

The Assignment

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 the text that you are reading. The process is meant to help you develop a better understanding of the text.

PROCEDURE:

- As you read, choose passages that stand out to you and record them in the **left-hand column** the chart (*ALWAYS include page numbers*).
- In the right column**, write your response to the text (ideas/insights, questions, reflections, and comments on each passage)
- Choose **SIX passages** from **SIX different** points in the novel.
- You **must 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/author of the article. What conclusions can you draw about the world, about human nature, or just the way things work?

(E) Evaluate - make a judgment about what the author is trying to say

Sample Dialectical Journal entry: *The Hunger Games* by- Collins

PASSAGE FROM TEXT	Pg.#	RESPONSE
1. "I am the girl who brings the strawberries. The girl his daughter might have spoken of on occasion. The girl who five years ago stood huddled with her mother and sister, as he presented her, the oldest child, with a medal of valor. A medal for her father, vaporized in the mines."	23	<i>I find it interesting that the author keeps repeating the word girl. This repetition is important and reinforces her youth, but I know that she is more than just a girl- she just volunteered to risk her life for her sister. She will be something special. (E)</i>
2. "They chatter continuously that I barely have to reply, which is good, since I don't feel very talkative. It's funny, because even though they're rattling on about the Games it's all about where they were or what they were doing or how they felt when a specific event occurred."	353-54	<i>The people working on Katniss are so insensitive to the fact that real actual humans have died. This wasn't a video game- it was real to Katniss and it's real to the people that live in the poorer districts. It's very upsetting to see that people can become so easily disconnected to suffering. (R)</i>

CHOOSING PASSAGES FROM THE TEXT: (LEFT HAND COLUMN)

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

For example, you might record:

- Effective &/or creative use of stylistic or literary devices
- Passages that remind you of your own life or something you've seen before
- Turning points 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
- Events you find surprising or confusing
- Passages that illustrate a particular character or setting

RESPONDING TO THE TEXT: (RIGHT HAND COLUMN)

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. You can choose to type and save your journals, or you can write by hand.

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

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

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...