

DIALECTICAL JOURNAL GUIDELINES

The term “*Dialectic*” means “the art or practice of arriving at the truth by using conversation involving question and answer.” Think of your dialectical journal as a series of conversations with your book as you read it. This process is meant to help you develop a better understanding of the novel as we read. Use your journal to record your personal responses to the texts, your ideas about the themes we cover and our class discussions. You will find that it is a useful way to process what you’re reading and to better understand the book’s content.

PROCEDURE:

- As you read, choose passages that stand out to you and record them in the left-hand column of the t-chart provided.
- In the right column, write your response to the text (ideas/insights, questions, reflections, and comments on each passage)
- After each comment you write, label your responses using the following codes:
 - **(Q) Question** – ask about something in the passage that is unclear
 - **(C) Connect** – make a connection to your life, the world, or another text
 - **(P) Predict** – anticipate what will occur based on what’s in the passage
 - **(CL) Clarify** – answer earlier questions or confirm/disaffirm a prediction
 - **(R) Reflect** – think deeply about what the passage means in a broad sense – not just to the characters in the story. What conclusions can you draw about the world, about human nature, or just the way things work?
 - **(E) Evaluate** - make a judgment about the character(s), their actions, or what the author is trying to say
- Complete journal entries for at least **two passages** per chapter.
- On the next page you will see examples of higher level responses. ! expect that at least half of your responses will be at this level.

Sample Dialectical Journal entry: TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD by Harper Lee

Passages from the text	Pg#s	Comments & Questions
“The Radleys, welcome anywhere in town, kept to themselves, a predilection unforgivable in Maycomb. . . .”	Pg 9	(R) It seems that the town is a little closed minded in viewing the Radleys since they don’t go to church or do other things common in Maycomb. This seems to be a prejudice against their lifestyle since it seems that the town might not really know them and has become pretty superstitious about them. People often get suspicious about what they don’t understand or what seems strange to them.

CHOOSING PASSAGES FROM THE TEXT:

Look for quotes or passages that seem significant, powerful, thought provoking or puzzling. For example, you might record:

- Effective &/or creative use of literary devices (simile, metaphor, personification, etc)
- Passages that remind you of your own life or something you've seen before
- Shifts or turns in the plot
- A passage that makes you realize something you hadn't seen before
- Examples of patterns: recurring images, ideas, colors, symbols or themes.
- Passages with confusing language or unfamiliar vocabulary
- Events you find surprising or confusing
- Passages that illustrate a particular character or setting

RESPONDING TO THE TEXT:

You can *respond* to the text in a variety of ways. The most important thing to remember is that your observations should be **specific and detailed**.

Basic Responses

- Raise questions about the beliefs and values implied in the text
- Give your personal reactions to the passage
- Discuss the words, ideas, or actions of the author or character(s)
- Tell what it reminds you of from your own experiences
- Write about what it makes you think or feel
- Agree or disagree with a character or the author

Sample Sentence Starters:

I really don't understand this because...

I really dislike/like this idea because...

I think the author is trying to say that...

This passage reminds me of a time in my life when...

If I were (name of character) at this point I would...

This part doesn't make sense because...

This character reminds me of (name of person) because...

Higher Level Responses

- *Make connections between different characters or events in the text
- *Make connections to a different text (or film, song, etc...)
- *Discuss the words, ideas, or actions of the author or character(s)
- *Consider an event or description from the perspective of a different character
- *Analyze a passage and its relationship to the story as a whole