

The Advantages of Reading Responses for Young Learners

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Abstract

Reading is a skill which can help young learners gain information as much as possible. It is important to arouse their interests in reading because reading has a lot of benefits. There are three main reasons why the mastery of this ability will help young learners empower themselves maximally. The first reason is that reading fulfills our mind and soul. The second, reading is such a relaxing activity which also bridges young learners to reach out the world beyond them. The last but not least, reading sharpens our thinking process.

Considering the above mentioned importance of reading activity, it is fruitful to introduce the young learners to the activity. Young learners get bored easily; therefore the approach has to be interesting so that they can be more than attracted but immersed in the activity. One simple yet attractive way to familiarize the young learners with the reading habit is to create responses after they read. Meanwhile what they read has to be interesting. In this study, the write chooses story books, and the writer would like to share his ideas and experiences about the influence of writing reading response on young learners' interest in reading. For this purpose, the writer observed his own private student, a young learner of English. The writer took six reading responses of her writing activities over a course of five months, and the writer found a very interesting fact that his own private student improved her writing skill tremendously, progressing from writing with lacks of details to write with ample details.

Key words: Reading Responses, Reading Interest, Young Learners

Introduction

In this modern era, English becomes one of the most importance languages in the world. It consists of four skills, reading, listening, speaking and writing. Among the four skills, reading is the one which can help young learners gain

information as much as possible. Through reading, young learners get various knowledge as well as entertainment.

Nowadays, the interest of reading books especially in young learners has unfortunately decreased. It happens because of their environment and their addiction of playing gadget all the time. Based on the survey as quoted from *Antara*, it is said that the interest of reading of the Indonesian people is the second lowest in the world. The interest of reading books written in Indonesian is quite low, let alone reading books in English or in other languages.

It is important to arouse their interests in reading because reading has many benefits. Here are some of the benefits of reading according to http://www.teenink.com/opinion/school_college/article/382103/Benefits-of-Reading/

Reading is a skill which can help young learners gain information as much as possible. It is important to arouse their interests in reading because reading has a lot of benefits. There are three main reasons why the mastery of this ability will help young learners empower themselves maximally. The first reason is that reading fulfills our mind and soul. The second, reading is such a relaxing activity which also bridges for young learners to reach out the world beyond them. The last but not least, reading sharpens our thinking process.

The first reason why reading is so beneficial in our lives is that a book could motivate our mind and soul. There is something about stopping to focus on words

during reading that is instantly relaxing. Maybe it is just staying still in a chair, something that does not seem to happen often in our lives.

The second, reading is relaxing and it is also a way for young learners to reach out to the world. Reading should be encouraged among young learners at an early age. This is significant because there are numerous benefits that young learners acquired from reading. On the one hand, reading also reports knowledge and information to their brains. It is no secret that reading increases young learners' vocabulary and spelling more than talking or direct teaching. Sometimes, reading forces us to look at words that we might not have seen or heard in our lives.

The third, reading improves our thinking process. Reading books require readers to think and imagine about different details in the book such as characters and plot; this provides us to improve our thinking process. Repeating a habit of reading and persuading the brain to be more receive more information will give us a great beneficial. It also makes the readers to focus on what they are reading for long periods. Since the readers must concentrate in order to read, they will improve their concentration and thinking abilities.

Teachers have to find out another way to increase young learners' interest in reading. One of the simple ways is to familiarize young learners with reading story books. The books that should be read start from their favorite ones, for example fairy tales, fable, legend, biography and etc. This way is expected to encourage them to read books.

The challenge lies on how to arouse the interest of the people in reading. The most effective way is to start introducing the habit from a very young age. This is important because reading is the window to the world. Before young learners are able to reap the benefits they can acquire from reading, they need to be motivated first.

Considering the above mentioned importance of reading activity, it is fruitful to introduce the young learners to the activity. Young learners get bored easily; therefore the approach has to be interesting so that they can be more than attracted but immersed in the activity. One simple yet attractive way to familiarize the young learners with the reading habit is to create responses after they read. Meanwhile what they read has to be interesting. In this study, the writer chooses story books, and the writer would like to share his ideas and experiences about the influence of writing reading response on young learners' interest in reading. For this purpose, the writer observed his own private student, a young learner of English. The writer took six reading responses of her writing activities over a course of five months, and the writer found a very interesting fact that own private student improved her writing skill tremendously, progressing from writing with lacks of details to writing with ample details.

