*To Kill A Mockingbird:* Dialectical Journals for Literary Analysis

**Unit Essential Questions:**

1. **How do writers use literary elements to develop theme?**
2. **How do readers identify and use literary elements to evaluate theme?**

Dialectical Journal Instructions:

1. Select passages in which the writer is clearly using a literary element.
2. Identify a thematic topic that is emphasized or represented in the passage.
3. Compose commentary about how the content of the passage and the use of the literary element help the writer communicate larger ideas.

Use the following guiding questions (varying in difficulty) below to help you select passages from the text for analysis. Be clear whether your purpose is reading like a reader or a writer.

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| Easier: | Medium: | Harder: |
| **Content**: Describe how racism affects the events in the novel *To Kill a Mockingbird* by analyzing at least 3 significant moments, dealing with race, from the novel.  **Craft**: How is characterization used to establish the theme? Which characters exemplify this theme? | **Content**: A recurring symbol throughout the novel *To Kill a Mockingbird* is the story Atticus tellsl his children, “...it is a sin to kill a mockingbird.” Explain this metaphor and analyze the ways in which Atticus Finch, Tom Robinson, and Boo Radley are all metaphorically portrayed as mockingbirds.  **Craft**: How does Lee’s use of point of view & perspective affect the reader’s mood and understanding of the text. | **Content**: Describe the ways in which economic class (how much money people have) affect the events in the novel *To Kill a Mockingbird,*  by analyzing at least 3 significant moments, dealing with class, from the novel.  **Craft**: How does Lee use imagery to develop the tone? How does that tone help to establish the theme? |

Sample Dialectical Journal (*The Hunger Games*):

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| **Passage (with citation)** | **Literary Element** | **Thematic Topic** | **Commentary** |
| “The boy took one look back to the bakery as if checking that the coast was clear, then, his attention back on the pig, he threw a loaf of bread in my direction. The second quickly followed, and he sloshed back to the bakery, closing the kitchen door tightly behind him” (Collins 23). | Conflict - Character vs. Society, Character vs. Self | Compassion | This description emphasizes the extreme poverty of District 12, and how characters come together to face the challenges of their society. Despite his own family’s needs, Peeta’s **compassion** compels him to provide for a younger Katniss, correlating with the moment where Katniss realizes that she must become the provider for her own family. Their mutual **compassion** for each other and their loved ones leads to their unified defiance against the capital. |

**Thematic Concepts** - Here are a few to consider; however, you are not limited to these options:

Courage, Innocence, Status, Companionship, Justice, Discrimination, Misogyny, Power Struggle, The American Dream

**Dialectical Journals** – ideally per chapter, but not required; depends on your focus and purpose

1 Example

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Passage (with citation) | Literary Element | Thematic Topic | Commentary |
|  |  |  |  |

2 Example

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Passage (with citation) | Literary Element | Thematic Topic | Commentary |
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3 Example

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Passage (with citation) | Literary Element | Thematic Topic | Commentary |
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4 Example

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Passage (with citation) | Literary Element | Thematic Topic | Commentary |
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5 Example

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Passage (with citation) | Literary Element | Thematic Topic | Commentary |
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