

Dialectical Journals

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 you read. Use your dialectical (“discussing”) journal to synthesize your personal responses to the texts into an overall better analysis of the texts. You will find that it is a useful way to process what you’re reading, prepare yourself for group discussion, and gather textual evidence for the various analysis assignments you will complete for this course.

Complete journal entries for at least two passages per chapter.

Procedure:

- ❖ Split each page in half (down the middle) to create a two column chart.
- ❖ As you read, choose passages that stand out to you and record them in the left-hand column of the chart. Always include the author’s last name and the page number(s)/line number(s) in MLA format as such: (Salinger 95).
- ❖ In the right column, write your response to the text (ideas/insights, questions, reactions, reflections, and/or comments on each passage). Each response should utilize academic language; each response to a quote should be a minimum of 4-5 meaningful sentences in length.
- ❖ Your chosen passages and corresponding responses should be number-coded. Feel free to color code them as well.
- ❖ Entries must be handwritten.
 - ❖ The amount of entries depends on each specific reading assignment. You will be notified of the specific requirements.
- ❖ Please label each response using the following codes:
 - (Q) Question – ask about something in the passage that is unclear. Attempt to answer the question.
 - (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 in regards to the characters in the story/author of the article. What conclusions can you draw about the world, about human nature, etc.?
 - (E) Evaluate - make a judgment about what the author is trying to say.
 - (LC) Literary Criticism - apply a specific lens of literary criticism to your reading and expand on how it enhances the meaning of the work.
- ❖ You are free to choose any type of entry to complete. However, each assigned reading should feature at least two different response types.

Choosing Passages from the Text:

Look for quotes that seem significant, powerful, thought-provoking, or puzzling.

For example, you might record:

- ❖ Effective and/or creative use of stylistic or literary devices.
- ❖ Passages that remind you of your own life or something you've seen before.
- ❖ Structural 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 motifs.
- ❖ Passages with confusing language or unfamiliar vocabulary (define them).
- ❖ 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. You can write as much as you want for each entry (minimum 4-5 meaningful sentences).

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).
- Discuss what it reminds you of from your own experiences.
- Write about what it makes you think of or feel.
- Agree or disagree with a character or the author.

Higher Level Responses

- Analyze the text for use of literary devices (tone, structure, style, imagery).
- 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.
- Provide an analysis of the text utilizing literary criticism.

Sample Dialectical Journal Entry:
***The Things They Carried* by Tim O'Brien**

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Passages from the Text</u></p> <p>Direct quotes from the text. Number them; include the page number(s)/line number(s).</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Responses</u></p> <p>Responses should be a minimum of 4-5 sentences long. Be sure to use a variety of response types.</p>
<p>1. “They carried like freight trains; they carried it on their backs and shoulders-and for all the ambiguities of Vietnam, all the mysteries and unknowns, there was at least the single abiding certainty that they would never be at a loss for things to carry” (O’Brien 2).</p>	<p>1. (R) O’Brien chooses to end the first section of the novel with this sentence. He provides excellent visual details of what each soldier in Vietnam would carry for day-to-day fighting. He makes you feel the physical weight of what soldiers have to carry for simple survival. When you combine the emotional weight of loved ones at home, the fear of death, and the responsibility for the men you fight with, with this physical weight, you start to understand what soldiers in Vietnam dealt with every day. This quote sums up the confusion that the men felt about the reasons they were fighting the war, and how they clung to the only certainty - things they had to carry - in a confusing world where normal rules were suspended</p>