

JBHS READING RECORD

Grade 9 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 9 Required Reading List with an asterisk): *A Tree Grows In Brooklyn*

- (1) There are many things about this book that I'd like to discuss. Francie Nolan was my favorite character because of her never-ending fight for what she wanted in life. Despite the fact that she doesn't have much, it still manages to be enough for her. Not only does she do her best in school; she actually likes it. She has a passion for learning, and I think that's why she accomplishes so much throughout her life. I would also like to talk about the major theme of this novel as well: growing up creates many challenges, particularly in an impoverished neighborhood with little money.
- (2) One thing I think others might find a bit confusing is when Francie says that the tree in her yard "likes poor people" (4). I think the tree is symbolic, as it survives without much food, light, or soil and still manages to live despite these harsh conditions. The tree represents Francie because she also has very little, yet survives on what she has. She, like the tree, demonstrates great endurance throughout the book to make the rest of her life better.
- (3) This book scored a perfect ten on my personal enjoyment scale. While reading this book, I was completely hooked. The details in the book made me feel like I was in the slums of Williamsburg, Brooklyn, during the early 1900s as Francie and Neely rummage through garbage bins, surrounded by concrete and decrepit brick tenements. Smith also gives the reader clear insight into what her characters are thinking and feeling throughout the book, making it easy to get to know the characters. The message she sends through quotes like "A person who pulls himself up from a low environment via the boot-strap route has two choices. Having risen above his environment, he can forget it; or, he can rise above it and never forget it and keep compassion in his heart for those he's left behind him in the cruel up climb" (129) inspired me. My only criticism about this book is that Smith should have shortened the explanation of the Nolan and Rommely family tree because, for a while, it lost my interest.
- (4) *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* has opened my eyes to see a world I know little about, and the effect this book had on me is an important life lesson for everyone: we all need to be more thankful for what we have. I am fortunate enough to live in a nice house, have enough food to eat, and get many things that I want. I take these things for granted many times. This book has shown me what it is like to live without all these luxuries. In Francie's life, every single penny counted to save up for what she and her family wanted. They didn't waste a thing they had. Taking this into consideration, we can become more aware of what we have and how fortunate we really are.

Overall, this student's response demonstrates advanced comprehension of *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*, 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 her opinion. The student's score for this response is a solid 5.

Many thanks to Simran Jain, Class of 2007, for her original analysis of A Tree Grows in Brooklyn.