

DIALECTICAL JOURNAL

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.
- It is a way to take notes on what is read using the actual text, 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.
- A dialectical journal is also an effective way for me 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:** Quotation and Written Response: choose a quotation from the novel that is 25+ words and respond to it. See ideas under “What do I Write?”
- **Next page(s):** 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).
- **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/6-8 visuals

Specifics:

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. Copy down each quotation and put at the top of each entry. Choose quotations that both interest you and make you think.

- **Personal 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 and have thought about it. 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!

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!)

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. **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 does this technique add to the writing?)
3. Provide a genuine response to the text. This includes personal reflection and connections.

Here are some ideas:

- a) Raise questions about the beliefs and values implied in the text.
 - b) Give your personal reactions to the passage / reflect upon them.
 - c) Discuss the words, ideas, or actions of the author or character(s).
 - d) Tell what it reminds you of from your own experiences.
 - e) Write about what the quotation makes you think or feel.
 - f) Agree or disagree with a character or the author.
 - g) Think about the author's use of literary techniques and qualities such as, descriptive language, diction, figurative language, allusion, characterization, plot development, etc. and how they impact the text.
4. Explain what you think the author is trying to tell us.
 5. Provide a closing remark.

Written Evaluation: You will be evaluated on the depth and breadth (analysis) of your responses, not your opinions. Remember, style, organization, and mechanics count, as this is formal writing. The types of entries should include genuine responses to the text. This includes personal reflection and connections, literary techniques and qualities, and most importantly, what you think the author is trying to tell us. Remember, you will have 12-15 written responses.

VISUAL COMPONENT:

- 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, 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!

****This is a Major Reading and Viewing Assessment:** I will be collecting your Journal entries three times. Divide your novel into 3 parts (this could be by chapters or sections –if your book mentions a time period etc. Just be logical). 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.

Rubric for Written Component:

RATING	Context	Personal Response/Insights	Elements of Fiction	Closing Comments/Function	Fluency and Correctness
Excellent 9-10	Context is clearly established. All relevant details are clarified.	My responses are insightful. I reveal personal connections to the quotations. I provide original and perceptive thoughts.	Clear and specific explanation of major elements of fiction and/or use of literary techniques.	Provides clear finality to the topic. Thoughtful conclusion.	My writing is well organized. My sentences are confidently constructed with few errors. My word choice is precise and skillfully contributes to the fluency of my response.
Proficient 7-8	Context is established, including most relevant details.	My responses are adequate, but could be more insightful. I reveal some personal connections, but don't reflect on them.	Elements of fiction and/or literary techniques are explained. May lack clarity, accuracy, or detail.	Provides a final thought that relates to the entry.	My writing is organized. My 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.	My responses are brief. I reveal very little personal insight. There is little reflection or it sounds as if I am not really interested in the topic.	Some attempt to point out elements of fiction and/or literary techniques, but explanations lack clarity, accuracy, or detail.	Final thought is provided, but does not work well with the entry.	My 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.	My responses are limited or superficial. I don't reveal any personal insight or ideas.	Superficial / inaccurate attempt to explain literary techniques and/or element of fiction.	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 of fiction.	Missing/ Inadequate	Writing errors cloud the communication.

Rubric For Visual Component of Journals

RATING	Overall Impression	Specific Words and Images	Artist's Journal
4-5 Excellent	The visual is sophisticated and developed and it fully communicates an understanding of the text. Overall, the visual relationships on the page have been considered.	All words and images are related to the topic and make it easier to understand the author's perspective. All borrowed graphics have been carefully considered for relevance.	Your journal includes thoughtful and critical reflections on your decisions. Your work shows deep insight into the choices and considerations for your visuals.
3-4 Proficient	The visual is adequate and communicates some aspects of the text. Overall the visual relationships on the page have been considered.	All words and images are related to the topic and most make it easier to understand the author's perspective. Borrowed graphics have been well-thought out.	Your journal includes some reflections on your decisions, but would benefit from deeper more thoughtful discussion of choices and considerations for your visuals.
2-3 Acceptable	The visual presents words and images that relate to the text but it fails to communicate a clear understanding of the text. There is a lack of understanding of the text. There is a lack of understanding for the relationship of the visuals on the page.	All words and images are related to the topic. Borrowed graphics are relevant and have been somewhat thought out	The journal includes some reflection on the decisions, but they are reaching and elementary.
1-2 Limited	The visual does not adequately communicate any understanding of the text. There is no rhyme or reason for the placement of visuals on the page.	Words and images do not relate to the topic OR borrowed graphics have little or no relevance.	The journal is incomplete. Entries are missing or too short to provide a picture of what you feel your work represents.
0 Nothing there	Nada	Zilch	Nought

