

## English IV: *All American Boys on the Road to Justice*

Students will read *All American Boys* by Jason Reynolds and Brendan Kiely, and complete **one** (1) dialectical journal entry **per chapter** (see instructions below). We will be using this novel as a basis for this unit but will also be including several nonfiction articles, some poems, author interviews, news clips, and a documentary. If you have any questions, please contact me at [williams.ck@easthartford.org](mailto:williams.ck@easthartford.org) or go to [www.thatenglishteacher.com](http://www.thatenglishteacher.com) for more information.

### Dialectical Journals

#### Purpose:

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 we read. Use your journal to incorporate your personal responses to the texts, your ideas about the themes we cover and our class discussions. You will find that it is a useful way to process what you’re reading, prepare yourself for group discussion, and gather textual evidence for your Literary Analysis assignments.

#### 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 (limit to only two) - *be sure to respond to/reflect upon your question if/when you find an answer.*
  - ✓ (C) Connect – make a connection to your life, the world, or another text
  - ✓ (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
- Provide at least one (1) entry per chapter. **Each entry must be a minimum of sixty (60) words long. Please note that this minimum word count can only earn you a “C” average for that dialectical journal entry.**
- *Your responses should be in your Composition Book.*

#### 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	(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 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. (127 words)

### **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 BUT NO LESS than 60 words. Please use your Composition Book for your journals. Students also have the option of typing their responses.

#### **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 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...

#### **Higher Level Responses**

- Analyze the text for use of literary devices (tone, structure, style, imagery)
- 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

### **Important information:**

- Your dialectical journal will be assessed and given a score at random times throughout the unit. –

#### **Formative Assessment**

- These dialectical journal entries will become an important resource for your literary analysis paper at the end of the unit. – **Summative Assessment**