

Summer Reading-Writing Assignment 2011 for Grades 9 - 12 English Department at City Honors School

Welcome to your summer reading experience.

Your assignment is to keep a dialectical journal for **each** of the **required** texts. Take notes in the format of a dialectical journal in a marble composition book or spiral bound notebook as you read. **Be prepared to hand these notes in the first day of school.**

What is a *dialectical journal*? One of the definitions of *dialectic* is “discussion and reasoning by dialogues as a method of intellectual investigation” (<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/dialectic>). The objective of keeping a dialectical journal is for you to analyze and comment on passages you deem significant.

DIALECTICAL JOURNAL PROCEDURES:

- Fold your pages in half lengthwise or draw a line down the center of each page using a ruler.
- Use the left side of each page for “note taking” and the right side of each page for “note making.” Note taking includes quotations, interesting literary devices, evidence of themes, character descriptions, recognition of a pattern or recurring motif, and other literary-based observations. The right side should include your thoughts about the specific items identified as being important to your interpretation of the text. It is crucial to process the information reflectively. The space on the right side should show your thinking process and an awareness of your personal approach to literary analysis.
- Include page numbers for every item in the center (see model).
- Include at least **five to seven** journal entries per text read; these entries should span the length of the entire work.

N.B.: You will be required to maintain journal notes on all of the works read throughout the year. This journal will be an invaluable tool not only for assessment preparations but also for class dialogue.

Sample journal entry and grading rubric for the *dialectical journal* are on the back of this paper.

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	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.

Rubric for Dialectical Journal

A = Detailed, meaningful passages, plot and quotation selections. Thoughtful interpretation and commentary about the text; avoids clichés. Includes comments about literary devices such as theme, narrative voice, imagery, conflict, etc., and how each contributes to the meaning of the text. Makes insightful personal connections and asks thought-provoking, insightful questions. Coverage of text is complete and thorough. Journal is neat, organized and professional looking; student has followed directions in creation of journal.

B = Detailed, but good plot and quote selections. Some valid interpretation; addresses some thematic connections. Includes some literary devices, but some discussion on contribution to the meaning. Some personal connection; asks pertinent questions. Adequately addresses all parts of reading assignment. Journal is neat and readable; student has followed directions in the organization of journal.

C = Few good details from the text. Most of the commentary is vague, unsupported, or plot summary/paraphrase. Some listing of literary elements; virtually no discussion on meaning. Limited personal connection; asks few, or obvious questions. Addresses most of the reading assignment, but is not very long or thorough. Journal is relatively neat, but may be difficult to read. Student has not followed all directions for organization; loose-leaf, no columns, not in separate notebook, etc. No page numbers.

D or F = Hardly any good details from the text. All notes are plot summary or paraphrase. Few literary elements, virtually no discussion on meaning. Limited personal connections, no questions. Limited coverage of the text; way too short. Did not follow directions in organizing journal; difficult to read or follow. No page numbers.

**Courtesy of Theresa Sutton*