

Dialectical Journals—Rhetorical Analysis and Persuasion Compiling Evidence and Writing Commentary Foundation Lesson

About this Lesson

This lesson demonstrates how students can use journaling to move from gathering evidence, to evaluating that evidence, to writing commentary about how the evidence supports an argument. Students may already be familiar with using dialectical journals in the analysis of fiction. Their trepidation when confronted with the task of evaluating and analyzing argumentative writing can be lessened by the use of the familiar dialectical journal format.

The purpose of using dialectical journals is to help students document their thoughts about a text and to transfer these thoughts into their writing in an organized, coherent manner. By making the link between device and meaning more concrete, dialectical journals can aid students as they prepare for class discussions, write analytical essays, or take exams. As with journals used to analyze fiction, journals used to evaluate an argument should be clearly directed and focused.

Students can use these journals to:

- summarize a text
- pose questions
- read closely for details, images, diction, etc.
- notice patterns and make connections
- connect techniques and devices to purpose, effect, and meaning
- choose appropriate evidence
- document quotations
- make inferences about claims, supporting reasons, and authorial assumptions
- write analysis justifying an assertion

Students can use two broad methods of reasoning—inductive or deductive—to draw conclusions about the text they are analyzing:

Inductive reasoning moves from specific information to a general conclusion. This method involves examining the specific devices and examples in a text to detect patterns and contrasts that lead to a conclusion about the writer’s purpose or position.

Deductive reasoning moves from a generalization to a specific conclusion. This method involves beginning with a theory about the writer’s purpose or position and then finding devices, examples, patterns, and contrasts that support that theory.

Dialectical journals support either reasoning strategy, as students may use them to uncover patterns in a text (inductive), or they may respond to a thematic idea by targeting devices and elements that support the concept (deductive).

Passages for Laying the Foundation® lessons are selected to challenge students, while lessons and activities make texts accessible. Guided practice with challenging texts allows students to gain the proficiency necessary to read independently at or above grade level.

This lesson is included in Module 9: Understanding the Appeals.

Objectives

Students will

- determine the context of an argument.
- evaluate the effectiveness of an author’s claims and reasoning.
- select appropriate evidence from the text to support a literary or rhetorical analysis.
- make inferences about topics based upon their reading.
- analyze a text by linking various rhetorical devices and elements to meaning, including
 - allusions
 - figurative language
 - imagery
 - mood
 - detail
 - tone
 - diction
 - theme
 - examples, facts, statistics
 - voice
- write thoughtful and effective commentary to support their analysis or claims.

Level

Grades Six through Ten

Connection to Common Core Standards for English Language Arts

LTF® Foundation Lessons are designed to be used across grade levels and therefore are aligned to the CCSS Anchor Standards. Teachers should consult their own grade-level-specific Standards. The activities in this lesson allow teachers to address the following Common Core Standards:

Explicitly addressed in this lesson

Code	Standard	Level of Thinking	Depth of Knowledge
R.1	Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it. Cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.	Understand	III
R.2	Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.	Analyze	III
R.3	Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.	Analyze	III
R.4	Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.	Analyze	III
R.6	Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.	Analyze	III
R.8	Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.	Evaluate	III

R.10	Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.	Understand	II
W.4	Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.	Create	III

Implicitly addressed in this lesson

Code	Standard	Level of Thinking	Depth of Knowledge
L.1	Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.	Understand	I
L.2	Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.	Understand	I

LTF Skill Focus

The foundation for LTF English lessons is the Skill Progression Chart that identifies key skills for each domain, beginning with grade 6 and adding more complex skills at each subsequent grade level while reinforcing skills introduced at previous grade levels. The Skill Focus for each individual lesson identifies the skills actually addressed in that lesson.

