

AP LANGUAGE – Summer Reading Assignment

I look forward to having you in AP Language and Composition next year. In preparation for the course, I would like you to read *The Grapes of Wrath* by John Steinbeck.

The Grapes of Wrath is an American classic. Yes, it's long, but it is wonderfully symbolic of the 20th century American experience, and resonates just as much in our current times. Junior year is focused on American literature, so this is a good place to start. For *The Grapes of Wrath*, I'd like you to do a **dialectical journal with three entries for each chapter**. A dialectical journal reflects the "conversation" between the reader and the text. (I've put an explanation and sample dialectical journal entry on the following pages.) Pay particular attention to the intercalary chapters, the ones that come between the chapters dealing with the Joad family's experiences. You'll be happy if you've annotated those chapters for **symbolism**. Just sayin'.

DIALECTICAL JOURNALS

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; this process is meant to help you develop a better understanding of the text. Use your journal to incorporate your personal responses to the texts. You will find that this journal is a useful way to process what you are reading, prepare yourself for group discussion, and gather textual evidence for your final project.

STEP ONE: PROCEDURE:

You may choose to do your journal on the computer or write it in a notebook. 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). **Be sure to give each entry a heading (see example below).** In the right-hand column, write your response to the text (ideas/insights, questions, reflections, and comments on each passage) Complete at least three journal entries for each chapter in *The Grapes of Wrath*. These are minimums; feel free to make as many entries as you like as you interact with the text.

STEP TWO: CHOOSING PASSAGES FROM THE TEXT

Look for quotes that seem significant, powerful, thought provoking or puzzling. For example, you might record:

- Effective and/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

STEP THREE: 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. As an honors student, your journal should be made up of 25% basic responses and 75% higher level responses.

Basic Responses (a starting point for understanding the text)

- 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.

Higher Level Responses (deeper thought leading to deeper understanding)

- Analyze the text for use of literary devices (tone, structure, style, imagery); be sure to explain the effect; avoid merely naming techniques.
- Make connections between different characters or events in the text.
- Make connections to a different text (or film, song, etc.).
- Discuss the words, ideas, or actions of the author or character(s).
- Consider an event or description from the perspective of a different character.
- Analyze a passage and its relationship to the story as a whole.

Sample Journal Entries *The Life of Pi* by Yann Martel

Attitude toward life, existence “I have nothing to say of my working life, only that a tie is a noose, and inverted though it is, it will hang a man nonetheless if he’s not careful” (Martel 6).	Pi respects the importance of work; however, he finds much more value in the beauty of life itself. Pi believes that to ignore the offerings of life and to focus too much on work is detrimental to one’s health..
Imagery to create tone of disgust “A foul and pungent smell, an earthy mix of rust and excrement hung in the air. There was blood everywhere, coagulating to a deep red crust. A single fly buzzed about, sounding like an alarm bell of insanity” (Martel 127).	Martel paints a disturbing picture in his description of the lifeboat following the slow painful death of the zebra. He describes the air as smelling like “an earthy mix of rust and excrement,” the boat as having “blood everywhere,” and his only companion as “a single fly...sounding like an alarm bell of insanity.” Through this shockingly filthy and revolting portrayal of the lifeboat, Martel establishes a tone of absolute disgust.
Diction, word choice to create tone of fear, confusion “The ship sank. It made a sound like a monstrous metallic burp. Things bubbled at the surface and then vanished. Everything was screaming: the sea, the wind, my heart” (Martel 97).	When describing the sinking of the Tsimtsum, Martel utilizes a variety of strong and violent words to establish a tone of disorder and fear. Martel describes the sound of the ship sinking as a “monstrous metallic burp,” simultaneously noting its enormity and its violent, industrial nature. He also says that “everything was screaming,” suggesting disorder and confusion.

I suggest you purchase your own copies of the book so you can annotate it. You can buy a used copy on Amazon for about \$5.00. There is also a PDF available online. I also have a limited number of copies available at school, so come by Room 22 if you need to borrow a copy.

Grapes of Wrath PDF:

<https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&pid=sites&srcid=aW1hZ2luZXByZXAuY29tfGh1bWFuaXRpZXMtMjAxMi0yMDEzfGd4OjUyZjkyMWM2OTYzOWVhNGE>

Do yourself a favor and don't wait until three days before school starts to do your project. It's going to take some time! Part of proving you are ready for AP level work is turning in your assignment on time. Don't stress, but don't wait until the last minute or you will find yourself out of AP Lang before you even start.

Next year is going to be great, and I'm so glad you've made the choice to be in my class. I look forward to having your bright young minds become even brighter in AP Lang!

See you in August,

Ms. McClure