

DIALECTICAL JOURNALS

The term “Dialectic” means “the art or practice of arriving at the truth by using conversation involving question and answer.” Think of a dialectical journal as a conversation with a text that you can use as a resource or share with others. The process is meant to help you develop a better understanding of the texts we read. Use your journal to record your thinking and your personal responses to texts, your ideas about the themes we discuss, and as the best way to be ready for class discussions and seminars.

PROCEDURE:

As you read, choose passages that stand out to you and record them in the left-hand column of a T-chart (*ALWAYS include page numbers*).

In the right-hand column, write your response to the text (ideas/insights, questions, reflections, and comments on each passage).

Complete 3 journal entries for *The Jungle* excerpt 1. You will complete 3 journal entries for excerpt 2 over the weekend.

Sample Dialectical Journal entry: *The Jungle* by Upton Sinclair

Passages from the text go on the left-hand side	Pg #s of handout	Comments, Reactions, & Questions, etc. go on the right-hand side
There was over a square mile of space in the yards, and more than half of it is occupied by cattle pens; north and south as far as the eye can reach there stretches a sea of pens.”	Pg 1	I have been to Kansas where stockyards seemed to rival the size of this one, but they were not this big. I can hardly imagine how big a square mile of stockyards would look. A person really could not see the whole thing at once unless they were in a helicopter or airplane. What I do remember is the smell. Yuck. If you were in a virtual sea of stockyards, super yuck!

CHOOSING PASSAGES FROM THE TEXT:

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'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, shocking, 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. Use your own paper for your journals and draw the T-chart.

<p>Proficiency Level Responses</p> <p>Raise questions about the beliefs and values implied in the text</p> <p>Give your personal reactions to the passage</p> <p>Discuss the words, ideas, or actions of the author or character(s)</p> <p>Tell what it reminds you of from your own experiences</p> <p>Write about what it makes you think or feel</p> <p>Agree or disagree with a character or the author</p>	<p>Examples of Sentence Starters:</p> <p>I really don't understand this because...</p> <p>I really dislike/like this idea because...</p> <p>I think the author is trying to say that...</p> <p>This passage reminds me of a time in my life when...</p> <p>If I were (name of character) at this point I would...</p> <p>This part doesn't make sense because...</p> <p>This character reminds me of (name of person) because...</p> <p>I figured out what this meant because...</p>
<p>Mastery/Advanced Level Responses</p> <p>Analyze the text for use of literary devices (tone, structure, style, imagery)</p> <p>Make connections between different characters or events in the text</p> <p>Make connections to a different text (or film, song, etc...)</p> <p>Discuss the words, ideas, or actions of the author or character(s)</p> <p>Consider an event or description from the perspective of a different character</p> <p>Analyze a passage and its relationship to the story as a whole</p>	<p>Examples of Advanced Sentence Starters:</p> <p>The author's choice of imagery reminds me of (another author's work or another work by the same author) because...</p> <p>Character (name) is far more willing to take risks than character (name). An inference I can draw is ...</p>