Levels of Thinking					
Remember	Understand	Apply	Analyze	Evaluate	Create
Close Reading <i>written, spoken, and visual texts</i>		Grammar <i>purposeful use of language for effect</i>		Composition <i>written, spoken, and visual products</i>	
Reading Strategies Annotation Determining Audience Determining Author’s Purpose Determining Main Idea Inference Literary Elements Detail Diction connotation denotation Imagery Rhetorical shift Tone tone determined through diction, imagery, detail, point of view, and syntax Figures of Speech Metaphor Literary Techniques Argumentation cause/effect deductive/inductive reasoning emotional appeals ethical appeals logical appeals Literary Forms Nonfiction				Types Expository analytical Structural Elements Body incorporation of quotes use of commentary use of evidence	

Connections to AP*

Students must perform rhetorical analysis on both the multiple choice and free response sections of the AP English Language exam. Students must be able to incorporate effective quotations and to write cogent, thoughtful commentary on the free response section of both AP English Literature and AP English Language exams.

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Materials and Resources

- copies of the Student Activity

Assessments

The following kinds of formative assessments are embedded in this lesson:

- graphic organizers

Teaching Suggestions

A dialectical journal can be an important part of an English class employing Pre-AP strategies but only if teachers have *a specific purpose and criteria for each journal*. Journals may take many forms, but teachers should select or create a journal based on the skill(s) students are expected to learn. To use journals effectively, teachers should

- model the activity for students prior to making an assignment.
- establish specific requirements; e.g., five pieces of evidence with inferences and commentary, page numbers, at least two sentences of commentary for each piece of evidence, etc.
- evaluate the journals. They should not be so long or overwhelming that students (and teachers) dread them.
- require or allow students to use journals when writing essays, participating in discussions, or taking tests.

Answers

Answers for this lesson are subjective and will vary. To obtain the maximum benefit of the lesson, ask students to go beyond the expected responses. Suggested answers have been provided below.

Activity One: Determining Context for Evaluating an Argument

Questions to evaluate the argument	Answer	Evidence from the text
What is the writer’s/speaker’s purpose? What does he/she hope to accomplish?	<i>Dr. Oz argues that our current understanding of healthy eating is much more scientific and accurate than it has been in the past.</i>	<i>“The good news is that we now know so much more than we ever did about how food reacts in our bodies. . . .And with that comes new insight into healthy eating that is more than just conventional wisdom or gimmickry” (lines 55-59).</i>
Who is the audience?	<i>those who want to eat well and be healthy but who find the current diet market confusing</i>	<i>“More often than you’d think, the problem is that a lot of folks just don’t know what a healthy diet looks like—and why should they, since the rules keep changing?” (42-44).</i>
What assumptions about the audience does the writer/speaker make?	<i>Dr. Oz believes that his readers genuinely want to eat healthy foods and to live healthy lives.</i>	<i>“Trust me, no one who’s ever been wheeled into my operating room is happy to be there. And the problem, believe it or not, isn’t that they doubt the wisdom of a healthy diet” (lines 38-42).</i>
What authority does the writer/speaker have that makes him/her credible?	<i>Dr. Oz is a Harvard-trained heart surgeon. He hosts his own television talk show aimed at educating the public on healthy living strategies.</i>	<i>Dr. Oz’s article appears in Time magazine’s health and nutrition section, and the reputable magazine presents him as an expert in the field.</i>
What claims does the writer/speaker make?	<i>Scientists have discovered how food interacts with the human body, so we now know better how to follow a healthy diet.</i>	<i>“The good news is that we now know so much more than we ever did about how food reacts in our bodies—how specific molecules affect specific functions of specific cells. And with that comes new insight into healthy eating that is more than just conventional wisdom or gimmickry” (lines 55-59).</i>
What issues are addressed or ignored?	<i><u>Addressed:</u> the dangers of not following a healthy diet</i> <i><u>Ignored:</u> the unwillingness of people to follow a healthy diet, even though they are aware of the consequences</i>	<i>“What confounded my colleagues and me was how and why our patients landed in our care in the first place—lying on a gurney, about to have their chest opened with a band saw” (lines 15-18).</i>

