

AP English Language and Composition - Dialectical Journals

What is a dialectical journal?

The term “dialectic” means “the art of practice of arriving at the truth by using conversation involving question and answer.” The purpose of a dialectical journal is to identify significant pieces of text and explain the significance of them.

“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**. You are neither right nor wrong in your response. So be willing to take risks and be honest.” – Definition from the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory

For the novel *Flight*, you will be required to write at least ten different entries.

1. You will start off writing **five entries (#1 - #5)** utilizing the instructions on **pages 1 and 2**.
2. The **other five entries (#6-#10)** will need to incorporate the categories and instructions on **page 3**.

Each entry will be worth ten points for a total of 100 points, and this summer assignment will count as a test grade (50% of your first semester grade). Each response must be at least **50 to 100 words in length**.

- ✓ Points will be deducted from the text side (left-hand side) for failure to document accurately and completely according to the models provided.
- ✓ Points will also be deducted on the Commentary/Reaction Connection side (right-hand side) for summarizing and incomplete analysis.

Procedure for Entries #1-#5:

- In your Google document, create a table like the one below for the first five entries (#1 - #5)
- As you read, choose passages that stand out to you, and type them in the left-hand column of a T-chart, and ALWAYS include page numbers.
- In the right column, write your response to the text (ideas/insights, questions, reflections, and comments) for each passage).
 - The left column is used to record the direct quotations from the reading.
 - The right column is used to write your comments and analysis over the selected text from the reading. Your commentary should be developed and demonstrate higher level thinking, which goes well beyond plot summary. *Basically, I am looking for evidence that you are thinking as you are reading.

Example #1 from *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee:

Passage from the text + the page # (2 points)	Commentary/Reaction/Connection (8 points)
Dialectical Journal #1	Response #1
“There was no hurry, for there was nowhere to go...nothing to see outside the boundaries of Maycomb County. But it was a time of vague optimism for some of the people: Maycomb Great County had recently been told that it had nothing to fear but fear itself.” (p. 21)	Apparently, Maycomb is also a very slow, sleepy town that is pretty isolated from everything else. This seems to be especially true since they only have a “vague” notion of FDR’s speech (an allusion to the Depression of the 1930’s – must be the era in which the story takes place) and there is “nothing” outside of Maycomb County. I wonder why they see the world this way – maybe people don’t travel because of the depression or because that’s just not what people did. It is interesting to me that it seems so much like my hometown, except that people in Maycomb have “vague optimism.” I feel as if people don’t feel optimistic now. I certainly don’t know what I am going to do after high school and college. During the Depression, about what did Americans generally have to feel optimistic? They just didn’t know any better.

Example #2 from *The Things They Carried* by Tim O'Brien:

Passage from the text + the page #
(2 points)

Commentary/Reaction/Connection
(8 points)

Dialectical Journal #2	Response #2
<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.” (p. 2)</p>	<p>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. 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>

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 have seen before
- A passage that makes you realize something you had not 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:

You can *respond* to the text in a variety of ways. The most important point to remember is that your observations should be specific and detailed, and you can write as much as you want for each entry.

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

HINTS:

Sample Sentence Starters:	Higher Level Responses:
<p>I really do not 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 does not make sense because...</p>	<p>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</p>

(These are two separate boxes not meant to line-up/correlate)

Procedure for Entries #6-#10:

- Form and Structure (1 required passage and response for this first category)
- Purpose/Tone/Style (1 required passage and response for this second category)
- Imagery and/or Detail (1 required passage and response for this third category)
- Rhetorical Devices (2 required passages and responses for this fourth category)

Dialectical Journal #__	
(Form and Structure - at least 1 passage for this category)	Response #__
<p>Important Excerpts/Passages from the Text Use quotes from the text in quotation marks followed by pages numbers in parenthesis.</p>	<p>Your Commentary/Reaction/Connection What is happening? How much time is covered? What patterns do you notice?</p>

Dialectical Journal #__	
(Purpose /Tone /Style - at least 1 passage for this category)	Response #__
<p>Important Excerpts/Passages from the Text Use quotes from the text in quotation marks followed by pages numbers in parenthesis.</p>	<p>Your Commentary/Reaction/Connection What is the author trying to accomplish? What argument(s) is he/she trying to make? What is the author’s attitude toward the subject? How is TONE revealed through DICTION and SYNTAX?</p>

Dialectical Journal #__	
(Imagery and/or Detail - at least 1 passage for this category)	Response #__
<p>Important Excerpts/Passages from the Text Use quotes from the text in quotation marks followed by pages numbers in parenthesis.</p>	<p>Your Commentary/Reaction/Connection The imagery of a literary work comprises the set of images that appeal to the senses. Look for recurring images (light/darkness, colors, clothing, odors, sounds). Point out details (numbers, facts, description) the author uses to support the argument. How are these images and/or details used? What emotions do they EVOKE?</p>

