Outline for a Response to Literature

I. Summary
   A. Introduce the book
   B. Engage the reader
      1. Dialogue clips
      2. Action descriptions
      3. Character thoughts
      4. Imagery - Setting details

II. Judgments
   A. Interpretive
      1. Explain what the author wants us to know
      2. Discuss the theme
      3. Support with the text
   B. Analytic
      1. Conflict Summary
      2. Techniques + strategies
      3. Support with text
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III. Close
   A. Evaluative Judgment
      1. Explain why the book is important
      2. What impact can it make
      3. Discuss the book's value

   B. Reflective Judgment
      1. What does the book remind you of
      3. Discuss any thoughts it brought to you

   C. Sum it up--- The So What
Dear Mr. Curtis,

There are few things in life that have the ability to touch and change the way a person views the world in which he or she lives. The moment such a thing enters the realm of a person’s understanding, that person is changed forever; maybe in the way that person thinks and speaks, maybe in the way that the little things take on a new significance, a new importance. Maybe, it will surface in the way that such a person now sees and treats the people around them. Whatever the change, more than just the one are affected.

During my recent return to college, I was given the assignment to read one of several choices of outstanding historical fiction for adolescents. Having nothing but an interesting title and an eye-catching title to go on, I chose The Watsons Go To Birmingham-1963. In the span of a few days, I became one of those people who are changed forever.

A reader of your book is drawn into the mix of lovable characters and laugh aloud action from the beginning of page one. Who could resist Kenny, the lovable protagonist, and his vivid descriptions and hilarious perspectives. The way that you infuse hyperboles such as “it was a zillion degrees below zero,” and, “it was so cold your slob would freeze before it hit the ground,” make Kenny’s character real to anyone who has ever been around a young boy. A reader can’t help but follow after Kenny like
an adoring friend as he travels through life's joys and struggles.

Your story gently pulls readers into a tight relationship with the "weird" Watson family. By the time they make the trip to Birmingham to deal with what they mistakenly think is their toughest struggle, you feel as though you have become a family friend. Often times, you find yourself wanting to tell Daniel and Wilona how to best handle Byron, or to explain to Kenny how to stand up for himself. You can't believe that the hatred and prejudice that exist during the story's time period could ever be expressed towards such a great group of people like the Watsons. So subtle is your inclusion of the evils of segregation, the reader never suspects the terrible tragedy awaiting our beloved family. Through the eyes of one family, the reader is exposed to the horror and injustice that ravaged our country during the early 60's.

I will never forget the fear and the shame that I felt when I first read chapter fourteen. I had never before been told about the terrible church bombing that occurred in Birmingham. It was so intense, that I had to put the book down for several minutes before I could continue reading, though I desperately wanted to know how the story ended. The rage at injustice I felt drove me to ask my mom, a longtime schoolteacher, why we had never been told at school about that day. Why had the children of my day not been educated about this heinous event? All she could say was that the whole thing
was still too controversial to discuss. People were afraid to bring up old wounds. These answers did nothing to calm my anger and confusion.

The choices I made after that were important ones. I learned to never take for granted the freedoms I have been given. As a teacher, I realized that I could educate my students about more than just adjectives and adverbs. I knew that I could share with them the gift of discovering equality and seeing prejudice for the evil that it really is. Each year, I lead my students through the amazing journeys of the Watsons, hoping that they too will learn the importance of accepting others’ differences. Every year, when we get to chapter fourteen, I still choke down the urge to cry. I hurt for those young girls and their families all over. I hurt for the hate that almost destroyed what our country stands for. I wonder to myself if the description of the girl’s red, white and blue dresses covered in the blood of violence is symbolic of our country’s flag. Did you want us to understand that the equality and freedom the flag was supposed to represent was being mocked and mutilated by the prejudice that threw the bomb that day?
My students and I face a new challenge these days. On a regular basis, new cultures, new faces and skin colors are moving into our small community. For many, it is the first opportunity to deal with accepting differences. With little or no thought to what prejudice really is, many could become involved in what your book taught us to change. By using writing The Watsons Go To Birmingham-1963, you have changed the way I see our past. Now, I can use the same book to help young people see our future. Students can become educated to what judging by the surface can lead to. They are challenged to think about the way they treat their classmates, their equals in their very own school.

