Dialectical Journals

**What is a dialectical journal?**

Simply put, “dialectical” means “the art or practice of arriving at the truth by the exchange of logical arguments.” A dialectical journal, then, is used to arrive at the “truth” of a written work through the written response to quotations from that work.

**What format should I use?**

Summarize the events of the chapter in a paragraph at the top of your paper.

Then, draw a line down the rest of the paper. Use the left side of the double column notes to copy a significant quote or line from the story with its page number. Use the second column to react to that line: question, predict, symbols, allusions, and literary devices, reflections. Include each of these for each quote. Don’t be afraid to use ellipses like this … to shorten your quote.

**What exactly constitutes a meaningful quotation?**

A quotation can be narration OR dialogue. You are NOT limited just to what the characters say to one another (especially when a character is the narrator). Find passages that you think help us better understand the author’s subject matter, characterizations, attitude, and especially THEMES. 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. NO SUMMARIES when explaining the quotes—THEY ARE AN INSULT TO MY INTELLIGENCE!

**How many quotations should I have?**

One quotation per chapter. Make sure to include the page number for at the end of each quote (see format below). Also indicate the speaker if you are using dialogue from novel.

**SUMMARY AND DIALECTICAL JOURNAL LAYOUT**

Name of Novel

Entry (chapters…)

**Concise one paragraph summary**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Meaningful Quote** |  |
| The narrator said, “Quote from the reading” (page #). | **Questions** you have about the quote:  *List your questions* |
|  | What does this quote **reveal** about the main idea/theme?  *Explain what this quote reveals.* |