Definition of Reading

Reading is an activity to develop an understanding of a subject or topic. Reading is an essential skill that individuals need to master in order to enrich our

knowledge. Reading keeps individuals informed, up-to-date, and thinking. Reading is both gaining and exchanging process. It is also a process in which the reader is searching for the relationship of several ideas in the text. Reading is a source of enjoyment for individuals (Li and Wilhelm, 2008).

After reading, it is a very important for an individual to find out the concept of comprehension that may be even more important. A person needs the ability to understand what the writer is going to communicate.

Reading comprehension can be defined as the ability to understand a text, to analyze the information, and to clarify what the writer is stating. “No one process defines reading comprehension by itself, but together they provide a fairly accurate account of the processes required for fluent reading.” (Grabe and Stoller, 2002:17).

The Importance of Reading

According to www.nationalreadingcampaign.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/ReadingFacts1.pdf, there are four reasons why reading is important.

The first reason is reading is a lifelong source of pleasure for individuals. It means that in order to get our lifelong pleasure, we can do it by reading as many as book as possible.

The second reason reading empowers the critical thinking skills of every individual. Reading lays the foundation for future learning and it increases our self-worth as well. It gives us the capacity for critical thinking. Everybody is able to use their critical thinking; the level of which depends on reasoning which one derives from reading.

The third reason is reading can enhance empathy and lead to greater understanding of people who are different from us. The need of understanding people towards us is important. One of the ways to enhance and make our understanding greater is through reading itself.

The Characteristic of Young Learners

Teaching young learners is totally different from teaching higher level students. It is not easy to do because they are still very young and the teachers should raise them in joining the learning process. The teachers should make an interesting learning activity to the students in order to make them understand well and the learning process can run well too. Young learners are students who study in elementary school. According to Rixon in "*Young learners of English: some research perspectives*" (1999). Young learners are students whose ages range from 5 to 12 years old.

To be able to teach English to young learners, their characteristics should be put into consideration. Brown (2000) states that there are five factors that may help teachers teach English to young learners.

(1).Intellectual Developments

Intellectual development assists the teachers to teach young learners since they are still in an intellectual stage from what Piaget (1997) called “Concrete Operation”.

(2).Attention Span

The length of attention span of young learners is different from the one of adults as it is much shorter. It is, then, necessary to attract students’ attention as to lengthen their attention span. As their attention span becomes longer, it is will be easier for them to absorb difficult materials. Besides, the teachers should try to make the class more productive and active.

(3).Sensory Input

The teachers has to design the process of teaching to stimulate young learners well beyond the visual and auditory modes

(4).Affective Factors

Young learners are so creative in language form but they still have less confidence. The teachers should help their potential barrier of learning.

(5). Authentic, Meaningful Language

The teachers has to know that young learners are fewer enthusiasts to put up with language that does not provide immediate rewards for them. Therefore, teaching young learners is an art of its own.

In addition, Wendy A. Scott and Lisbeth H. Ytreberg(1990) state that the characteristics of young learners related to learning are:

- (1). They can explain the activities that they have done.
- (2). They usually know what they are going to do.
- (3). They can give opinion about something based on what they are thinking.
- (4). They can give reason logically.
- (5). They can use their imagination very well.
- (6). They usually copy their mother tongue intonation.
- (7). They can easily understand the interaction around them.

The Advantages of Reading Responses for Young Learners

The advantages of writing book summary for elementary school students as quoted from <http://www.readingrockets.org/strategies/summarizing> are:

Firstly, it helps young learners learn to determine essential ideas and strengthen important details that support them. With the practice of writing responses, young learners are trained to understand what the book is about and to

interpret it. It happens because the essential ideas that they find in the text can strengthen their understanding of the passage.

Secondly, it enables young learners to focus on key words and phrases of an assigned text that are worth noting and remembering. After writing responses book, it makes easier for the readers to find out key words and important phrases to strengthen their understanding of the book.