Dialectical Journal #__	
(Rhetorical Devices- at least 2 passages for this category)	Response #__
<p>Important Excerpts/Passages from the Text Use quotes from the text in quotation marks followed by pages numbers in parenthesis.</p>	<p>Your Commentary/Reaction/Connection Look for rhetorical devices that you are analyzing in the rhetorical analysis essays such as syllogism, anaphora, amplification, anadiplosis, assonance, alliteration, hypophora, litotes, metonymy, parallelism, polysyndeton, and synecdoche, as well as the list on the next page. How are these devices utilized to support the author’s argument?</p>

**IMPORTANT:* For the last five journal responses for #6 through #10), you will choose from one of the templates out of the four total templates, meaning the last templates will be utilized a second time.

Elements of Literary Style:

1. Sentence Structure: Are the sentences long or short? Why do they change? Is the word-order straightforward or unconventionally crafted?
2. Diction: Is the writing tight and efficient, or elaborate and long-winded?
3. Vocabulary: Are the words technical, flowery, colloquial, cerebral, obscure, or.....?
4. Tone: What is the author's attitude?
5. Word Color/Word Sound: How much does the language call attention to or depend on the quality of its sound through alliteration, assonance, consonance, dissonance, unusual word choice, etc?
6. Paragraphs/Chapter Structure: Are the paragraphs short, or are they enormous blocks running across the page?
7. Experimentation in Language: Are there any unusual techniques, such as stream-of-consciousness, mixing styles and genres, unusual layout on the page, breaking rules of grammar and form, and so on?

*IF you are still slightly confused about the assignment, Google examples on YouTube. They will not be exactly the same set up, but it will be close enough to give you a visual of the concept.

75 rhetorical terms utilized for persuasion:

adage	epigram	refute	zeugma
allegory	figurative language	rhetoric	ethos
alliteration	figure of speech	rhetorical modes	pathos
allusion	hortatory	rhetorical question	logos
ambiguous	hyperbole	rhetorical triangle	exigence
anaphora	imagery	satire	epistrophe
antanaclasis	induction	scheme	
anecdote	inversion	dependent clause	
antimetabole	irony	independent clause	
antithesis	juxtaposition	sentence patterns	
aphorism	metaphor	simile	
appositive	metonymy	source	
archaic diction	nominalization	speaker	
assumption	oxymoron	straw man	
asyndeton	pacing	style	
claim	paradox	syllogism	
colloquial/ism	parallelism	syntax	
concession	parody	synthesize	
credible	persona	tone	
deduction	personification	trope	
denotation	polemic	understatement	
diction	polysyndeton	voice (in grammar)	
	propaganda	voice (in narrative)	

Scoring Rubric:

Critical Reader (detailed, elaborate responses): 90 – 100

- ✓ Extra effort is evident.
- ✓ Your quotes are relevant and thought provoking.
- ✓ You can “read between the lines” of the text.
- ✓ You consider meaning of the text in a universal sense.
- ✓ You create new meaning through connections with your own experiences or other texts
- ✓ You “carry on a dialogue” with the writer; you question, agree, disagree, appreciate, and object.
- ✓ Sentences are grammatically correct.

Connected Reader (detailed responses): 80-89

- A solid effort is evident.
- You include an adequate number of legible entries.
- Your quotes are relevant and connect to the themes.
- Entries exhibit insight and thoughtful analysis.
- You construct a thoughtful interpretation of the text.
- You show some ability to make meaning of what you read.
- You create some new meaning through connections with your own experiences and the text.
- You explain the general significance.
- You raise interesting questions.
- You explain why you agree or disagree with the text.

Thoughtful Reader (somewhat detailed responses): 75-79

- Sentences are mostly correct with a few careless spelling and grammatical errors.
- You selected quotes that may be interesting to you but that don’t necessarily connect the themes of the novel.
- Entries exhibit insight and thoughtful analysis at times.
- You make connections but explain with little detail.
- You rarely make new meaning from the reading.
- You ask simple questions of the text.
- You may agree or disagree but do not support your views.

Literal Reader (simple, factual responses): 70-74

- Entries exhibit limited insight or none at all.
- You accept the text literally.
- You are reluctant to create meaning from the text.
- You make few connections which lack detail.
- You are sometimes confused by clear or difficult sections of the text.

Limited Reader (perfunctory responses): below 70

- Very little effort is evident.
- You find the text confusing but make no attempt to “figure it out.”
- You create little or no meaning from the text.
- You make an occasional connection to the text, and the ideas lack development.
- Sentences contain numerous grammatical and spelling errors.