

## DIALECTICAL JOURNALS FOR *GREAT EXPECTATIONS* BY CHARLES DICKENS

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. Use your journal to incorporate your personal responses and ideas about the theme. You will find that it is a useful way to process what you’re reading.

**You will need to complete Six journals – Two from each part of the novel.**

**Part I:** Chapters 1-19 Pip’s Childhood

**Part II:** Chapters 20-39 Pip’s London Life

**Part III:** Chapters 40-59 Pip’s Attempt to Save Magwitch

### 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

### 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.

### Basic 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 Dialectical Journal entry: THE THINGS THEY CARRIED by Tim O'Brien**

* This is a brief entry. Please try to use the entire right column for your response * 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>	Pg 2	<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 me feel the physical weight of what soldiers have to carry for simple survival. When one combines the emotional weight of loved ones at home, the fear of death, and the responsibility for the men they fight with, with this physical weight, I 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>

**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...

### **Hints for Dialectical Journals**

1. The left-hand column is for direct quotations, citations, summaries and/or clear references to the text.

2. The right-hand column is for personal reactions to the text indicated in the left-hand column.

Your reactions in the right-hand column might include:

- what the passage stirs in his or her thinking or memory
- associations to other texts, events, or references
- her or his feelings about the ideas, tone, and/or style of the work
- words or passages s/he doesn't understand
- words or passages s/he thinks are important
- images that stand out in the work
- repetitions of ideas, words, phrases and/or images
- connections among passages or sections of the work
- identification of symbols present in the work
- speculation about theme
- questions that are raised

3. If you are not sure what to write about in the right-hand column, here are some question options for you:

- What does the quotation mean or suggest to you?
- Why do you think it is important, to you personally and/or to the whole story?
- What confuses you about the quotation? Why is understanding this quotation important to your response to the whole work?
- How does the quotation connect to other ideas in the story?
- How do you think the narrator feels about the ideas, events, or characters he/she is presenting?
- If it suggests a problem, what solution(s) might exist?
- What might have caused the problem?
- Do the characters remind you of anyone else, in fiction, history, or your own life?
- What is revealed about the character(s) through this quotation?
- What are the implications of this idea, in the story and/or beyond it?
- Is the idea suggested correct or reasonable? Do you agree or disagree with it? Why?
- How does this quotation relate to other works you have read?
- How does this quotation relate to your personal experiences?
- What works of art, music, dance, or film does it remind you of? How? How does making this connection help you get more out of the question?

4. Here are some sentence starters for your right-hand column:

- I wonder . . .
- I began to think of . . .
- I suppose that . . .
- I don't see how . . .
- I like the idea . . .
- I noticed that . . .
- I was surprised that . . .
- I can't really understand . . .

- I was reminded of . . .
- \_ I can't believe . . .
- If I had been . . .
- It bothers me when . . .
- Why did . . .
- How did . . .