Lastly, it teaches young learners how to take a large selection of text and reduce it to the main points for more concise understanding. When the young learners finish writing responses, they are usually able to retell the whole section of the passage into the simple one in their written responses.

How to Write Reading Responses

Based on <http://www.kean.edu/~cpdonova/HowtoWriteaBookAnalysis.pdf> there is no right way to write a reading responses. Reading responses should reflect the ideas and the opinions of the writer. A good reading responses start from 1 page to 10 pages. The above procedures are the most common standard to write reading responses; below there are some steps of to start writing reading responses.

Fiction (above all, do not give away the story)

Character

- From what sources are the characters drawn?
- What is the author's attitude toward his characters?
- Does character development occur?

Theme

- What is/are the major theme(s)?
- How are they revealed and developed?
- Is the theme traditional and familiar, or new and original?

Plot

- How are the various elements of plot (eg, introduction, suspense, climax, and conclusion) handled?
- To what extent, and how, is accident employed as a complicating and/or resolving force?
- Is there a sub-plot and how is it related to the main plot?

Setting

- What is the setting and does it play a significant role in the work?

Biography

- Does the book give a "full-length" picture of the subject?

- What phase of the subject's life receives greatest treatment and is this treatment justified?
- What is the point of view of the author?
- How is the subject matter organized: chronologically, retrospectively, etc.?
- What source materials were used in the preparation of the biography?
- Is the work documented?
- What important new facts about the subject's life are revealed in the book?

The Effects of Writing Reading Responses

The writer observed his private young learner who is a seven-year-old girl studying in the second grade of Surabaya Intercultural School last year. Her English teacher usually taught reading through writing reading responses as explained by the writer before.

The teacher asked the students to borrow three books from the library and they had to choose one of their favorites to be written as their reading response and the students' response should be submitted on the following week. Then the teacher asked the students to write their response in reading response journal book. The first page of the book, there some questions to guide the students to make reading response. The students had to choose one of the questions in their reading response journal book. After that the students started making their reading response and they submitted the reading response journal book and finally the teacher gave responses to their writing.

When the students made their reading response, there were some reading response questions in their reading response journal book.

Reading Response Questions:

1. Why did you choose this book?
2. Is this a fiction or nonfiction book? How can you tell?
3. What was your favorite part? Why?
4. How did the main character feel at the beginning and the end of the book?
5. Do you think the setting was good for the book? Why or why not?
6. How would you describe the main character?
7. What was the problem?
8. What happened at the beginning, middle and end of the story?
9. What did you learn from this book?
10. Did you like the book? Why or why not?
11. Do you think the illustrations match the story? Why or why not?
12. Were any parts of the book funny? What made them funny?
13. Do you think the main character made good decisions? Why or why not?
14. Would you change anything about the book? What would you change and why?
15. Write letter to a character in the book. Include questions for the character to answer.
16. What do you think was the most important event in the book so far? Why?

Figure 1.

In figure 1, the students could choose one of the questions as their main idea to write reading response. They could choose one of the questions freely. When all of the reading response questions had been used, the students could choose the same questions again.

