** |
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**Instructions:** Now that you have expressed your opinion briefly, write one paragraph telling me which

of these fifteen songs you like the best. Make sure you include three reasons to support your opinion.

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**Instructions:** Now write one paragraph telling me which of these selections is your least favorite.

Don’t forget to explain why.

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**Book Reviews**

(not your elementary teachers’ book reports)

This year, to hold you accountable for your outside reading, you will write book reviews. Now, these are not your elementary school book reviews. These will show intelligence, prove you have read the book, and prove that you actually used the gray matter between your ears while you read. Honestly, if you don’t think while you read, you are doing it wrong.

Now, here’s the cool part: you are going to publish your book reviews online.

We are going to use a fairly safe reading platform called Goodreads ([www.goodreads.com](http://www.goodreads.com)). Accounts are free, and I will establish an educational group where you will publish your reviews for your classmates to browse. Once published in the class group, you will receive credit for your review. Each term you are required to complete at least \_\_\_\_\_ reviews. You may do one extra review per term for extra credit. I’m not limiting how many reviews you write or how many books you read, but those are all that is required for this class.

To standardize the quality of review you produce, I will lay out a few guidelines:

In order to receive full credit for each book review, you must

* Read the entire book (not just part of it; not just watch the movie; not just hear about from a friend, etc.).
* Write four (count ‘em: 1-2-3-4) paragraphs as outlined below:
  + ¶1 Summarize the plot in 50 words or less (not as easy as it sounds). Spoilers are allowed (and in some cases encouraged).
  + ¶2 & 3 Analyze specific elements of literature (see other side for these instructions).
  + ¶4 Express your opinion about the book, including evidence to support your claim(s) in more than 50 words.
* Honestly do your own work (You know that I eat plagiarists for lunch.).
* Turn them in on or before the established deadline.

Literary Analysis Instructions

(Paragraphs 2 and 3 of you Book Review)

**Directions:** Choose two of the following literary elements to analyze in your book review. You will want to examine the two most often used, the two that have the most evidence, or the two that you understand best. Your goal is to convince the readers, through this textual evidence, that you know this book well and are therefore a credible source of information regarding its contents. Remember that if you can’t back up your opinions, your voice won’t carry any weight in this world. Interpretation of the work is believable and to show how literary devices reveal meaning and contribute to the overall theme. Select from the following literary elements:

**Characterization** (both character traits and dynamics): How is a major character revealed and how does the character change (if a dynamic character)? It’s usually easiest (but not required) to use the protagonist.

**Symbolism:** What objects are used as symbols, and what ideas or qualities do they represent? How/why are they important to the overall book?

**Figurative Language:** How does the use of figurative language (simile, metaphor, personification, hyperbole) contribute to the overall mood, tone, and meaning of the text?

**Setting:** How do the time, place, and social environment contribute to the overall mood, tone, and meaning of the text?

**Structure:** How did the structure of the text contribute to the overall meaning of the text?

**Point of View:** How did the point of view establish the author’s intentions as far as plot, characterization, setting, etc.?

**Conflict:** Plot conflict is the main problem set up in the beginning, developed in the central part of a novel, and ultimately resolved in the ending of the story. The conflict can be internal (psychological struggle within the mind of the character) or external (a conflict outside a character’s control such as nature, another character, or society etc.). How did the conflict contribute to the overall theme?

**Theme:** The theme is a **generalization** about life or human nature. Certain types of experiences are common to all people everywhere. The **theme** makes some revelation about the subject and should be expressed in a sentence: “Loyalty to a leader is not always noble.”

**Special Note:** *If you have read a work of nonfiction or a collection of some kind, you will note that not all of these points apply to what you have read. There may also be something else that was prevalent in the book but not listed above. If any of these are cases are true, please come discuss with me further options. I’d be glad to work with you to construct a meaningful book review.*

**Book Review Example**

***Moby Dick* by Herman Melville**

*Moby Dick*, a multi-layered whaling tale about Captain Ahab and his ship, *The Pequod*, and their pursuit of the infamously vicious white whale Moby Dick, is told by Ishmael, a sailor aboard the vessel. Intricately woven through whale history and lore, this fatalistic quest eventually ends in disaster.

Melville uses quite a bit of open symbolism throughout the book. You have the classic good vs. evil symbolism with the man vs. the whale. The allegorical aspect of obsession and selfishness is also portrayed in the hunt for the whale. Christianity and heathenism also comes into play. The multiple layers of story and metaphor find roots in Transcendentalist thinking and provide many possible interpretations of the included symbols regarding man and his relation to the universe. I can see why *Moby Dick* gets dissected in so many American literature classes.

Ishamel’s first person narration as a member of the crew gives him a unique perspective in telling the tale of the whale and the monomaniacal captain. He shares his experience as a newcomer to the whaling industry and gives pertinent information as to the why and how to many whaling and general whaling beliefs and practices. His perspective as a scholar and jack-of-all-trades allows the historical aspect to come through. His position in the crew also allows him the opportunity to overhear the discussions above and below deck, especially the soliloquizing of many of the characters, especially the captain and others reveal their true characters. The part Ahab and others find beauty and peace amidst the craze of the hunt at sea would never have been things they would reveal openly to the crew. But as a lookout and part of Ahab’s whaling boat, Ishmael captures all as the lone survivor of this tragedy of man.

I actually enjoyed *Moby Dick* more than I thought I would. Long ago, after reading Melville’s *Billy Budd* in AP English, I swore that I would never read this so-called American masterpiece. Aside from being a kajillion pages long, Melville was dry. However, I really enjoyed the author’s use of description and layering in the novel to supply the reader with the background knowledge to really appreciate the actual whaling aspect. Yes, much of it was tangential and unnecessary, but overall, I found it engaging. Many of the side stories were cool but irrelevant. And I didn’t really need to know all the technical aspects of cetology. It’s impressive to have all the history behind the adventure in a geeky sort of way. True to 19th century literature, though, most of the story was exposition and did not drive the plot forward. It came in lulls and binges—perhaps kind of like the business of whaling. And although I liked *Moby Dick*, a have to add the caveat that I am a literature geek; however, I definitely could not have navigated this tome in high school.

Name \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Period \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**1 Topic = 18 Topics**

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|  |  | **Purpose** | **Possible Writing Topics** |
| Express and Reflect | --  --  -- |
| **One Topic:** | Inform and Explain | --  --  -- |
|  | Evaluate and Judge | --  --  -- |
| Inquire and Explore | --  --  -- |
|  | Analyze and Interpret | --  --  -- |
| Take a Stand/Propose a Solution | --  --  -- |
| Taken from *Write Like This* (Gallagher, 2011) | | |