

# Dialectical Journal

*A dialectical journal is a strategy for deepening your thinking as you read a text. Following are a few definitions found through an internet search:*

The purpose of a dialectical journal is to identify significant pieces of text and explain the significance. It is another form of highlighting/annotating text and should be used to think about, digest, summarize, question, clarify, critique, and remember what is read. It is a way to take notes on what is read, using the actual text, so that when students are asked to write an essay about or utilize the information from the text they do not have to reread the entire piece. Instead, they can search their notes for direct quotes to use as supporting evidence for their opinions.

[agi.seaford.k12.de.us/sites/hbrake/.../dialectical-journal-handout.doc](http://agi.seaford.k12.de.us/sites/hbrake/.../dialectical-journal-handout.doc)

The dialectical journal is a type of double-entry note-taking which students use while reading literature. In the two columns students write notes that dialogue with one another, thereby developing critical reading and reflective questioning.

<http://www.sdcoe.net/score/actbank/tdia.htm>

1. **dialectical** (die-uh-LEKT-i-cul), n. : the art or practice of arriving at the truth through logical arguments.
2. **journal** (JUHR-nul), n. : a personal record of events, experiences, and reflections kept on a regular basis; a diary.

<http://webinstituteforteachers.org/~jevans/wevbo/eq-dialecticjournals.htm>

A dialectical journal is a conversation between you and what you are reading. You simply write down **passages** that make you think or interest you and write about **your thoughts**. 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 are there for everyone to read; however, the connections and interpretations are uniquely yours. You are neither right or wrong in your response. So be willing to take risks and be honest.

<http://education.lnl.gov/bep/english/10/sdia.html>

## Instructions:

*In your Writer's Notebook (WN), create a T-chart for each chapter of **The Giver**. Label the right hand side, **Inferences** and the left hand side, **"Significant Passages"** (pg#). While you are reading, note 2 to 3 significant passages (textual evidence); then write down your inferences (thoughts, questions, predictions). On the following pages are examples of Ms. Durham's Dialectical Journal. Feel free to borrow a few passages, but **MAKE** your own connections with the text. It's most important for you to select passages that seem significant to you while reading – so you can practice making meaning with the text.*

***Examples from Ms. Durham’s Dialectical Journal  
for The Giver by Lois Lowry.***

***Inferences***  
*(thoughts, questions, predictions)*

***Textual Evidence***  
*“Significant Passage” {pg#}*

If this is a perfect place, why would anyone be afraid? Maybe fear is how this place is kept perfect.

**Ch. 1**  
“It was almost December and Jonas was beginning to be frightened,” (1).

What does it mean to be “released?” Does that mean the pilot is kicked out of the community?

“ ‘Needless to say, he will be released,’ the voice had said...” [about the pilot], (2).

What a polite community – teaching their students how to apologize from an early age... and in unison. Sounds a little creepy, though.

“ ‘We accept your apology, Asher.’ The class recited the standard respons in unison,” (4).

So... Newchildren don’t receive their names until they are several weeks or several months old? Is this at the same December Ceremony as the Twelves?

**Ch 2**  
“ ‘I enjoy the Naming,’ Jonas said,” (11).

This community has a lot of rules. Jonas must be obedient – to never question the rules.

“It didn’t seem a terribly important rule, but the fact that his father had broken a rule at all awed him,” (12).

Someone or some committee is watching them? On the one hand, kind of cool to have guidance in finding your career/assignment, but... again, kind of creepy.

“During the past year he had been aware of the increasing level of observation,” (15).

***Inferences***  
***(thoughts, questions, predictions)***

***Textual Evidence***  
***"Significant Passage" {pg#}***

What is significant about these eyes? Jonas's are different from most. Does this mean he is different from most?

**Ch. 3**

"Almost every citizen in the community had dark eyes... But there were a few exceptions. Jonas himself, and a female Five who he had noticed had the different lighter eyes," (20).

Will Jonas and Gabriel have a special bond because their eyes are alike – "pale, solemn, knowing"?

[about Gabriel] "...of the newchild with his pale, solemn, knowing eyes," (25).

Again – Lily, the family, I guess even the community are unfamiliar with animals... No zoo?

"Lily giggled at the strange word. 'Hippo,' she repeated..." (21).

Children are born of Birthmothers, yet they are unvalued... Hmm.

[about Birthmothers] "There's very little honor in that Assignment," (21).

What is going on with that apple that only Jonas can see?

"But suddenly Jonas had noticed, following the path of the apple through the air with his eyes, that the piece of fruit – well, this was the part that he couldn't adequately understand – the apple had **changed**," (24).

The Community has lots of rules, divided by levels of seriousness – even levels of punishment: chastisement and release.

**Ch 4**

"There was never any comfortable way to mention or discuss one's successes without breaking the rule against bragging, even if one didn't mean to. It was a minor rule, rather like rudeness, punishable only by gentle chastisement," (27).

Is this a clue about release? The Ceremony of Release for the Old sounds a little like our funerals.

"What happens when they make the actual release? Where exactly did Roberto go?" (32).

So many rules, even about nakedness.

"An the nakedness, too. It was against the rules for children or adults to look at another's nakedness; but the rule did not apply to newchildren or the Old," (30).