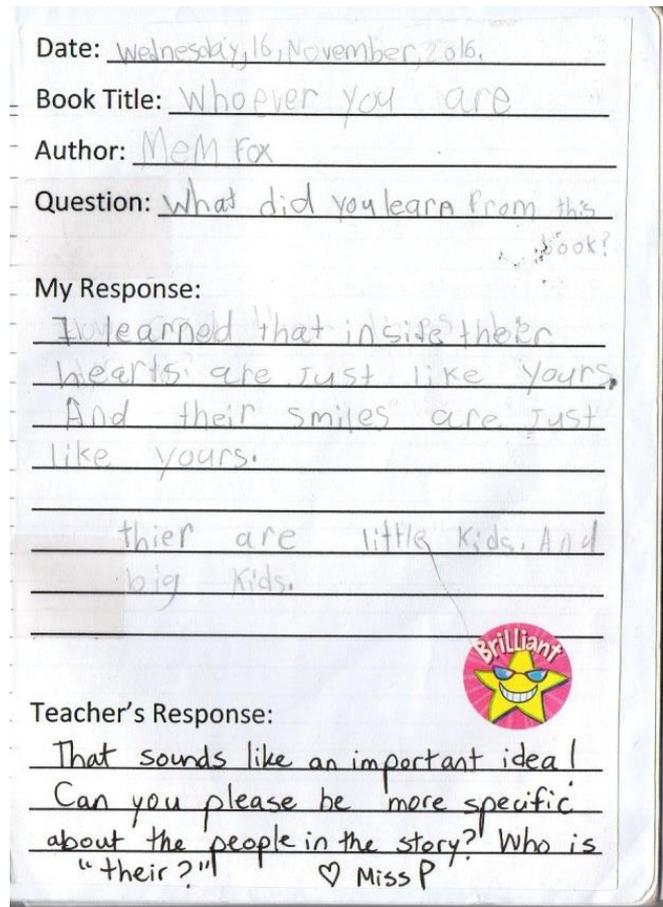


Figure 2.

In figure 2, we know that the writer's student made her first reading response because the steps to write reading response were explained. Then her English teacher gave comments that she needed to explain more specifically about the people in the story. Here, we can find that she tended to use her intellectual development or we called as concrete stage where she only focused to write based on the question that she had chosen.

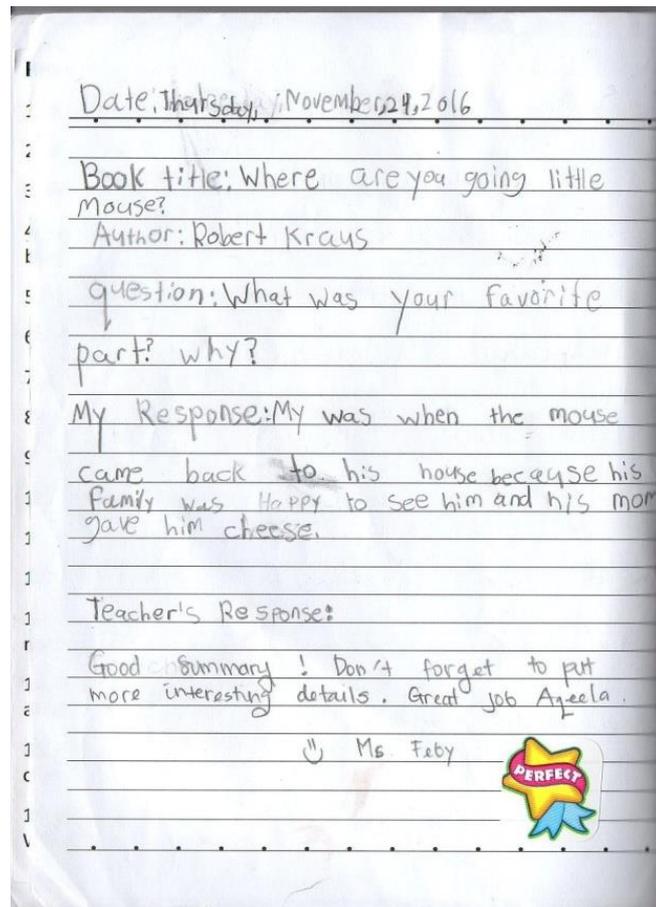


Figure 3.

In figure 3, we know that the teacher's response was she needed to put more details. Here, we can find out that she tried to develop her affective factors however the teacher should help her in improving her potential of writing reading response.

