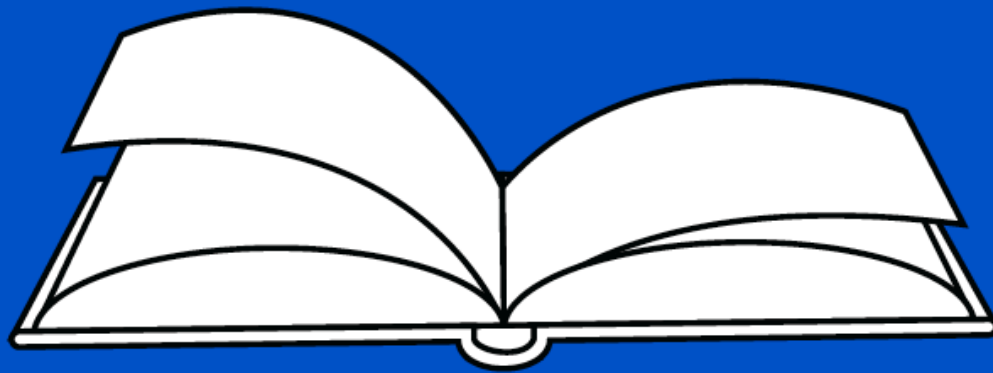


25 RIGOROUS TASKS
TO DO DURING A

novel study

INDEPENDENT - WHOLE CLASS - SMALL GROUP



Middle School English Language Arts
Grades 6 - 7 - 8

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For the Teacher

There are so many incredibly engaging, rigorous end-of-novel projects and assessments out there for students to create based on the whole novel.

But what about *during* the novel?

Whether it's a whole-class novel unit, a small group literature circle, or an independent novel, most students need some sort of accountability for during the actual reading of the novel— the day-to-day reading that must take place before any summative assessment or project can ever happen.

These tasks are also beneficial for students who are already intrinsically motivated to read because now they can pause, reflect, and extend their thinking.

That's the reason for creating this novel study pack of 25 rigorous tasks that can be used *during* the reading of the novel. The idea is that students will be able to create a "product" each day, or each chapter, or for every few chapters of their novels.

And these work with almost any novel out there!

One More Thing...

Figure out when and how students will actually complete these tasks—

- Are they reading the novel at home and completing tasks in class?
- Are they reading the novel in class and working on tasks at home?
- Are they reading in class AND doing a task in class, too?
- Do they know what "counts" as a "good" task response and what doesn't?
- Do they know how and when these tasks will be turned in or graded?

For the Teacher

Here are a few points to consider when implementing these tasks in your classroom to help students stay accountable with their novel studies:

- * They can be used in any order
- * You can let students choose one per chapter or one per day
- * You can also tell students they will choose any ____ tasks per week (number)
- * Let students talk with you and/or with each other about what they're doing
- * Depending on the specific task, you could let students repeat certain ones
- * No, you don't have to grade or read them all!
- * Would it be a good idea to take one of the tasks and do a "good example" and a "bad example" of what a written response should look like based on something else the whole class has read? I would create these as class and then leave them up as examples for students to refer to.
- * How many points will each task be worth? Will students earn a daily grade for each one, or will five tasks done together equal one weekly grade?
- * Will you allow students to change any of the tasks or to create their own tasks if these particular ones give them new ideas about how to interact with their novels? This is a good way to extend the learning opportunities and differentiate even further!
- * Students could combine their tasks into something like a booklet (either on paper or by using technology) to become a major "test" or assessment for the end.
- * As the teacher, would you like to re-word or alter or add to any of the tasks before presenting them to your students?
- * Not every single task card will be perfect for every single novel. It's OK to let students simply never end up using them!

Task #1

Answer the questions here using full, complete sentences.

Be proud of your ideas for each question by using text evidence from the novel to support them!

How does the author (or narrator) describe the setting?

How does the description of the setting help create a certain mood in the story at this point?

What appears to be the most important part of the setting (and why)?

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Task #2

Answer the questions here using full, complete sentences.

Be proud of your ideas for each question by using text evidence from the novel to support them!

Explain several conflicts or problems you see so far.

How can you tell if these are “internal conflicts” or “external conflicts” for the character(s)?

Task #3

Answer the prompts here using full, complete sentences.

Think of a character who said or did something that you're really proud of:

Now, what did _____ say in the novel that made you think "YESS!!! Good for her / him!!!"

Explain what was happening, and what made _____ say or do that which made you so proud!

Copy the actual quote or quotes.

What does this show about the character?

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Task #4

Answer the question here using full, complete sentences.

Be proud of your ideas by using text evidence from the novel to support them!

There's a saying that goes something like this:
"People can be mean. Don't take it personally. It says nothing about you, but a lot about them."

Where do you see this happening in the novel?

Task #5

Answer the prompts here using full, complete sentences and examples from the text.

So far, is the book what you thought it would be?

Look at the front cover, read the back cover, etc.
Explain your thoughts about this question.

Task #6

Answer the questions here using full, complete sentences. You may need to do some Googling for this one!

Benjamin Franklin once said, “Either write something worth reading, or do something worth writing about.”

What do you know about the author of your book? Learn what you can about the author and summarize the parts that might have to do with where the idea for this book came from, or perhaps the parts of the author’s life that have something to do with the novel. Be sure to write down the names of the websites you use to find this information. Don’t copy anything word-for-word. Just summarize what you find that has to do with the novel.

Task #7

Answer the prompt here using full, complete sentences and examples from the text. Be proud of your thoughts and use text evidence for support!

“Some might say we lose ourselves in good books.
In truth, we find ourselves there.”