If the words of one man, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., could change the way many thought in the 60’s, one book, your book, has the ability to change the way we think in the new millennium. And now I, one teacher, can continue to spread the message through its pages. Thank you for touching my life.
I. Fill in the blank.

1. The author of Out of the Dust is _________________________________.
2. Out of the Dust is ________________________________ genre.
3. The story is told from ________________ point of view.
4. Out of the Dust has won these two awards:
5. The story is set during the ________________________________, a time of struggle and poverty for many.

II. Short Answer
5. Out of the Dust is a poem cycle because:

6. Define historical fiction. Think about what Karen Hesse has done with history and this book.

    Hesse uses irony often in this story. What is ironic about each of the following?
7. The baby's death?
8. The rain that comes too hard?
9. Daddy beginning to build a pond?
10. The section dealing with the accident being titled, Summer 1934?

Identify the following
11. Protagonist
12. Antagonist
13. Theme
Description: Your answers must be thorough...not short, incomplete sentences.

14. Describe the different conflicts that Billie Jo is struggling with at this time. Be sure to identify them as In (internal) or Ex (external).

15. How can Billie Jo achieve the theme of this book in dealing with her conflicts?

16. Discuss Billie Jo’s relationship with her father. Include your opinion about the causes and complications involved with their struggles.

17. Describe Momma. Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

18. Good historical fiction blends actual facts from history with fictional story elements such as characters and plot. How does the storyline stay true to the actual happenings of the Dust Bowl period in history?
Out of the Dust
Final Test

I. Fill in the blank (3 points each)

1. An event that causes a change in the story line or the characters etc is called a

2. _____________ - is the author of this story.

3. Out of the Dust is a type of this kind of _______________ genre.

4. A ______________ is a type of figurative language that compares two or more things using like or as or sometimes than.

5. A ________________ is a type of figurative language that shows comparison by saying one thing is another.

6. ________________ is a type of figurative language that gives human characteristics to a nonhuman object or thing.

II. Matching: Match each example with the correct type of figurative language (3 points each)

a. simile b. metaphor c. personification

- 7. “He wanted a boy, instead, he got a long-legged girl with a wide mouth and cheekbones like bicycle handles.”

- 8. “Ma was a column of fire”

- 9. “But now, sorrow climbs up our front steps,”

- 10. “the water slid in, into the dying ground and softened its stubborn pride,”

- 11. “Ma...she’s rock and dust and wind now, she’s carved stone”

- 12. “And their bones wouldn’t like it if Louise came walking up here between us”

- 13. “from time to time I’d hear someone cry out, their voices rose like ghosts”

III. Listing (1 point each)

List five pivotal events that occur in the story.

14.
15.
16.
17.
18.
List six different ways that the book is historically accurate (1 point each)
19. 
20. 
21. 
22. 
23. 
24.

List four conflicts and their resolutions. Label them as internal or external. (3 points each)

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List three things and explain their symbolic meaning (3 points each)
29. 
30. 
31.

List two minor themes from the book and explain how they are developed (example...how the character's came to learn/experience them, the events that brought them about) (Five points each)
32. 
33.
Discussion

(Five points)
34. Describe the changes that Billie Jo and her father go through after Ma's death.

(Nine points)
35. List the major theme of this book. Discuss how this theme is developed throughout the story. (USE AT LEAST THREE TEXT EXAMPLES).
36. Read the following passages. Choose one and thoroughly explain what they mean and what is happening to cause them to be said. (Five points)

A. "I thought maybe if my father ever went to Doc Rice to do something about the spots on his skin, Doc could check my hands too, tell me what to do about them. But my father isn’t going to Doc Rice and now I think we’re both turning to dust."

B. "The way I see it, hard times aren’t only about money, or drought, or dust. The tractor’s busted, we don’t have the cash to fix it, but there’s nothing saying Daddy can’t do the work by hand. It can’t be any harder than digging a hole forty by sixty by six feet deep."

C. "And I know now that all the time I was trying to get out of the dust, the fact is, what I am, I am because of the dust. And what I am is good enough, even for me."

D. "Daddy said he’d try some sorghum, maybe some cotton, admitting as how there might be something to this notion of diversification folks were talking about, he’d make new sod. And I’m learning, watching Daddy, that you can stay in one place and still grow."