

## ***DIALECTICAL JOURNAL***

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 you are asked to write an essay about or utilize the information from the text you do not have to re-read the entire piece. Instead, you can search your notes for direct quotes to use as supporting evidence for your opinions. A dialectical journal is also an effective way to assess your comprehension.

Essentially you set up two-column notes: The left column is where you will write the sentence/s or phrase/s from the text that you believe illustrates a significant idea. You should put quotation marks around the sentence/s to show that they are someone else's words.

THE ABOVE INFORMATION WAS TAKEN DIRECTLY FROM THE FOLLOWING SOURCE:  
<http://www.esubjects.com/curric/general/supplements/DialecticalJournal.pdf>

Feel free to play with the topics for your dialectical journals; you may pull out passages you have questions about, passages on specific characters, passages on specific symbols, passages which build themes, or passages that demonstrate the style of the specific author. Feel free to comment on diction, tone, style, voice, etc. The important thing is that you have **something to say** about the passage. Your comments should be developed and demonstrate higher level thinking which goes well beyond plot summary. Please AVOID plot summaries. We are looking for evidence that you are **thinking** as you are reading. The AP literature course is focused on ***close reading of works***. This summer, we want you to practice *close reading*. The dialectic journals will provide an organized way for you to record your thoughts. We challenge you TO THINK. There are no wrong answers. Avoid using Spark notes during your reading, instead, use YOUR BRAIN! We have attached some sample "journals" to guide you.

### ***Dialectic Journals in a Nutshell!***

1. You should have at least **20 total entries** that are minimally one to two paragraphs in length. The math, and thus the organization of your task, is easy: Divide the text four quarters and create five entries for each quarter.
2. Your dialectical journal may be handwritten or typed. If you know you have difficult handwriting, either type the assignment or take your time and write it neatly.
3. Be aware that you will not receive credit for summarizing the plot, summarizing the quote you have noted, or simply explaining what it means (Ex: "This shows how mad she was that he did that." "This shows how bad things are getting."). Dig deeper.
4. You must include the page number from which your quote is taken.
5. Although not a specific instruction related to just the journal you are creating, be aware that you will need to bring your copy of the text to class on certain dates, so keep up with it.

## ***Dialectical Journal Instructions and Examples***

<b>Text</b>	<b>Response</b>
<p>For the TEXT column, your entries may include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Details that “popout” as out of place, meaningful, etc.</li> <li>• Confusing or difficult quotations or passages</li> <li>• Evidence of theme, tone, mood, character development, plot complication, setting significance, etc.</li> <li>• Figurative language such as metaphors, similes, personification, etc.</li> <li>• Effective &amp;/or creative use of stylistic or literary devices (including sentence structure)</li> <li>• Passages that remind you of your own life or something you’ve seen before (don’t overuse this option)</li> <li>• Structural shifts or turns in the plot</li> <li>• A passage that makes you realize something you hadn’t seen before (epiphany!)</li> <li>• Examples of patterns: recurring images, ideas, colors, symbols or motifs.</li> <li>• Passages with confusing language or unfamiliar vocabulary</li> <li>• Events you find surprising or confusing</li> <li>• Passages that illustrate a particular character or setting</li> </ul>	<p>For the RESPONSE column, you have several ways to respond to a text:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raise questions about the beliefs and values implied in the text</li> <li>• Give your personal reactions to the passage</li> <li>• Discuss the diction (vocabulary) used</li> <li>• Discuss what makes the quote or passage meaningful, striking, or important</li> <li>• Discuss how theme is shown</li> <li>• Discuss the meaning and/or effect of figurative language</li> <li>• Discuss the character’s role and/or the values of the character</li> <li>• Discuss the importance of setting</li> <li>• Tell what it reminds you of from your own experiences</li> <li>• Write about what it makes you think or feel</li> <li>• Argue with or speak to the characters or author</li> <li>• Comment on the relevance of a passage to its historical context or to the present</li> <li>• Identify recurring symbols or images</li> </ul>
<b>Text (examples)</b>	<b>Response (examples)</b>
<p>“The puddle had frozen over, and me and Cathy went stompin in it. The twins from next door, Tyrone and Terry, were swingin so high out of sight we forgot we were waitin our turn on the tire. Cathy jumped up and came down hard on her heels and started tapdancin. And the frozen patch splinterin every which way underneath was kinda spooky. ‘Looks like a plastic spider web,’ she said. ‘A sort of weird spider, I guess, with many mental problems’” (35).</p>	<p>In this first paragraph of the story, Bambara indirectly characterizes the narrator using rural Southern dialect to let us know that the story is set in the South and our narrator is not necessarily educated. We also learn that the characters are children from the activities the author describes. I also like the imagery of the puddle freezing over, which I guess also lets us know that it is winter. I also really like the imagery of the splintering puddle and the “tapdancin.” The writer seems to be establishing a humorous and lighthearted mood at the beginning of the story. I wonder if the mood will stay lighthearted</p>
<p>“By the door there was a dish filled with sweetened milk with little pieces of white bread floating in it. He was so pleased he almost laughed, as he was even hungrier than he had been that morning, and immediately dipped his head into the milk, nearly covering his eyes with it. But he soon drew his head back again in disappointment; not only did the pain in his tender left side make it difficult to eat the food - he was only able to eat if his whole body worked together as a snuffling whole - but the milk did not taste at all nice” (Part II, Paragraph 2).</p>	<p>This passage contains visual imagery (Gregor and bowl of food), auditory imagery (“almost” laughing) and symbolism (white milk, white bread, and [white] eyes). The imagery contributes to the brief and desperate sense of hope, which is immediately followed by repulsion because Gregor cannot drink the milk he longs to consume. The white imagery connotes purity because of Gregor’s tainted and mutated state of being. The fact that he “dipped his head into the milk, almost to his eyes” might represent the desire to cleanse what he has seen he has become. He wants to “purify” himself in the remembrance of what he once was, in the drink that used to be his favorite. He has lost his identity and the things that used to bring him comfort because he has been transformed into a worker bug by mass society, which seems to be the recurrent theme of the short story.</p>