

Summarizing, Observing, and Questioning Dialectical Journal

Student Resource

Dialectical journals allow you to record a mental conversation with a text. You can use dialectical journals for a variety of tasks: to summarize important ideas in a passage; to ask questions of a text; to record patterns of details, images, and figures of speech; to make inferences; to connect literary elements and techniques to thematic meaning or tone; and to document quotations and evidence.

One kind of dialectical journal is a Summarizing, Observing, and Questioning Journal, which allows you to summarize important points or ideas and to ask questions about a passage. There are three types, or levels, of questions you can ask when completing this type of journal entry:

Level One: Literal	Level Two: Inferential	Level Three: Thematic
Knowledge questions can be answered by skimming the text or doing research.	Inference questions require the reader to make educated guesses supported by the text.	Thematic questions connect the text with real life and with universal themes.
<i>on the line</i>	<i>between the lines</i>	<i>beyond the lines</i>

Answers to Level One questions can be found directly in the text; you literally can put your finger “on the line” that contains the answer. Level One questions often begin with “What?” “Where?” or “Who?”

Answers to Level Two questions are interpretive, requiring readers to make inferences or assumptions based on evidence in the text. Level Two questions ask “How?” and “Why?”

Level Three questions ask you to consider the universal meaning of texts. When considering Level Three questions, ask yourself, “How does this text connect with my life or with life in a larger sense for all human beings?” These questions begin with ideas in the text but move from the “what?” of the text to the “so what?” of abstract issues and thematic concerns.

When you are creating a Summarizing, Observing, and Questioning Dialectical Journal entry, you should follow this procedure:

In the left-hand column

- summarize assigned paragraphs, passages, or chapters.
- write a synopsis of a specific plot point.

In the right-hand column

- note patterns of diction, imagery, figurative language, etc.
- create questions on each of the three levels of questioning.

Chapter 3



Name _____ Date _____ Class Period _____