Activity Two: Writing an Entry in a Rhetorical Analysis Dialectical Journal

Evidence (quotation and context)	Type of Appeal Devices That Create Appeal	Inference—Commentary (explanation, interpretation, evaluation)
<p>Quotation: “...I was brought up short by the traffic graffiti of atherosclerotic plaque” (lines 2-4).</p> <p>Context: Dr. Oz describes looking at diseased heart muscle during his first heart surgery.</p>	<p>Type of appeal: <i>emotional</i></p> <p>Device(s) that create appeal: Diction: “traffic,” “graffiti”</p>	<p>Dr. Oz’s metaphor connecting the patient’s clogged arteries to “traffic graffiti” suggests a jumbled network of jammed blood vessels, much like a highway blocked with cars. The negative word “graffiti” describes the ugly plaque, which acts as a pollutant and scars the beauty and efficiency of the blood vessels. In one phrase, Dr. Oz conveys the dangerous, contaminating effect of atherosclerotic plaque on our circulatory system.</p>
<p>Quotation: I was learning to operate and was frankly thrilled at the prospect of harvesting a leg vein to bypass the blockage” (lines 7-9).</p> <p>Context: Dr. Oz describes looking at a cardiovascular system clogged with plaque.</p>	<p>Type of appeal: <i>ethical</i></p> <p>Device(s) that create appeal: stating qualifications or personal experience; personal anecdote</p>	<p>As a surgeon, Dr. Oz was trained to “heal with steel.” His opening anecdote about observing a patient’s plaque-clogged cardiovascular system gives Dr. Oz credibility as a medical spokesperson. The fact he is “thrilled” to harvest a leg vein is undercut by his later claim that the sick patient wasn’t thrilled “to have (his) chest opened with a band saw” (lines 17-18). Dr. Oz’s medical expertise makes his comments about new dietary guidelines persuasive and believable.</p>
<p>Quotation: “A dietary free-for-all, in the U.S. and elsewhere, is producing not the healthiest generation in history but one in steady decline, with epidemics of obesity, cardiovascular disease and diabetes. More than two-thirds of U.S. adults, and more than a third of kids, are overweight or obese” (lines 32-35).</p> <p>Context: Dr. Oz identifies the overarching problem his argument tries to address—the negative impact of our nation’s dietary practices on our health.</p>	<p>Type of appeal: <i>logical</i></p> <p>Device(s) that create appeal: Statistics: “two-thirds of adults, and more than a third of kids, are overweight or obese.”</p>	<p>Dr. Oz uses statistics to impress upon his readers that the nation’s poor dietary practices pose a significant and dangerous problem to public health. The statistics prove his assertion that our nation’s health is deteriorating, and Dr. Oz implies that the “epidemic” number of obesity-related diseases will negatively impact our standard of living and life expectancy.</p>

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The process of gathering, interpreting, and evaluating evidence is more manageable if you begin by collecting your evidence in a Dialectical Journal. Using this format helps you organize your thoughts and reflect on the significance of the evidence, which later makes writing either the rhetorical analysis essay or the persuasive essay much easier.

Read carefully the following writing prompt and passage before completing the lesson on dialectical journals.

Prompt: The passage below examines the connection between health and nutrition. Read the passage carefully. Then write an essay in which you discuss the rhetorical devices the author uses to explain the confusion consumers experience in understanding what constitutes good nutrition. Consider such devices as facts, examples, and diction.

The first time I looked into an open chest cavity at a heart muscle working to pump blood through the body, I was brought up short by the traffic graffiti of atherosclerotic plaque. This waxy goo, often found in
5 overweight people, builds up in the vessels surrounding the organ in which, philosophers tell us, the soul lives. But I pushed any such distracting thoughts from my mind. I was learning to operate and was frankly thrilled at the prospect of harvesting a leg vein to bypass the blockage. Surgeons
10 are trained to think that way, and rightly so. Do a good day's work and a life is saved, a bad day's work and a patient dies. No room there for anything but the job at hand.

My objective was to heal with steel. That, in some
15 ways, was the easy part. What confounded my colleagues and me was how and why our patients landed in our care in the first place—lying on a gurney, about to have their chest opened with a band saw. The biggest reason was often the simplest one: the food they ate.

20 Our natural history as a species is a vast canvas of events whose peaks and valleys, successes and tragedies were often determined by the availability or scarcity of food—that is, until the 20th century. While famine remains a terrible reality in some parts of the world, most of us have

25 almost unrestricted access to food. We produce a safe and
abundant supply of fruits, vegetables, meats, and dairy; we
seal it, freeze it and protect it from spoilage and
contamination. We even fortify it with vitamins and other
healthy additives.

