

Dialectical Journal Guidelines

A dialectical journal is a running dialogue between you, the reader, and what you are reading. This is done by recording notes in the form of quotations or paraphrases and then commenting upon what you have recorded.

Directions: Type this journal using the same format shown below. Simply construct a two-column table. Use Arial or Times New Roman, 12-point font, single spaced.

Procedure:

- As you read, choose passages that stand out to you and record them in the left-hand column of a T-chart (*ALWAYS include page numbers*).
- In the right column, write your response to the text (ideas/insights, questions, reflections, and comments on each passage)
- Label your responses using the following codes:

Response Types

- **(E) Explanation**—why you chose the quotation/passage
- **(Q) Question** – ask about something in the passage that is unclear
- **(P) Predict** – anticipate what will occur based on what’s in the passage
- **(C) Connect** – make a connection to your life, the world, or another text
- **(A/E) Analyze/Evaluate** - make a judgment about the character(s), their actions, or what the author is trying to say
- **(I) Interpret**—determine the meaning of what you’ve read
- **(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?

Choosing Passages From The Text:

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
- Structural shifts or turns in the plot/events
- 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/narrator or setting/event

Minimum Requirements:

1. **20-25 journal entries for the entire text**
2. At least two of each response type per entry
3. Quotes cover key ideas found in the chapters (all the quotes may not come from one or two chapters, must cover various parts from the entire text).
4. 4-7 sentences per response (No summaries!)
5. Correct MLA formatting

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

Passages from the text	Reaction/Response
<p>“-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”(2).</p> <p><i>*the '(2)' above is the page number</i></p>	<p>(R/I) 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 with a simile comparing the weight to a freight train. 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>

Sample of a Poor Dialectical Journal Entry

Quotation with MLA in-text citation	Reaction/response
It kept coming back to that. He had nothing.	(C) I know how that feels. I have nothing too.

Dialectical Journal Response Ideas for Fiction

Characterization: Identify a passage that reveals something interesting about a character in either a direct or indirect way. In your response, analyze what we learn about the character and why it is significant.

Conflict: Identify a passage that reveals a struggle between opposing forces. This can be internal conflict within a narrator/character's own mind, or an external conflict between a narrator/character and an outside force such as the weather or the economy. In your response, analyze why this conflict is significant to the development of the plot.

Figurative Language: Identify a passage that uses words or phrases that do not have an everyday, literal meaning. These types of language may include metaphors, similes, personification, and hyperbole. In your response, identify the type of figurative language and analyze how it contributes to the text.

Foreshadowing: Identify a passage that contains clues or hints about events that will occur later in the plot. In your response, analyze the clues and the impact that the event will have on the development of the plot.

Imagery: Identify a passage that contains rich language that appeals to one (or more) of your five senses. In your response, analyze how this imagery impacted you as reader.

Point of View: Identify a passage that reveals the perspective from which the story is told. In your response, analyze what influence this particular narrator has on our understanding of the plot as it is told.

Setting: Identify a passage that reveals the time, place, and cultural or emotional atmosphere of the action. In your response, analyze the impact of the setting on this particular part of the plot.

Symbolism: Identify a passage that utilizes a person, a place, a thing, or an event that stands for itself and for something beyond itself as well. In your response, identify the symbol and analyze what it represents.

Theme: Identify a passage that clearly reveals an important central idea/message or insight into life in this text. In your response, analyze how the theme is apparent in this passage as well as in other places in the text. Some thematic topics to consider include the following:

- Acceptance
- Diversity
- Overcoming Challenges
- Loss
- Equality
- Racism

Dialectical Journal Response Ideas for Non-Fiction

Form and Structure: Identify the parts of the work and how they fit together. Describe what makes the work seem complete and unified. Describe passages that identify the climax, time order, or conclusion of the topic. Analyze why the author used certain forms and how effective it is in the context of the work.

Purpose: Identify passages that reveal the author's purpose either explicitly or implicitly. Describe passages that support your conclusions about the author's purpose.

Tone: Identify passages that create an atmosphere or mood for the text. Describe the tone using characteristics (like humorous, satirical, passionate, zealous, condescending, etc.)

