

Dialectical Journal A
A Separate Peace

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.

Directions:

Draw a line down the middle of a piece of notebook paper (or fold the paper in half), thereby making two columns. It may be useful to make the right column wider than the left column. The left column is used for traditional note taking of direct quotes or summaries of the text. The right column is used for commenting on the left-column notes.

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 column, write your response to the text (ideas/insights, questions, reflections, and comments on each passage)
- If you choose, you can 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, or another text
 - (P) Predict – anticipate what will occur based on what’s in the passage
 - (CL) Clarify – answer earlier questions or confirm/disaffirm a prediction
 - (R) Reflect – think deeply about what the passage means in a broad sense – not just to the characters in the story. What conclusions can you draw about the world, about human nature, or just the way things work?
 - (E) Evaluate - make a judgment about the character(s), their actions, or what the author is trying to say
- Complete journal entries for at least two to three passages each Chapter for a total of 45 entries.

Requirements for Grading:

1. It is your responsibility to make sure you know and understand these directions. Ask your questions now and not the night before your journal is due.
2. **Journal Entries:** You are required to make a minimum of three journal entries per chapter. You must have a **minimum of 45 entries**.
3. Each left-hand entry must have a quote or paraphrase and the page number on which it appears.
4. Each right-hand entry **must be at least 8-10 sentences**, well thought out, and **have no grammatical errors**.

5. Each right-hand entry must be a response to one of the prompts on the back of this page. Each entry must start with the number of the prompt you are responding to. You do not have to use the prompts in order and you are allowed to repeat prompts, but you must use at least 10 of the prompts in your journal.
6. You will be graded on the completeness of your journal using the “Effective Reader” school-wide rubric. The “Student Score” side of the attached rubric must be completed when you hand in your journal.
7. You are required to write this journal in a notebook unless you chose to type it. All pages must be kept together and in order.
8. Your journal does not have to be typed, but **it must be legible**. Entries that can’t be read **will not** be graded.
9. Reference the following example for formatting your journal.

Sample Dialectical Journal entry: *THE THINGS THEY CARRIED* by Tim O’Brien

Passages from the text	Pg#s	Comments & Questions
<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>	<p>Pg 2</p>	<p>(R) 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>

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 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 as long as it is no less than 8 sentences. You can use loose leaf paper for your journals or download the template from the Author Study page on the ESA web site.

Basic Responses (this is here only for informational purposes – you should use higher level 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

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 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**

Suggested prompts for Responses – pick one of the following for each response entry

1. Predict what you think will happen and tell why (based on the quote you chose)
2. Tell what you like about a particular phrase or part of the story and why.
3. Describe your response or feelings to a part of the reading. What did the author do to make you feel that way?
4. Comment on the author's style and how it adds to the story.
5. Explain a word or phrase that struck you. What does it mean and how is it used?
6. Evaluate the writing, explaining why it is or isn't good. (This doesn't mean if you like it or not.)
7. Compare an aspect of this reading with that of another literary work.
8. What makes a particular character or setting appeal or not appeal to you and why? Be specific.
9. Explain the importance of an interesting secondary character. How is he/she essential?
10. Share how events of the novel have caused a change in your views.

11. List some questions you would ask a question/author if you had the opportunity.
12. Contrast the society of this novel to your own.
13. Discuss new insights into someone you know, which were gained from books.
14. Analyze whether your knowledge of a character was gained mostly from what he/she does, what he/she says or what is said about him/her. (Is there direct or indirect characterization?)
15. Figure out the ways a character changed and what caused the changes. Be specific.
16. Are there moral issues or dilemmas? What message/philosophy is the author sending the reader? Are the answers to the issues ambiguous or do the characters make clear choices?
17. Explain any characters, events, or objects that are symbolic.
18. Point out effective examples of figurative language (or other literary devices).
19. List questions about puzzling passages that are good for discussion.
20. Does a sentence or phrase stand out to you as particularly important or poignant? Explain how/why.
21. Comment on the relevance of a passage to its historical context or to the present.
22. How would a particular scene be different if you were viewing the story as a play or movie?
23. Review your notes and comment on how a particular thought changed or prediction came true.