TKAM Dialectical Journal

As you read *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee, you will be asked to keep a dialectical journal. This is YOUR journal. Though it is much like a diary, I DO NOT want you to tell me about what you did over the summer or retell me Lee’s story. What I DO want is for you to tell me what is coming to mind as you read *To Kill a Mockingbird*. While these entries should be based around your opinion, focus less on whether or not you liked the novel. Dig deep!

List of possible entry ideas:

- **Make connections between the text and your own experiences.** What does the reading make you think of? Does it remind you of anyone of anything?
- **Make connections between the text and other texts or events.** Does this make you think of any other related issues from the past or the present?
- **Ask yourself questions about the text.** What don’t you understand about the novel or a particular passage within the novel?
- **Write down interesting words, images, phrases, or details.** Ask questions about why the author might have chosen them. Tell how they made you feel.
- **Think about answering the following questions as you dig for depth:** how so? and so? so what? why? how?
- I do NOT want you to summarize the reading in your entry. However, it is required that you include passages and/or quotes from the readings to help you make your point! Make sure you include page number citations (see below).
- You will be responsible for a total of 10 entries that are a minimum of two paragraphs each. (A paragraph involves 4–6 sentences, minimum.) Though I won’t be grading for spelling, grammar or mechanics, these things are still very important and should be taken into consideration.

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<th>Quotation</th>
<th>Response</th>
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<td>In the left column, students record a significant passage of text as a quotation (using MLA citations). A quotation should be an important, significant, thought-provoking passage from text focusing on a theme or symbol.</td>
<td>In the right column, students record their thoughtful and meaningful responses. The following are some suggestions, but should not be the only approach: ✓ What this passage reminds student of from own life ✓ How this passage relates to current issues happening in society, country, world ✓ What other text connections are being hinted at ✓ How the passage connects with the student emotionally, psychologically, or intellectually ✓ Interpreting and analyzing the passage for its deeper meaning ✓ NO 2ND PERSON PRONOUNS (you, your, yourself, yours) - 1ST PERSON PRONOUNS OKAY</td>
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OUTSTANDING EXAMPLE
“She was a good enough Mami, fussing and scolding and giving advice, but a terrible girlfriend parent, a real failure of a Mom” (Cisneros 901).

The narrator of the story makes the difference between a “Mami” and a “Mom” very clear here: an American mother is a friend first and a parent second, whereas a Dominican mother is parent first and friend second. The narrator believes her mother is not the right kind of mom for her and her sisters, who are trying to fit in America. How could she be the right kind when she’s *so Dominican*?

This passage reminds me of how hard my family has fought to fit in with our adopted culture and the ways my brothers and sisters fought to not be different. We worked so hard to not speak with accents that would give away our family’s origins. We wanted to fit in so desperately.

**SATISFACTORY EXAMPLE**

“‘She was a good enough Mami, fussing and scolding and giving advice, but a terrible girlfriend parent, a real failure of a Mom.’” (PG 901).

The narrator explains the difference between a “Mami” and a “Mom.” She doesn’t think her mother tries as hard to fit in with Americans as she and her sisters have to try.

**NEEDS WORK EXAMPLE**

She was a good mommy

*Response lacks thoughtful response, uses pronouns instead of nouns, lacks insight or thoughtful engagement with the passage.*

- She thinks she’s stupid.

**Reminders:**

- 10 quotation-response combinations per assignment
- Take some time to develop thoughtful, meaningful, insightful responses.
- Try to select important passages that show a theme (universal life message) or symbol being developed.
- Journals must be typed in MLA format and brought to class as instructed by the teacher.
- Create MLA-style citations by using the author’s last name and a number indicating the page in parentheses: (Lee 42).