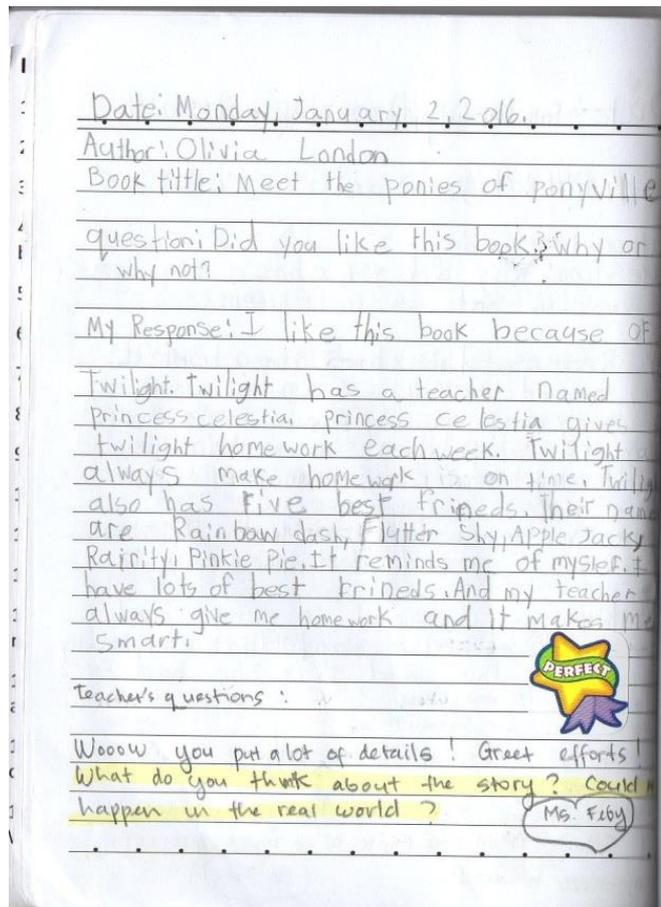


Figure 4.

In figure 4, we can know that the teacher's response was surprising because she put a lot of details the story. Here, from her sensory input including maximize the auditory and visual senses through her imagination.

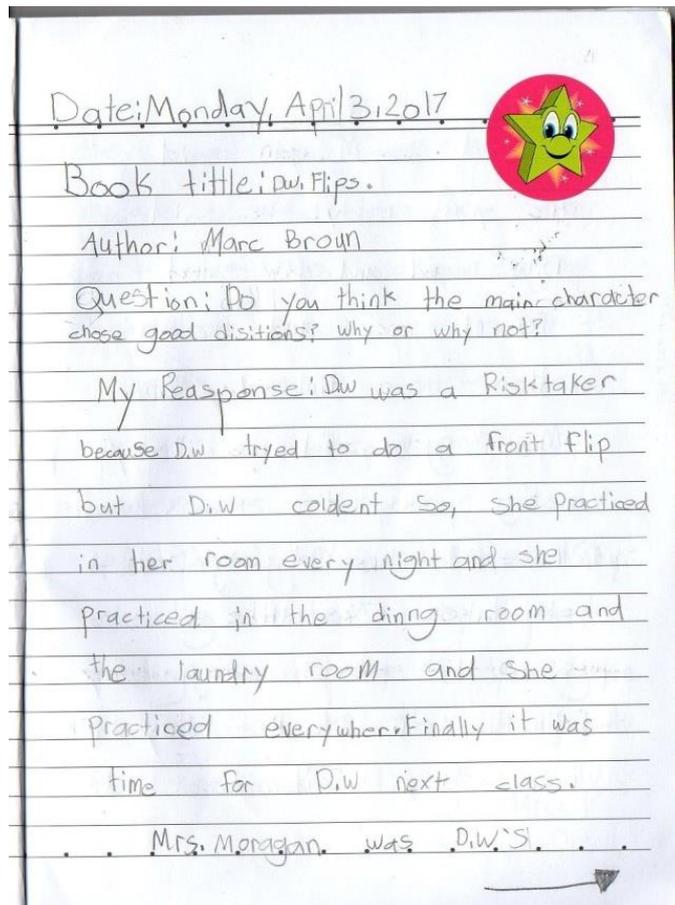


Figure 5(a).

teacher. And Mrs. Morgan said
are you ready? she said.
D.W. jumped and D.W. rolled
forward once and the twice
then three times! Now
Mrs. Morgan said we will try
something new. it's back won
roll said Mrs. Morgan. Say a
risk taker acts like a
person that risks when they
fail like a scientist they risk
when they fail because

Figure 5(b).

