

JBHS READING RECORD

Grade 10 Required Summer Reading Response

MODEL

As you complete your summer reading books, write a brief response to each one. In paragraph form, please respond to the following questions. Be certain to use direct quotations and specific examples from the book to support your ideas. Since you will be using your responses as a basis for discussing the book with your classmates at the start of school, be certain your responses have enough specific information to aid you in your discussion. You may also want to write a brief plot summary to help you remember details about the book.

Book selection #1 (from the Grade 10 Required Reading List with an asterisk): *Siddhartha*

(1) After reading *Siddhartha*, I re-evaluated my own way of living and what I would like to do in the future. The most memorable parts of the book are some of the obstacles Siddhartha has to overcome on his journey toward attaining Nirvana. I was surprised at his maturity when he begins to realize that, if he were to quench his thirst for knowledge, he would have to leave his family. His departure from his friend Govinda and his decision to learn from himself instead of becoming part of a learning order signify great changes in his views of the world. His experiences helped me understand the importance of simplicity in our lives.

(2) Siddhartha is a strong, deep character who is always seeking and curious, but almost never satisfied. When he meets the holy, illustrious Buddha, the being who has supposedly attained Nirvana, he says, “You have learned nothing through teachings . . . To nobody . . . can you communicate words and teachings of what happened to you in your hour of enlightenment” (33), showing his strength and constant desire for learning. I believe Hesse uses this strong character as the real substance, the real theme in his book, to show us inner strength and the power of simplicity.

(3) This book definitely reveals that, for humans, greed is a hard force to overcome. When Siddhartha lives in town, he is transformed from a poor, wise man to a greedy, rich one, and his physical appearance changes to reflect greed’s destructive impact on him: “Gradually his face assumed the expressions which are so often found among rich people, the expressions of discontent, of sickliness, of displeasure, of idleness, and of lovelessness. Slowly, the soul sickness of the rich crept over him” (78). On the other hand, the novel also shows that we share the ability to be persistent, just like Siddhartha in his quest to attain Nirvana.

(4) To me, a good book is one that makes the reader think for himself, and *Siddhartha* made me do just that. After reading it, I re-evaluated my own way of living, and what I would like to do in the future. The apparent joint themes related to simplicity and self-discovery impacted me very deeply. Thinking about the “soul sickness” Siddhartha suffers makes me rethink the state of our own nation and economic beliefs of money being the all-important, all-consuming pursuit. Seeing Siddhartha trying to learn on his own made me realize that I, too, would like to try all sorts of different experiences and take from them what I can. I believe that learning in places other than the classroom is extremely important, and this book re-emphasizes these beliefs.

Overall, this student’s response demonstrates advanced comprehension of *Siddhartha*, along with thoughtful reflection about and analysis of it. The student thoughtfully reflects on the novel by touching on major ideas like character and theme. The student personally evaluates the book and uses a specific detail in the form of a quotation to justify his opinion. The student’s score for this response is a solid 5.

Many thanks to Ian Makowske, Class of 2007, for his original analysis of *Siddhartha*.