A reader response is a focused exploration of single idea that you see developing in a text. It is not a summary, but at its best is a risk-taking piece of interpretation of the meaning the writer is creating. Although your initial reactions to a text may be personal in nature, you must move beyond these limiting responses to focus on what the author is attempting to convey and how they do it.

The following guidelines should help direct your critical close reading and note taking and prepare you for your written responses:

As you read and interact with the text,
1. Look up the definition of words and allusions you don’t know or understand.
2. Note and follow emerging patterns, ideas, or recurring images. Ask why.
3. Consider the author’s choice and connotations of words. Ask why.
4. Note telling characteristics as presented by the author. Explore implications.
5. Jot down imperative quotations or a well-crafted line. Connect.
6. Ask questions of the text—Why would the author present this character in such a way? Is the narrator reliable? – Try to answer these questions.
7. Consider the author’s use of the traditional elements of analysis:
   - Language/diction
   - Symbolism
   - Irony
   - Structure/Syntax
   - Point of view
   - Imagery
   - Tone
   - Dialogue
   - Characterization
   - Theme
   - Setting

As you develop your thesis in your response, use plenty of quotes and specific details that persuasively support your assertions. Cite the page of your quotes parenthetically. Follow the CLAIM/EVIDENCE/COMMENTARY model.

Neatly handwrite your response.

Your response must be on the reading assigned that night and handed in at the beginning of class to receive credit. The length is not important. I am looking for the insight of your claim, the persuasiveness of your evidence, the clarity of your commentary. Your response should be as long as it needs to be to make your point thoroughly, yet precisely.

A reader response should not attempt to show me everything you know about the assignment, but it should show significant reflection on a significant element of the assignment. You need to show me you know what is important and can do a close, thoughtful reading/analysis on your own.