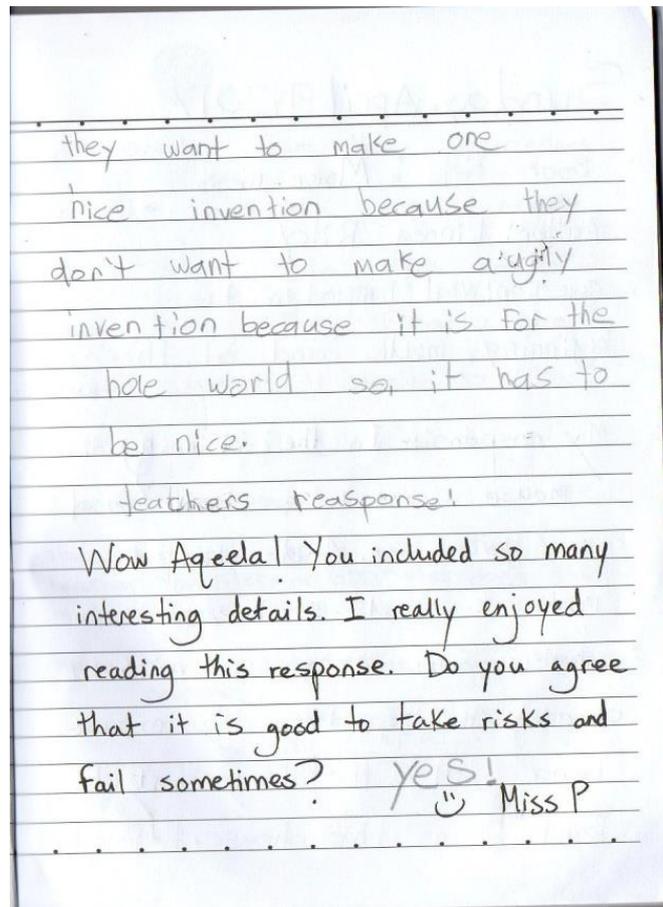


Figure 5(c).

In figure 5, we know that the teacher's response enjoyed reading her reading response since she included so many interesting details. In this reading response, she showed the development of giving reason logically in making the story in a good order. She was also able to explain what she had read very well.

Date: Monday, 22 May, 201

Book title: Jamberry

Author: Bruce Degen

Question: What was your favorite part? Why?

My Response: My favorite part was when a bear and a little boy were riding a little boat and the little boat was full of blueberry's then they found a waterfall and also the little boy was surprised but the bear was really happy.

Meanwhile the little boat flipped over and this time the bear and the little boy was really

Figure 6(a).

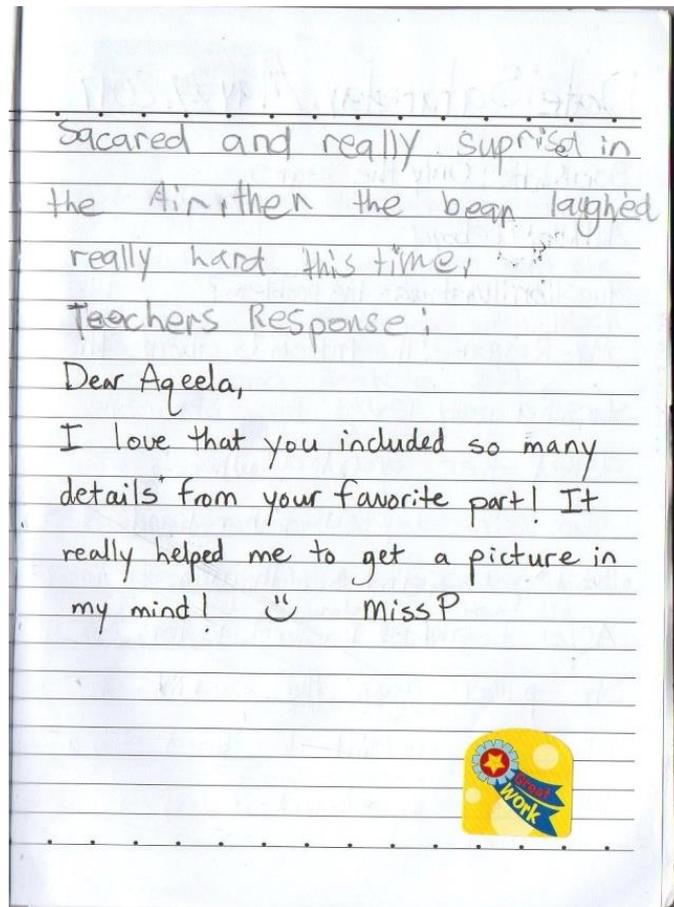


Figure 6(b).