- *Cassandra King*

In what way have you lost yourself in the book
you're reading?

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Task #8

Answer the question here using full, complete sentences.
Be proud of your ideas by using text evidence from the novel to support them!

Think about one of the characters that stands out to
you in the novel. What do you want to say to him or
to her at this point in the story?

Task #9

Answer the prompt here using full, complete sentences and examples from the text. Be proud of your thoughts and use text evidence for support!

Who or what is most surprising to you right now?

Explain the full situation and what makes it all so shocking or so surprising to you as a reader.

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Task #10

Answer the question here using full, complete sentences.
Be proud of your ideas by using text evidence from the novel to support them!

Secrets make up a significant part of a good novel.

Which secret seems to be the most important one at this point in the novel?

Who in the book is involved in the secret?

What are the different things that could happen if this secret is discovered by others in the book?

Task #11

Answer the prompt here using full, complete sentences and examples from the text. Be proud of your thoughts and use text evidence for support!

Great novels involve major events or major characters going through changes.

Think about where you are in the novel.

Explain changes in characters or in the setting that you see.

How might these changes effect the plot of the story?

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Task #12

Answer the question here using full, complete sentences. Be proud of your ideas by using text evidence from the novel to support them!

In a well-written novel (or movie!), certain things begin to stand out as symbols or as having symbolic meaning. What is a symbol you're noticing in the novel right now?

Task #13

Answer the question here using full, complete sentences and examples from the text. Be proud of your thoughts and use text evidence for support!

When you think about what's happening in the plot so far...

When you think about what decisions the characters are making...

What theme (life lesson) are noticing as a reader?

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Task #14

Answer the prompt here using full, complete sentences. Be proud of your ideas by using text evidence from the novel to support them!

The theme is the life lesson or the moral of the story.

Whether you're finishing the novel or not, what is a life lesson the main character is trying to learn?

Find two quotes from anywhere in the novel that supports this theme, and explain your ideas about them.

Task #15

Answer the prompt here using full, complete sentences and examples from the text. Be proud of your thoughts and use text evidence for support!

A good book will have several really important, pivotal scenes. Think of an important scene (so far) and prepare / practice a dramatic reading of that scene.

Think about the difference between simply reading the scene aloud and performing a dramatic reading of the scene. Prepare to perform it for the class or for a small group in the class.

Write about what made you choose that particular scene, and describe HOW you will go about making it dramatic!

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Task #16

Answer the prompt here using full, complete sentences. Be proud of your ideas by using text evidence from the novel to support them!

Think about cause and effect... actions and reactions...

Describe a cause / effect or action / reaction that you see in the novel.

Task #17

Answer the question here using full, complete sentences and examples from the text. Be proud of your thoughts and use text evidence for support!

There's a quote that goes like this:

“FEAR has two meanings:
Forget Everything And Run
or
Face Everything And Rise...
The choice is yours.”

How does this quote apply to what's happening in your novel, and what the characters are doing?

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Task #18

Answer the imaginative prompt here using full, complete sentences. Be proud of your ideas by using text evidence from the novel to support them!

Fill in the sentence and see where it takes you, based on events in the novel so far:

“I wonder what would happen if....”

After you finish the above sentence, write about the possible results based on what you know about the characters at this point in your reading.

Task #19

Answer the prompt here using full, complete sentences and examples from the text. Be proud of your thoughts and use text evidence for support!

Interrogation!

Pretend to be one of the characters and imagine that other characters are asking you *tough* questions about things you've done or said in the book.

List the questions you might get in an interrogation from those who don't understand you, or are your enemies.

Then react to those questions the way your character would realistically react based on his or her personality.

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Task #20

Answer the prompt here using full, complete sentences. Be proud of your ideas by using text evidence from the novel to support them!

Sometimes we surprise ourselves! Characters in novels (or movies!) can surprise us with their responses to events or to other characters, too.

Write about a character in the book who has a surprising response (either in words or in actions). Explain what's so surprising about it, and what it shows about that character's personality.

Task #21

Answer the prompt here using full, complete sentences and examples from the text. Be proud of your thoughts and use text evidence for support!

In real life, we don't always agree with the decisions others make. Sometimes, we even regret our own decisions.

Think about a decision one of the characters makes in the book that you completely disagree with.

Explain the situation, the decision, and why you disagree with it.

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Task #22

Answer the prompt here using full, complete sentences.
Be proud of your ideas by using text evidence from the novel to support them!

In real life, we don't always handle certain situations in the best way. The same thing happens in books, too.

Write about a situation in the book that you, in real life, would have handled in a totally different way.

Task #23

Answer the prompt here using full, complete sentences and examples from the text. Be proud of your thoughts and use text evidence for support!

Think of two characters or two settings in your novel. Write about the similarities and differences in these two characters' personalities or in the two settings (whichever you choose)

How do these similarities and differences effect what's happening in the novel (the plot)?

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Task #24

Answer the prompt here using full, complete sentences. Be proud of your ideas by using text evidence from the novel to support them!

Copy a line or a few lines from the novel that really “gets” to you in some way.

Now, explain why it's so meaningful to you and why it could be one of those things you really think about and actually remember later on, long after you've finished reading.

Task #25

Answer the prompt here using full, complete sentences.
Be proud of your ideas by using text evidence from the novel to support them!

Sometimes the things we read make us angry. We're angry that something happened, or that someone thinks a certain way, or that the writer used words we find offensive.

What part of the novel makes you feel angry?

Explain what it is that makes you feel this way.

Why do you think the author did this? What would be a good next step for you as a reader and as a human being?

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