**Dialectical Journals**

The term “dialectic” means “the art or practice of arriving at the truth by using conversation involving question and answer.” Think of your dialectical journal as a series of conversations with the texts we read during this course. The process is meant to help you develop a better understanding of the texts we read. Use your journal to incorporate your personal responses to the texts, your ideas about the themes we cover and our class discussions. You will find that it is a useful way to process what you’re reading, prepare yourself for group discussion, and gather textual evidence for your Literary Analysis assignments.

**Procedure**:

* As you read, choose passages that stand out to you and record them in the left-hand column of the chart (ALWAYS include page numbers).
* In the right column, write your response to the text (ideas/insights, questions, reflections, and comments on each passage).
* You **must** label your responses using the following codes:
  + (Q) Question- ask about something in the passage that is unclear
  + (C) Connect- make a connection to your life, the world, another text, or between characters
  + (P) Predict- anticipate what will occur based on what’s in the passage
  + (CL) Clarify- answer earlier questions or confirm/disaffirm a prediction
  + (D) Discuss- discuss the words, ideas, or actions of the author or character(s)
  + (E) Evaluate- make a judgment about what the author is trying to say
  + (A) Analyze- analyze the text for use of literary devices (tone, structure, style, imagery, etc.) and the effect of the devices in the text or analyze a passage and its relationship to the story as a whole
  + (R) Reflect- think deeply about what the passage means in a broad sense- not just to the characters in the story/author of the text. What conclusions can you draw about the world, about human nature, or just the way things work?

**Sample Dialectical Journal entry: Beyond the Yellow Highlighter**

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| Passages from the text- Must quote at least 10 per reading assigned. Make sure to number them. | Page #/Parag. | EACH passage you quote must relate to one of the following code above. Make sure to use a variety. Using the same codes for most or all of your entries will result in a lower score. |
| 1. “The yellow marks in my college textbooks…did not help me very much.” 2. “Annotations do make me read a lot slower and I wish I didn’t have to do them. It is so much harder to fake read if you have to annotate like we have to do now. So now I actually read, because it’s too hard to fake annotate.” | 82/1  87/2 | (C) I can relate since I often used to highlight what I thought was important and then end up with most of the page highlighted.  (C) It is harder to fake annotate- it almost takes more time. (R) People are prone to find the easy way to do something. Since there’s really no easy way to annotate- fake or real- it makes sense to really read and think about the texts. (Q) Is it really harder to fake read if you have to annotate? Or does it just take longer? |

**Choosing Passages from the Text:**

Look for quotes that seem significant, powerful, though provoking or puzzling. For example, you might record:

* Effective and/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.
* 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 or setting.

**Responding to the Text:**

You can respond to the text in a variety of ways. The most important thing to remember is that your observations should be specific and detailed. You can write as much as you want for each entry. You can choose to type and save your journals or you can write by hand.

**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

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| **Sample Sentence Starters:**  I really don’t 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 doesn’t make sense because…  This character reminds me of (name of person) because… |

**Higher Level Responses**

* + Analyze the text for use of literary devices (tone, structure, style, imagery)
  + Make connections between different characters or events in the novel.
  + 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