

Summer Reading Assignment

For this assignment, you must read both assigned novels and complete a dialectical journal for each novel.

Non-fiction: keep a dialectical journal. Your dialectical journal should include at least one passage for every 10 pages.

9th Grade

Fiction

***The House of the Scorpion* by Nancy Farmer**

Matteo Alacrán was not born; he was harvested. His DNA came from El Patrón, lord of a country called Opium--a strip of poppy fields lying between the United States and what was once called Mexico. Matt's first cell split and divided inside a petri dish. He is a boy now, but most consider him a monster--except for El Patrón. El Patrón loves Matt as he loves himself, because Matt is himself. As Matt struggles to understand his existence he is threatened by a sinister cast of characters, including El Patrón's power-hungry family. Escape is the only chance Matt has to survive. But escape from the Alacrán Estate is no guarantee of freedom, because Matt is marked by his difference in ways he doesn't even suspect.

Non-fiction

***The Pact: Three Young Men Make a Promise and Fulfill a Dream* by Sampson Davis, George Jenkins, Rameck Hunt, Lisa Frazier Page**

Chosen by *Essence* to be among the forty most influential African Americans, the three doctors grew up in the streets of Newark, facing city life's temptations, pitfalls, even jail. But one day these three young men made a pact. They promised each other they would all become doctors, and stick it out together through the long, difficult journey to attaining that dream. Sampson Davis, George Jenkins, and Rameck Hunt are not only friends to this day—they are all doctors. This is a story about the power of friendship. Of joining forces and beating the odds. A story about changing your life, and the lives of those you love most...together.

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 novel you are reading.

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) Label your responses using the following codes:

- (Q) Question – ask about something in the passage that is unclear

- (A) focuses on how plot/structure, character, setting, and many other techniques are used by the author to create meaning. Always be sure to discuss the significance of your observations to the main idea about life (the theme).
- (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

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

Passages from the text	Pg #s	Comments & Questions
"-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".	Pg 2	(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.

Sample Dialectical Journal entry: Beyond the Yellow Highlighter

1. "The yellow marks in my college textbooks...did not help me very much."	Pg 5	(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.
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"		(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?

Sample Dialectical Journal entry: Night by Elie Wiesel

"Death wrapped itself around me till I was stifled. It stuck to me. I felt that I could touch it. The idea of dying, of no longer being, began to fascinate me. Not to exist any longer"	Pg 82	<i>(A) In this passage, Wiesel personifies death to show the control it has over those who are suffering in the camps. In this case, Death silences Elie, overpowering his will and subduing his hope of survival. Elie is conflicted. He wants to survive. He wants to take care of his father. But he doesn't know how much more he can take. (E) This is important because we see that Elie has reached a breaking point. Death has come for him so many times but has failed. This time, however, Elie is too tired to run, too tired to fight. He has had enough. Death is offering a gift—an escape from this hellish existence.</i>
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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
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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**.

Proficient 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

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

Sample Sentence Starters

The writer implies _____ when she writes _____ in order to _____

The word _____ suggests _____.

The atmosphere established in the paragraph/passage is one of _____.

The author uses the image of _____ for the purpose of _____.

The effect of the metaphor comparing _____ to _____ is _____.

This _____ can be connected to _____ (another character, event, text, film, song, etc...)

This passage is related to the _____ (greater theme, symbol, event...)

_____ (character) might view _____ from a different perspective because _____

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...

Literary Analysis Writing Rubric

<i>Skill Area</i>	<i>6 Responses at this level:</i>	<i>5 Responses at this level:</i>	<i>4 Responses at this level:</i>	<i>3 Responses at this level:</i>	<i>2 Responses at this level:</i>	<i>1 Responses at this level:</i>
Meaning Sound understanding, interpretation, and analysis	Offer insightful interpretations of the text with analysis that goes well beyond a literal level.	Offer accurate interpretations of the text with analysis that goes beyond a literal level.	Convey an accurate although somewhat basic understanding of the text and offer partially explained and/or somewhat literal interpretations.	Convey a partly accurate understanding of the text and offer few or superficial interpretations with a tendency to retell.	Convey a confused or largely inaccurate understanding of the text and offer unclear interpretations.	Provide no evidence of understanding and make no interpretations.
Development Specific and relevant details that support the thesis	Develop ideas clearly, elaborate on specific textual evidence, and reveal an insightful understanding of the author's use of literary elements and techniques.	Develop ideas clearly, explain key textual evidence, and reveal an understanding of the author's use of literary elements and techniques.	Develop some ideas more fully than others, using relevant textual evidence and reveal some understanding of the author's use of literary elements and techniques.	Develop ideas briefly or partially, using some textual evidence but w/o much elaboration and reveal a vague understanding of the author's use of literary elements and techniques.	Contain textual evidence that is vague, irrelevant, repetitive and/or unjustified and reveal a confused understanding of the author's use of literary elements and techniques.	Do not include textual evidence and reveal no understanding of the author's use of literary elements and techniques.
Organization Thesis statement and organization of key elements of support and paragraphing	Contain a compelling thesis statement, use insightful analytical topic and concluding sentences, and make skillful use of transition words and phrases.	Contain a clear thesis statement, use topic and concluding sentences, and make use of transition words and phrases.	Contain a clear thesis statement but ideas within paragraphs may be inconsistently organized. Make some attempt to use basic transitions.	Fail to maintain focus on the thesis statement. Exhibit a basic structure but lack coherence. Make an inconsistent attempt to use transitions.	Establish a confused or irrelevant thesis. Exhibit some attempt to provide a beginning, middle, and an end. Make little attempt to use transitions.	Fail to include a thesis. Exhibit a complete lack of organization. Make no attempt to use transitions.
Language Word choice and sentence variety	Use language that is precise, engaging, and sophisticated and incorporate a wide range of varied sentence patterns.	Use language that is original and incorporate some varied sentence patterns.	Use appropriate language and make some attempt to use sentence variety but with uneven success.	Rely on basic vocabulary and rely on a limited range of syntactic structures.	Use language that is imprecise or unsuitable and reveal a confused understanding of how to write in complete sentences.	Use language that is incoherent or inappropriate and include a preponderance of sentence fragments and run-ons.
Conventions Spelling, punctuation, capitalization, usage	Demonstrate control of the conventions with essentially no errors.	Demonstrate control of the conventions, exhibiting occasional errors only when using sophisticated language (e.g. punctuation of complex sentences).	Demonstrate partial control, exhibiting occasional errors that do not hinder comprehension (e.g. incorrect use of homonyms).	Exhibit frequent errors that somewhat hinder comprehension (e.g. agreement of pronouns and antecedents, spelling of basic words, errors in verb tenses).	Exhibit frequent errors that make comprehension difficult (e.g. subject-verb agreement).	Exhibit numerous errors of several kinds.