Style: Identify a passage that contains specific word choice (diction) and sentence structures (simple, compound, complex, compound-complex). Analyze the author's use of sounds, rhythms of words for effect. Describe the denotation/connotation of the word choice and its effect on the mood of the work.

Rhetorical Devices: Identify passages that utilize various rhetorical devices to express ideas or convey meaning. Some devices to consider include the following:

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| • Alliteration | • Personification |
| • Analogy | • Paradox |
| • Antithesis | • Oxymoron |
| • Simile | • Irony |
| • Metaphor | • Euphemism |
| • Parallel Structure/Anaphora | • Understatement |
| • Rhetorical questions | |

Rubric for Dialectical Journal

Critical Reader (detailed, elaborate responses)—100 A:	Connected Reader (detailed responses)—89 B+:	Thoughtful Reader (somewhat detailed responses)—79 C+:	Literal Reader (simple, factual responses)—69 D+:	Limited Reader (inadequate responses)—60 D-:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Extra effort is evident. <input type="checkbox"/> You include more than the required number of entries. <input type="checkbox"/> Your quotes are relevant, important, thought provoking, and representative of the themes of the novel. <input type="checkbox"/> You can “read between the lines” of the text (inference). <input type="checkbox"/> You consider meaning of the text in a universal sense. <input type="checkbox"/> You create new meaning through connections with your own experiences or other texts. <input type="checkbox"/> You carry on a dialogue with the writer. You question, agree, disagree, appreciate, and object. <input type="checkbox"/> Sentences are grammatically correct with correct spelling and punctuation with proper MLA citations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> A solid effort is evident. <input type="checkbox"/> You include more than the required number of entries. <input type="checkbox"/> Your quotes are relevant and connect to the themes of the novel. <input type="checkbox"/> Entries exhibit insight and thoughtful analysis. <input type="checkbox"/> You construct a thoughtful interpretation of the text. <input type="checkbox"/> You show some ability to make meaning of what you read. <input type="checkbox"/> You create some new meaning through connections with your own experiences and the text. <input type="checkbox"/> You explain the general significance. <input type="checkbox"/> You raise interesting questions. <input type="checkbox"/> You explain why you agree or disagree with the text. <input type="checkbox"/> Sentences are mainly grammatically correct with correct spelling and punctuation with proper MLA citations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Adequate effort is evident. <input type="checkbox"/> You include minimum number of entries. <input type="checkbox"/> Sentences are mostly correct with a few careless spelling and grammatical errors. <input type="checkbox"/> You selected quotes that may be interesting to you, but that don’t necessarily connect to the themes of the novel. <input type="checkbox"/> Entries exhibit insight and thoughtful analysis at times. <input type="checkbox"/> You make connections, but explain with little detail. <input type="checkbox"/> You rarely make new meaning from the reading. <input type="checkbox"/> You ask simple questions of the text. <input type="checkbox"/> You may agree or disagree, but don’t support your views. <input type="checkbox"/> Sentences are somewhat grammatically correct but main contain some spelling and punctuation errors or improper MLA citations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Minimum effort is evident. <input type="checkbox"/> You have slightly less than the minimum number of entries. <input type="checkbox"/> Entries exhibit limited insight or none at all. <input type="checkbox"/> You accept the text literally. <input type="checkbox"/> You are reluctant to create meaning from the text. <input type="checkbox"/> You make few connections which lack detail. <input type="checkbox"/> You are sometimes confused by unclear or difficult sections of the text. <input type="checkbox"/> Sentences contain limited grammatical correctness with multiple spelling and punctuation errors and improper MLA citations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> You include significantly less than the required number of entries. <input type="checkbox"/> Very little effort is evident. <input type="checkbox"/> You find the text confusing, but make no attempt to figure it out. <input type="checkbox"/> You create little or no meaning from the text. <input type="checkbox"/> You make an occasional connection to the text, and the ideas lack development. <input type="checkbox"/> Sentences contain numerous grammatical, spelling, and punctuation errors and improper MLA citations, which hinders readability.