

Dialectical means: “the art or practice of arriving at the truth by the exchange of logical arguments” (dictionary.com). A dialectical journal, then, is used to arrive at the “truth” of a written work through written responses to quotations from that work.

The Purpose:

- To identify significant pieces of text and explain/discuss the significance.
- To practice highlighting/annotating text and thinking about, digesting, summarizing, questioning, clarifying, critiquing, and remembering what is read.
- To practice note taking on what is read, so that when you are asked to write an essay or utilize the information from the text, you do not have to reread the entire piece.
- To provide me with an effective way to assess your reading comprehension.

How to Set Up Your Journal: *Quotation-Response-Visual*

- **Page 1:** Title page
- **Page 2:** Table of contents (You can add to this later).
- **Next pages: Quotations and Written Responses:** choose 12-15 quotations from throughout the novel and respond to each (this works out to about 2 quotations per chapter). Each quotation needs to be 25+ words. (For response ideas, see “What do I Write?” on page 2).
- **Next pages: Visual Component.** These visuals connect to the quotation, the specific chapter, or an idea that the author continues to build upon. (Remember: variety in visuals is necessary – avoid movie pictures).
- **Next pages:** Continue the same format for the next chapters: Quotation / Response / Visuals (Do this for all the chapters in the novel).

**To clarify, you need 12-15 quotes/12-15 responses/6-12 visuals

**Variety is important: include personal and analytical responses

Specifics:

VISUAL COMPONENT: Be creative!

- Find an important idea from the chapter and visually present this idea. Use drawings cut outs, or create a computer generated photo collage etc.
- Think of ways to make the visuals connect more specifically to the novel –do this by adding details, such as snippets of text to your visuals.
- Provide a brief, but detailed explanation of what you intended your visuals to do.
- Remember, visuals can be drawn, cut out, printed etc. But, BE ORIGINAL. Avoid simply printing a picture of an actress who has played that role. Think in terms of symbolism and don’t pick the first thing you Google!

WRITING COMPONENT: Choosing & Explaining Significant Quotations

As a reader, your goal is to discern why some passages hold particular significance to the events, characters, and themes in the writing.

- **Quotation Requirements**

You must select **12-15 passages** from the novel. Each passage (quoted segment) must be at least twenty-five words and be cited following the MLA parenthetical referencing criteria (see my website). Include all significant parts of the quotation. Do not cut a passage off or begin in the middle of an important thought. Type out each quotation and put at the top of each entry. Choose quotations that both interest you and provoke thought.

Written Responses: 300-500 words each (include a word count at the end).

- Each written response goes below the quotation. Write something insightful about the quotation to demonstrate that you understand the significance of the passage.

****This process is an important way to understand a piece of literature. By writing about literature, you make your own meaning of the work in order to truly understand it. When you do this yourself, then the text belongs to you– you have made it yours. The passages in a novel are for everyone to read; however, the connections and interpretations you make are uniquely yours.**

DO NOT PLAGIARIZE. I want your ideas, not SparkNotes!

- First, establish the context of the quotation. Next, explain the significance of the quotation: this means you need to explain why the quotation is an important part of the literature you are reading (and to the world in which we live). ****Usually, a quotation takes on a particular significance because it relates to one or more of the following: Plot, Character, and Theme, or Literary techniques (and how this adds to the writing).**

What do I Write? (Remember these are paragraph responses of 300-500 words each–so do not set this up as numbered Q&A please). **Do a combination of personal and analytical responses.**

1. Establish the context of the quotation. (What is going on? Who is speaking?)
2. Explain the quotation. When asked to explain the significance of a quotation, you need to explain why the quotation is an important part of the literature you are reading and to the world in which we live.
3. Provide a genuine response to the text. This includes either personal reflection or analysis.
4. Provide a closing remark.

Personal Response Ideas:

- Raise questions about the beliefs and values implied in the text.
- Give your personal reactions to the passage / reflect upon them.
- Discuss the words, ideas, or actions of the author or character(s).
- Tell what the quotation reminds you of from your own experiences.
- Connect to issues in the text to today's world.
- Write about what the quotation makes you think or feel.
- Agree or disagree with a character or the author.

Analytical Response ideas

- Make connections between different characters or events in the text.
- Analyze the behaviours of characters and how they impact others.
- Comment on the big issues within the text.
- Discuss the words, ideas, or actions of the author or character(s).
- Analyze a passage and it's relationship to the story as a whole.
- Analyze the text for literary devices (tone, structure, style, imagery, foreshadowing, etc.) and their effect.
- Make connections to a different text (or film, song, poem etc....but make sure this is meaningful and has a point).
- Write a compare/contrast between the book and the movie, arguing the aspects that the director does well or where he/she misses the mark.
- Analyze how the conflict impacts the characters.
- Analyze how the scene reveals the theme

EVALUATION: This is a Major Reading and Viewing Assessment: [See the rubric](#) for details on how you are being assessed. When the journal is complete, set up an appointment to present it to me. You will be evaluated on both visual and written aspects of the project. For the written component, you will be evaluated on the depth and breadth of your responses, not your opinions. Remember, style, organization, and mechanics count– this is formal writing.

Rubric for Written Component:

RATING	Context	Personal Response/Insights	Elements of Fiction/Analysis	Closing Comments/Function	Fluency and Correctness
Excellent 9-10	Context is clearly established. All relevant details are clarified.	Responses are insightful. Writing reveals personal connections to the quotations. Original and perceptive thoughts.	Clear and specific explanation of major elements of fiction and/or use of literary techniques. Analysis is precise.	Provides clear finality to the topic. Thoughtful conclusion.	Writing is well organized. Sentences are confidently constructed with few errors. Word choice is precise and skillfully contributes to the fluency of the response.
Proficient 7-8	Context is established, including most relevant details.	Responses are adequate, but could be more insightful. Some personal connections, but reflection is not detailed.	Elements of fiction and/or literary techniques are explained. May lack clarity, accuracy, or detail. Analysis is evident.	Provides a final thought that relates to the entry.	Writing is organized. Sentences are well constructed with some minor, but noticeable errors. Word choice is generally effective.
Acceptable 5-6	Context is established, including some relevant details.	Responses are brief. Very little personal insight is revealed. There is little reflection or the writer sounds disinterested in the topic.	Some attempt to highlight elements of fiction and/or literary techniques, but explanations and analysis lack clarity, accuracy, or detail.	Final thought is provided, but does not work well with the entry.	Writing is organized to a degree, but needs improvement. There are issues of control and noticeable errors in mechanics.
Limited 3-4	Context is not made clear.	Responses are limited or superficial. Does not reveal any personal insight or ideas.	Superficial / inaccurate attempt to explain literary techniques and/or elements of fiction. Analysis is not evident.	Final comment is unrelated to the entry.	Entries are not well organized. Writing shows a lack of control and sentence structure is also a problem. Word choice is poor.
Does not meet Minimal Requirements 0-2	Context is not established	Little evidence of personal insight or thought.	Superficial/ incomplete handling of literary techniques/elements	Missing/ Inadequate	Writing errors cloud the communication.