30 This was the kind of bounty early civilizations could
only dream of. But our triumph of nutritional ingenuity has
had an unfortunate inverse effect. A dietary free-for-all, in
the U.S. and elsewhere, is producing not the healthiest
generation in history but one in steady decline, with
35 epidemics of obesity, cardiovascular disease and diabetes.
More than two-thirds of U.S. adults, and more than a third
of kids, are overweight or obese.

The problem isn't that people don't want to eat well and
be well. Trust me, no one who's ever been wheeled into my
40 operating room is happy to be there. And the problem,
believe it or not, isn't that they doubt the wisdom of a
healthy diet. More often than you'd think, the problem is
that a lot of folks just don't know what a healthy diet looks
like—and why should they, since the rules keep changing?

45 Time was, red meat was healthful, and pasta was bad;
then pasta was great, and red meat was terrible, all of which
lasted until the Atkins craze came along and the rules
flipped again. There were the Mediterranean diet and the
South Beach diet and the low-fat diet and the grapefruit diet
50 and, yes, the cabbage-soup diet, and all of them promised
great things. Red wine is the newest route to health, unless
of course it's dark chocolate—or unless it turns out to be
neither. With every cure, it seems, comes a problem; every
new truth somehow turns out to be part myth.

55 The good news is that we now know so much more
than we ever did about how food reacts in our bodies—how
specific molecules affect specific functions of specific
cells. And with that comes new insight into healthy eating
that is more than just conventional wisdom or gimmickry.

Activity One: Determining Context for Evaluating an Argument

A speaker or writer must consider several issues to develop a persuasive argument. Some of those issues are listed on the chart below in the left-hand column. Look at the questions and consider them carefully. Read the passage by Dr. Mehmet Oz and find the answers and evidence that would support a conclusion. Write the answer in the center column and the evidence in the right-hand column.

Questions to evaluate the argument	Answer	Evidence from the text
What is the writer's/speaker's purpose? What does he/she hope to accomplish?		
Who is the audience?		
What assumptions about the audience does the writer/speaker make?		
What authority does the writer/speaker have that makes him/her credible?		
What claims does the writer/speaker make?		
What issues are addressed or ignored?		

Activity Two: Writing an Entry in a Rhetorical Analysis Dialectical Journal

Using the dialectical journal is a way to break down writing into manageable steps. When you approach a dialectical journal activity, follow this procedure for filling out the graphic organizer:

In the left column:

Record facts, quotations, examples, emotionally loaded words or images, and other forms of evidence the writer uses to establish his or her argument.

Note the context of the quotation or detail from the text.

Note the type of appeal.

Note the device(s) that create the appeal (diction, repetition, etc.).

Use quotation marks around quotes.

In the right column:

Explain or interpret the significance of the evidence.

Read the example journal entry carefully. Then use it as a model to practice the techniques you have learned, using the excerpt from Dr. Oz’s *Time* magazine article “The Oz Diet: No More Myths. No More Fads. What You Should Eat—and Why.”

Evidence (quotation and context)	Type of Appeal Devices That Create Appeal	Inference—Commentary (explanation, interpretation, evaluation)
<p>Quotation: “...I was brought up short by the traffic graffiti of atherosclerotic plaque” (lines 2-4)</p> <p>Context: Dr. Oz describes looking at diseased heart muscle during his first heart surgery.</p>	<p>Type of appeal: emotional</p> <p>Device(s) that create appeal: Diction: “traffic,” “graffiti”</p>	<p>Dr. Oz’s metaphor connecting the patient’s clogged arteries to “traffic graffiti” suggests a jumbled network of jammed blood vessels, much like a highway blocked with cars. The negative word “graffiti” describes the ugly plaque, which acts as a pollutant and scars the beauty and efficiency of the blood vessels. In one phrase, Dr. Oz conveys the dangerous, ugly, contaminating nature of atherosclerotic plaque on our circulatory system.</p>

