

Image Journal: *Every Falling Star*
Gwen Romero, Wasatch Range Writing Project

Summary:

Students create a journal including images, summaries, and reflections to process the events/details in a work of literature. Central questions: How do our experiences and our responses to those experiences shape who we are and how we see the world? Do the experiences that we remember the most vividly have a strong emotional element that colors how we remember and interpret them?

Objectives:

- Develop critical thinking skills through analyzing, synthesizing, and conceptualizing information.
- Evaluate the effects of experience on the development of an individual.
- Analyze the literal and metaphorical associations of objects/images and experience.

Context:

An eighth to twelfth-grade English/literature, humanities, current issues, or world civilizations class.

Materials:

- Copies of Sungju Lee's *Every Falling Star* for whole class.
- Assignment handout. **Note:** Based on the level of your class, determine how many entries per chapter/multiple chapters you will require (requiring 2-3 each has worked well for me in my eleventh-grade classes—depth without filler or frustration) and how many chapters you will read each day, including in class and as homework. Fill in the blanks on the assignment sheet: required number of entries per part, first journal check, and final journal check.
- **In-class:** Pens/pencils, colored pencils, and paper (students may choose to use a memo book or sketchpad—or you can print copies of the template).
- **Online:** Upload template to class platform (copy as many pages as needed based on reading and response rate that will work for your class).

Time Span:

Approximately three weeks.

Procedures: in-class (IC); online (OL)

Day 1: Brainstorm (group discussion) what students know/think they know about North Korea and its history, politics, living conditions etc.; list on board (**IC**) or on Whiteboard/Discussion/Shared Doc (**OL**). Then, introduce author and work (brief background—see cover notes, “A Brief History”, and “Prologue”). Discuss the context of this work and this writer’s background experiences that contrast with our experiences. Review *memoir* and *autobiography*; clarify that this work is a memoir. Introduce the assignment by distributing and reviewing the handout and reader’s log with the class.

Begin reading book, together or individually. Have students mark their places when you reach the end of the first chapter or have 15 minutes remaining of class time. Complete a summary draft, using same format as for introductory brainstorm; ask other students for input on draft and clarifications (what to include or exclude)—then have everyone write the summary in his/her reader’s log. Next, have others share thoughts/feelings/themes and complete the reader response section. Then, have students suggest possible key images for this chapter as well as the relevance/significance of each image. Each student should have the first entry ready to share start-of-class the following day. Also, assign additional chapter(s).

Day 2: Have students share entries, leading into class discussion. Students should write discussion notes on back of entry or on the following page.

Continue daily with journal sharing and discussion until finished with book.

Note: I check journals half-way through the unit, while students are working on small-group discussion questions, and at the end of the unit. Journals are graded on the quality and depth of responses to the literature, the quality of the images/photos, and the additional notes from class discussion.

Follow up:

Project 1: Each student selects one thread from his/her journal—character development, theme, symbolism, etc.—for a response paper: Which experiences seemed to have the strongest effects on Sungju Lee, and how so?

Notes: I use an online writing platform so that students can “share” their documents with at least two peers to workshop revisions and edits. In-class, students read their own works aloud; the group discusses each and the two peers leave comments (I monitor during class and add comments; I also have students “Share” their works with me so that I can see peer comments). This can also be achieved with printed copies (**IC**) or via video chat/conference (**OL**).

Project 2: Each student brainstorms a list of experiences that have shaped him/her, selects three to write about briefly—approx. one-half page each, then selects “the most vivid” memory to write about in detail as a personal narrative with an emphasis on making the experience vivid for the reader and easy for the reader to understand how the experience affected the student.

Notes: I do clarify that students should select memories that they are comfortable sharing with classmates; however, if they choose to write about something personal, I will be the audience and may need to involve counselors. *Most students have chosen to write about something meaningful but not deeply personal. A few have used this as a forum to ask for help for themselves/others or to work through something deeply personal.

Extensions:

- Have students research more about the related topics—images and information to share with the class: the countries (North Korea, South Korea, China), weather, conflict, specific people or places referenced in the book, governmental policies, etc.
- Have students research news articles related to the book. Either print and mark notations on the article or complete the notes in a document online to submit: title, writer, date of publication, name of publication (news outlet/magazine/e-zine/etc.) + link if online, essential details (who, what, when, where, main ideas/facts/statistics), and explanation of relevance to book (insight, update, etc.).

Rationale:

Having students incorporate imagery into written responses appeals to visual learners and strengthens personal connections for all students while challenging them to evaluate the text in a symbolic mode.

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Image Journal Assignment

While reading, you will be required to keep an image journal—a combination of sketches about and written responses to the book. You will be required to make _____ entries for each of the chapters of the book. You will be required to read _____ chapter(s) each day and be prepared to share your entries for each.

You may use lined paper, a tablet, or a sketchbook. Each entry should include the following: chapter(s), summary of main events and characters, reader response (your thoughts and feelings about the details), a key image (sketch of detail or scene or comparable photo from a magazine or the internet) with an explanation of the significance/symbolism, and observations (see below).

Observations: The written entries should focus on the events of the book, significance of details, insights to the effects of events and conditions on the characters, and your thoughts/insights; questions for class discussion; notes on characters, mood, and themes; and connections to your own life/experiences and current events. Each written entry should be at least the equivalent of a half a page of standard notebook paper. To show depth and understanding, vary your entries; write about more than just the plot.

Below or on the back of each entry, you are expected to include additional notes and observations from class discussion. You will use these notes to write a response paper.

Your final journal should include a cover that includes the book title and author, your name, and a design/sketch/image that conceptualizes a central theme.

First journal check: _____ (date)

Final journal: _____ (date)

You will be called on to share entries during our study of the book.

Your name _____ Due date _____

Reader's Log (title of book) _____

Summary of Chapter _____ to _____ :

Reader response:

Key Image:

Significance/symbolism:

Observations:

Discussion notes (complete with class):