Reading Response Journal Example

**I was surprised** when reading the conversation between Celie and Sophia at the end of letter # 21 in *The Color Purple.* It begins with Celie admitting that for over a month she couldn’t sleep at night and didn’t know why. She finally realizes, **“I sin against Sophia’s spirit.”** To me, this introspection of Celie’s goes along with her fragile-hearted nature and is true to her character of being a “peace-maker” to avoid escalating a conflict**. I couldn’t believe** that when Sophia confronts Celie about telling Harpo to beat her, the first words out of her mouth are …”Just want you to know I looked to you for help.” **I never thought** of anyone asking Celie for help when she is so timid and meek. **It made me wonder** what kind of help Sophia needs: household duties, cooking, and sewing – skills that Celie does have in abundance. **I can’t imagine** what other kind of help “meek and mild” Celie could offer such a strong woman as Sophia, but I think I may have short-changed Celie by believing she doesn’t have much emotional strength to offer others. **One reason I believe this** is when Sophia confronts Celie with, “You told Harpo to beat me,” Celie shows some self-awareness by admitting, “I say it cause I’m jealous of you. I say it cause you can do what I can’t – Fight.” **Then I noticed** how quickly Sophia’s emotions took a turn, “She mad before, sad now.” The reference to “Fight” reminds Sophia that she has been fending off men her whole life but she never imagined she would have to fight abuse from her own husband, “I loves Harpo … But I’ll kill him dead before I let him beat me.” What does Celie do next? She turns the “spotlight” of the conversation back on herself with this question, “You feels sorry for me, don’t you?” Again, Celie **surprises the reader** by pursuing potentially unpleasant comments about herself from Sophia**. My greatest emotional** **connection** with Celie in this passage is her heart-breaking “wish” that, “This life soon be over…Heaven last all ways.” Poor Celie, she is just enduring her life until she can leave it. I love Sophia’s answer to that, “You ought to bash Mr. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ head open. Think bout heaven later.” The women’s laughter that follows provides a little comic relief from all the tension of the conversation. I am happy to know that Celie and Sophia are friends again and that Celie, “…sleeps like a baby now.”

**Themes:** social position of women in male dominated society, fight vs. flight, woman as “saviors”

**Literary Technique(s):** character foils – Celie/Sophia - this conversation highlights opposite character traits in each woman’s reaction to men and violence

Reading Response Journal

* Record your ***reactions*** to the reading for today. Describe the ***effect*** the reading had on you.
* Focus on ***a*** ***particular event***. Make sure to acknowledge the ***complexity*** of the plot and characters. Don’t over simplify.
* ***Begin with:*** I noticed…/ This reminds me of…/ I can’t believe…/ I wonder why…
* After writing your personal reaction, connect your response to ***at least one theme*** of the novel. Provide ***additional evidence*** if necessary.
* Finally, address the author’s ***stylistic features***. How does her/his ***language*** impact the theme?