In figure 6, we know her teacher loved her reading response because she put so many details from her favorite part. Here, she used the authentic and meaningful language in her reading response. This reading response showed us her highly attention span about the assignment. As a result, it helped her teacher imagine the story.

Date: Saturday, May 27, 2017

Book title: Only the stars

Author: Dee Boyd

Question: What was the problem?

My Response: The problem is about the stars. Tia really loves the stars. She asked her grandma "where's the stars in daytime?" Her grandma said "you can't see them in daytime." After breakfast Tia went to her room. She pulled down the curtains she pulled the curtains to hard so a little part ripped and it had a

Figure 7(a).

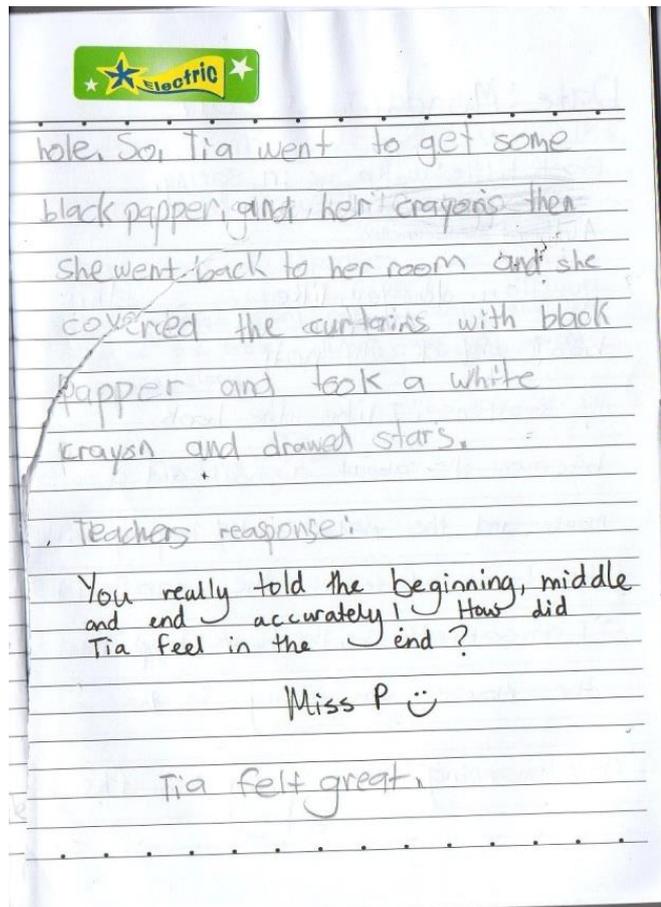


Figure 7(b).

From figure 7, we know that the response from her teacher proud of her that she made her reading response from the beginning, middle, and end accurately. She was finally improving her ability in comprehending the story based on what she was thinking.

After reading some assignments of the student's reading response, the writer found out that his student made some improvements in writing reading response and her accuracy in reading book also increased. It means her interest in reading has improved. The writer also observed that the student's vocabulary, sentence

structure (spelling, grammar, cohesiveness and coherence), and details of the story have improved step by step.

Conclusion

Introducing reading habit to young learners is important. Due to their short attention span, teachers have to use a technique which can attract young learners to grow the habit. One of the techniques is by writing reading response. This activity familiarizes young learners to read meaningfully before they are able to produce a hand-writing. This technique can be implemented to encourage young learners to be interested in reading through reading and writing assignments.

Throughout the five month period of observation, the writer found that the young learner under observation showed important improvements in her reading skill and in her use of grammar which was possible from the sentences that she constructed. In addition to that, she has grown her reading habit which is observable from her enthusiasm in reading books of her interest. Her writing reading response weekly has significantly reduced the errors on spelling, capitalization, and grammatical rules. To sum up, writing reading response can be considered to be applied in order to increase the young learners' interest in reading.

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