

## Responses to Literature – Instructional Ideas

### The Hiking Trip, *California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE) Guide for Students, English/Language Arts*

One type of response to literature is through character analysis. This lesson focuses on recognizing and forming insights into a character’s behavior, and analyzing personality, emotions and actions. This lesson uses the text and prompt for “The Hiking Trip,” from the *California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE) Guide for Students, English/Language Arts*.

#### Prewriting:

Begin by asking students to write on one of the following topics:

1. Describe a time when you overcame a fear or obstacle in your life. Be sure to include what emotions you felt at the time.
2. Describe a story you have read or a movie you have seen where a character overcomes a fear or obstacle. Be sure to include what emotions he or she seemed to feel.

It may be necessary to help students come up with topics by brainstorming some possibilities on the board or telling an experience of your own.

Ask students to share their responses aloud. As they read, make a chart/list/cluster on the board of the fears/obstacles described and the ways students overcame them.

#### Preliminary Reading:

Students then read “The Hiking Trip”, a story from the sample CAHSEE about a boy who overcame fears and obstacles. After their reading, discuss what specific obstacles and fears he encountered, how he overcame them, and how his experiences were similar or different from theirs. The goal of this first reading is to provide a basic understanding of what happened, why it happened, who was involved, and what the resolution was. Students may also consider what the author’s purpose may have been.

### Previewing the Writing Task:

Read the prompt together, using either a projected overhead transparency or their copy of “The Hiking Trip”.

#### Writing Task:

In the story, “The Hiking Trip,” the reader learns about the main character, Jeff. Jeff’s personality and emotions are revealed through the actions and dialogue presented in the story.

Write an essay in which you describe the personality and emotions of Jeff, the main character. How do his personal characteristics add to the events in the story? How does the author reveal this information about Jeff in the story? Use details and examples from the story to support your ideas.

Then look together at each individual sentence of the prompt and highlight key words. Some key words are *describe*, *reveal*, *personal characteristics*, *support*, and *details and examples*. Ask the class to rewrite the prompt in their own words.

Have students share some of their rewrites. Write their responses on an overhead transparency, draft paper, or the chalkboard.

Make a checklist of what a good response to this prompt would have to include. For example:

- \_\_\_\_\_ details that show Jeff’s personality
- \_\_\_\_\_ details that show Jeff’s emotions
- \_\_\_\_\_ specific examples from the text
- \_\_\_\_\_ how Jeff’s characteristics affect events in the story

### Reading for Details:

As students read the story a second time, ask them to keep these criteria in mind, and highlight or underline what they consider to be important details about Jeff’s personality and emotions. Model this way of reading and highlighting for details on an overhead before they read individually, using the first three paragraphs of *The Hiking Trip*.

After everyone has read the passage, discuss what details they marked as *important*. Make a list of words on the board to describe Jeff’s personality and what emotions they saw him reveal in the passage. Look back to their checklists of what a good response should include. Emphasize especially “how his characteristics affect events in the story” as they conclude this final prewriting activity.

Writing:

Allow a full class period for their writing in response to the sample test prompt and collect their essays. Essays should not be taken home for revision.

Follow-up:

Using the overhead projector, show pre-selected essay models from student samples, either anonymously from the class or from those included with this lesson plan. Discuss with the class whether or not these essays responded to the criteria previously listed. Comment on what works well in the essay and what is in need of improvement.

Have students get into groups. Give each group two or three sample essays to discuss in terms of the criteria. Have the groups write a response to the writer explaining whether or not the writer met the established criteria. Discuss their findings with the whole class.

Pass back student essays. Allow students an opportunity to reflect on their own writing, examining what they need to do to improve the essay. For additional practice, have students revise essay.



## Hiking Trip

"I never wanted to come on this stupid old hiking trip anyway!" His voice echoed, shrill and panicked, across the narrow canyon. His father stopped, chest heaving with the effort of the climb, and turned to look at the boy.

"This is hard on you, son, I know. But you've got to come through with courage and a level head."

