

## DIALECTICAL JOURNALS

A dialectical journal is a conversation between you and what you are reading. It highlights the questions, connections, and ideas that you have as you read. By writing about literature, you make your own meaning of the work in order to truly understand it. You are neither right nor wrong in your response. So be willing to take risks, try your ideas, and be honest.

Since the journal is a conversation between you and the text, you will need to record parts of the text and your thoughts about the text. On the left side of your journal page, record phrases, sentences or short passages that interest you. On the right side of the page, write your thoughts, questions, insights, and ideas about the quoted text. If you find yourself simply repeating what the quotation says, you might want to select a different quotation or reevaluate how you are approaching the response (see the DJ Starters sheet if you need more suggestions). Use literary terms in your reflections and elaborate as you express your thoughts! Aim for a mix of comments. Consider:

- What you think something means
- Personal connections you make (to a character, setting, event)
- Patterns you notice
- Predictions you can pose
- Patterns that are broken (what seems unusual)
- Observations about a character (important decisions made, ideas expressed, key events in her/his life)
- Literary techniques and the author's intent
  - Explain **imagery, foreshadowing, or symbolism** in the quote
  - Identify and give evidence for the **tone** of the passage
  - Identify and explain the effect of the **point of view**
  - Examine the **differing perspectives** of the **characters**
  - Discuss **character development** and **interaction**
  - Examine the **effects of diction or language**
  - Explain how the passage examines a **major theme** of the novel
  - Identify other **literary/rhetorical devices** and explain their effect

The number of dialectical journal entries will vary with each text we read. Make sure you title each journal, write the date before each entry, and include the page number at the end of each passage you copy (see assignment model). If you choose to handwrite your entries, do so legibly! If you choose to type your entries, print your work as you go! There will be unannounced, periodic spot checks. Saying your work is “at home/on the computer” will not suffice. Be prepared! Compile your entries in the Dialectical Journal section of your Response Journal.