

Keep a dialectical journal for *The Catcher in the Rye*. *Dialectical* means “the art or practice of arriving at the truth by the exchange of logical arguments” (dictionary.com). A dialectical journal, then, is used to arrive at the truth of a text by engaging in conversation with the written work itself.

As you read, note 10 passages that stand out -- any 10 passages -- you can't be wrong here! Divide your paper into two columns. In the left-hand column of your paper, record the sentences(s) or passage of your choice. Write out the entire quote; include page numbers. In the right-hand column, write a two-fold critical response. **Part 1:** Capture your first response. **Part 2:** Consider the language landscape -- things like surface features, sentence structure and style.

As you engage with the text, you might....

ask questions	make judgements	analyze the writer's use of specific language
connect to real life	draw inferences	note the purpose and effect of rhetorical devices
develop insights	compare and contrast	connect to other works of literature
draw conclusions	predict consequences	

Example Dialectical Journal based on Shirley Jackson's short story "The Lottery":

<p>1. "The morning of June 27th was clear and sunny, with the fresh warmth of a full summer day; the flowers were blossoming profusely and the grass was richly green" (43).</p>	<p>Hmmm. The opening sentence suggests a mood of promise and possibility. Traditionally, summer is a time when children are out of school, crops grow plentifully before a fall harvest, and the weather is generally wonderful. "Flowers blossoming...grass green," conveys a climate of hope, beauty, and life. Seems like a perfect day. Too perfect, maybe – bordering on the cliché and the uncomfortable. Is something going to happen to destroy the "perfection"? The verbs (was, were, was) indicate that there isn't too much action, allowing the description of the summer day and its natural elements to be the focus.</p>
<p>2. "Although the villagers had forgotten the ritual...they still remembered to use stones"(46).</p>	<p>Wait a minute, a shift in perspective. All along we've had a viewpoint much like a play; only seeing the characters actions and dialogue. This is different. Now, the narrator glances into their thoughts. What are they going to do to Tessie? These seemingly nice people are barbaric. They're going to stone a woman in the community for no apparent reason. Maybe this shift in perspective helps to underscore the horror of their actions.</p>