"But I'm scared! I don't even want to have courage!" he retorted. He jerked his head the other way and wiped his eyes across his arm.

"If not courage, fine," his father replied sternly. "Then have enough love for your brother to think this through!" He pulled a bandana from his back pocket and tied it around his neck. Then he gently placed his hand on the boy's shoulder and continued, more softly this time. "Now, I don't know if I can make it without stopping every so often. And we just don't have the time to stop. You're young, but you're strong and fast. Do you remember the way back from here to the road, if you had to go alone?"

Jeff flashed back to the agonizing scene of his seventeen-year-old brother at their campsite that morning. He'd been bitten by a snake yesterday during a rough hike through very rocky terrain. By the time they returned to their tents, he was limping badly. Then this morning he couldn't put on his boots, and the pain seemed to be getting worse. He needed medical attention right away, so leaving him there was their only choice.

"Jeffrey? Jeffrey, could you do it? Could you make it to the road without me if you had to?"

Jeff blinked and looked past his father's eyes to the end of the canyon, several miles away. He nodded slowly as the path and the plan began to take hold in his mind. "What was the name of that little town we stopped in to get matches, Dad?"

His father smiled and replied, "Flint. After we left Flint, we parked at the side of the road a few miles out of town. When you see which way our car is facing, you'll know that the town is back the other direction." Jeff

thought about this and then nodded. They both drank water and then continued scrambling over the rocks.

Nothing was as pretty as it had seemed when they first hiked this way to their campsite. Before, the boulders and rocks had been an interesting challenge. Now, they were obstacles that threatened their footing and their velocity. Overhanging limbs had earlier been natural curiosities in the cliffs. But now they were nature's weapons, slapping and scratching the boy and the man who crashed by and pushed through as quickly as they could.

Stone by stone, they made their way up the canyon. Jeff's father grew smaller and smaller in the distance. "He must be stopping a lot," Jeff thought. He waved to him from a bend in the canyon wall. His father waved back. Jeff turned and made the final ascent up an easier slope toward the road and spotted his father's car. He lurched toward it, half stumbling, and leaned on the hood, breathless.

"Can't stop," he thought. "Mark's in big trouble. Gotta keep going." The fast, loud thudding in his ears was deafening, and as he pulled himself upright, he was surprised as a car sped by, heading toward Flint. "Hey, mister!" he shouted, waving both arms. He began to walk, faster and faster until he was jogging. Then he quickly crossed the highway and broke into a full-speed run, holding his left arm straight out, his thumb up.

His chest was burning with every breath when he suddenly heard several loud honks from behind. He

turned as the brakes squealed and saw "Bob's Towing & Repair, Flint" right behind him. "Jump in, boy! What's up?" Jeff explained between gasps as the truck picked up speed. The driver reached for his two-way radio as soon as he heard about Mark. "Better get the helicopter in there," he seemed to be shouting into his hand. But Jeff wasn't sure about that because everything got fuzzy and then went black and quiet.

Hours later, Jeff opened his eyes to find strange surroundings and his father on a chair nearby.

"You're a hero, son," his father said with a smile. "You saved Mark."

"What happened?" Jeff asked through a wide yawn. "Where are we?"

"This is a motel room in Flint. You made it into town and sent the helicopter into the canyon after Mark. I can't tell you how happy I was when I saw it overhead. I'm so proud of you!"

Jeff sat up suddenly. "Where's Mark? Is he OK?"

"They airlifted him out and got him to the hospital. His leg's still in bad shape, but he's going to be just fine in a couple of days. Thanks to you, son."

Jeff's worried face relaxed as his father spoke. "How about you, Dad? How did you get out?"



"Well, I finally hiked myself out of that canyon and to the road. I won't be going back there any time soon. That's for sure. Anyway, I couldn't see the car, and as I headed for Flint I got lucky and was able to hitch a ride from a fellow named Bob in a tow truck."

Jeff laughed out loud. "I guess Bob makes a good living going up and down that road. I hope you gave him a good tip, Dad!"