**DIALOGIC JOURNAL GUIDELINES**

The Dialogic Journal can help you organize your thoughts during the pre-writing phase. Fill in your DJ by jotting down phrases, sentences, or ideas from your chosen text that stand out to you or have some kind of effect on you.

Next to each quote/passage, fill in the columns that ask you to explain, defend, and critique your reactions to the passage. You will also find it helpful to pinpoint the author’s thesis (the argument he or she is trying to make) and purpose (why the author feels this argument is important).

The following instructions will guide you in each section:

**I. Understand**

At the top of the journal on the opposite page, write down the author’s thesis in your own words. What is the argument the author is trying to make throughout the essay? Then, think about how the author tries to make that argument: What and where is the thesis? When does he/she get to it and why do you think it is organized in that way? How does the author’s attitude toward the topic shape the way the he or she presents the material?

**II. Explore**

Write down the phrases or passages that made the biggest impression on you for any reason. If certain statements intrigue you, or if you are attracted to certain statements, issues, or problems, write your response. Remember, the passage doesn’t necessarily have to be something you like or agree with. If a passage confuses you or gives you pause, this could be a good passage to explore further. Ask yourself questions about the text: What perplexes you about a particular passage? Try beginning, “I wonder why... ” or “I’m having trouble understanding how ...,” or “It perplexes me that...,” or “I was surprised when....”

**III. Explain**

Why does this particular passage stand out to you? What made you pause and take notice? Make connections with your own experience. What does the reading make you think of? Does it remind you of anything or anyone? Make connections with other texts or concepts or events. Do you see any similarities between this text (concepts, events) and other texts (concepts, events)? Does it bring to mind other related issues?

**IV. Defend**

Connect your explanation of the passage (above) with the author’s thesis and purpose. In what ways are you reacting to the way the author is making his or her point? What strategies is the writer using to help her/him achieve her/his purpose? Do you think the writer intended you to have the response you did to the passage? Why or why not? Do you agree or disagree? Both? If you’re not sure, try agreeing with the writer. Write down the supporting ideas. Try arguing with the writer. On what points, or about what issues, do you disagree? But DON’T JUST agree or disagree with the topic. Try to understand and be analytical about how the author constructs the essay and how these strategies and decisions may affect your reading/understanding of the topic.

**V. Critique**

How does the passage you wrote down work to support the author’s purpose? Do you see a particular strategy at work in this passage? Do you think that the author achieves his or her purpose with this passage? Do they make an effective argument (whether you agree or not)? Do their strategies fit their purpose? What did you learn from this passage? Do you think other readers would find it helpful? How? Why?