

## DIALECTICAL JOURNAL ENTRIES

The “dialectic” was the method Socrates used to teach his students how to be actively engaged in the struggle to derive meaning from an unfamiliar and challenging work. In a dialectical journal, students divide their paper into two columns. One column is labeled TEXT; the other RESPONSE. 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 text.

### **PROCEDURE: YOU MAY HANDWRITE OR TYPE YOUR ENTRIES.**

- As you read, choose phrases, sentences, and/or paragraphs 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 something you knew or perhaps saw on TV.
  - (P) Predict – anticipate what will it be about based on the title and the pictures.
  - (CL) Clarify – answer earlier questions or confirm/disaffirm a prediction. Write down words you don't understand or questions you have about what you read.
  - (R) Reflect – think deeply about what you just read. What conclusions can you draw about the world, about human nature, or just the way things work?
  - (E) Evaluate - make a judgment about what you just read.

### **Sample Dialectical Journal entry:**

*To Kill a Mockingbird Journal*

<b><u>TEXT</u></b>	<b><u>RESPONSE</u></b>
June 17, 2005 Chapters 3 and 4 p. 21: “...as I read the alphabet a faint line appeared between her eyebrows, and after making me read most of <i>My First Reader</i> and the stock market quotations from the <i>Mobile Register</i> , she discovered that I was literate and looked at me with more than faint distaste. Miss Caroline told me to tell my father not to teach me any more, it would interfere with my reading.” (American history)	The novel takes place during the Depression, a time when kids like Scout had almost nothing to look forward to and no prospects for a better future. Scout speaks often of how dirty the kids are, how poor everyone is (so poor that no one notices that anyone else is in any better or worse shape than they are). Miss Caroline does not seem to understand that she is probably one of the few things standing between the kids of that era and total disaster. Her job is so important because she can give them all the key to a better life. Instead, she singles kids out for mistreatment, demeans the children in front of each other, and does not try to inspire the kids in her class.

## Dialectical Journal Entry

**TITLE OF READING:**

**WRITER:**

**DATE OF RESPONSE:**

<u>TEXT</u>	<u>RESPONSE</u>	<u>CODE</u>