

DIALECTICAL JOURNAL

The Pearl | John Steinbeck | Summer Reading 2026

Name: _____ Grade: 9th Date Completed: _____

What Is a Dialectical Journal?

A dialectical journal is a conversation between you and the text. You respond to a meaningful passage with your own thinking, then make a connection in the third column. It is not a summary. It is evidence of your mind at work.

Instructions

Read each chapter of *The Pearl* carefully before completing the journal entries for that chapter.

Three passages have been selected for you per chapter. Use them - do not substitute your own unless instructed.

In the Response column, write your analysis of the passage. Avoid low-level verbs like says, shows, gets, or talks about. Choose stronger verbs: reveals, exposes, challenges, illuminates, suggests, forces, demonstrates, confronts, critiques, underscores, foreshadows, complicates.

In the third column, you will alternate between two types of connections. The blue column asks you to respond to a corresponding Bible verse. You may use the verse provided or substitute your own - but you must still respond to the same prompt question printed in that column. The gold column asks an odd question designed to connect the text to your own life and experience.

Be specific. A response that says this reminds me of a time I wanted something earns less than one that names the object, the year, the person, and what happened when you got it or didn't.

On the first day of school, you may be asked to discuss one of your entries in a brief one-on-one conversation. Be ready to explain your thinking.

Submit a photograph of your completed handwritten journal along with this document. **No handwritten copy, no credit.**

Verb Bank -- Use These Instead of Says / Shows / Gets

reveals | exposes | challenges | illuminates | suggests | forces | demonstrates | confronts | critiques | underscores | establishes | conveys | portrays | embodies | signals | evokes | foreshadows | heightens | complicates | disrupts

A Note on Honesty

The odd questions in the gold column are designed to be impossible for artificial intelligence to answer on your behalf because they ask for your specific memories, your specific experiences, and your specific life. The best journals are the ones that feel like the student -- not a search engine.

Side A | Bible Verse Column

Text from The Pearl	Your Response / Analysis	Bible Verse Column
"Kino heard the Song of the Family... It was all around in the air, a soft uncontrolled tune of the morning... the Song of the Family clung about him." (3)		Psalm 133:1 - How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity. Respond: Steinbeck opens the novel with music as a symbol of family harmony. How does this verse illuminate what Kino stands to lose before the story even begins?
"This doctor was of a race which for nearly four hundred years had beaten and starved and robbed and despised Kino's race, and frightened it too, so that the indigene came humbly to the door." (11)		James 2:9 - But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers. Respond: Steinbeck exposes a system of racial oppression in one sentence. How does this verse speak to the injustice Kino encounters at the doctor's gate?
"Kino heard the music of the pearl, distorted and insane... And the beauty of the pearl, winking and glimmering in the light of the little candle, cozened his brain with its beauty." (17)		Proverbs 4:23 - Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it. Respond: Before the pearl is even found, Kino already hears its music. What does this reveal about the danger of desire that begins before we have what we want?

Text from The Pearl	Your Response / Analysis	Bible Verse Column

Side B | Odd Question Column

Text from The Pearl	Your Response / Analysis	Odd Question Column
"Kino heard the Song of the Family... It was all around in the air, a soft uncontrolled tune of the morning." (3)		Odd Question: Describe the feeling of waking up in a home where everything felt exactly right - safe, warm, and in place. Where were you, how old were you, and what made that morning different from others?
"This doctor was of a race which for nearly four hundred years had beaten and starved and robbed and despised Kino's race." (11)		Odd Question: Think of a time you were turned away, ignored, or dismissed because of something about you that you could not change. Describe the moment as specifically as you can - where were you, who was there, what was said?
"Kino heard the music of the pearl, distorted and insane... cozened his brain with its beauty." (17)		Odd Question: Name something you wanted so badly that the wanting itself changed you - your mood, your behavior, your relationships. What was the thing and what did the wanting cost you before you even had it?

Text from The Pearl	Your Response / Analysis	Odd Question Column

Side A | Bible Verse Column

Text from The Pearl	Your Response / Analysis	Bible Verse Column
"And because the need was great and the desire was great, the little secret melody of the pearl that might be was stronger than the Song of Evil." (20)		1 Timothy 6:9 - Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. Respond: Kino's hope overrides his instincts. How does this verse foreshadow what the pearl's promise will ultimately cost?
"In his mind a new song had come, the Song of the Pearl That Might Be, warm and soft and wild, beautiful and terrible..." (25)		Matthew 6:21 - For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Respond: The pearl produces its own song in Kino's mind even before he sells it. How does this verse explain the way the pearl has already begun to redirect Kino's entire inner life?
"It is said that humans are never satisfied, that you give them one thing and they want something more... It is one of the greatest talents the species has." (25)		Ecclesiastes 5:10 - Whoever loves money never has enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with their income. Respond: The narrator's comment is ironic and unsettling. How does this verse both confirm and complicate the narrator's tone here?

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Side B | Odd Question Column

Text from The Pearl	Your Response / Analysis	Odd Question Column
"And because the need was great and the desire was great, the little secret melody of the pearl that might be was stronger than the Song of Evil." (20)		Odd Question: Describe a time when hope for something good made you ignore a warning sign you could clearly see. What were you hoping for and what did you choose not to look at directly?
"In his mind a new song had come, the Song of the Pearl That Might Be, warm and soft and wild, beautiful and terrible..." (25)		Odd Question: What is a dream you have carried for a long time that feels both exciting and frightening at the same time? Describe it without explaining why you haven't pursued it -- just describe what it looks like when you imagine it.
"It is said that humans are never satisfied." (25)		Odd Question: Think of something you desperately wanted, eventually got, and then discovered you still weren't satisfied. How long did the satisfaction last and what did you want next?

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Side A | Bible Verse Column

Text from The Pearl	Your Response / Analysis	Bible Verse Column
"The news stirred up something infinitely black and evil in the town; the black distillate was like the scorpion, or like hunger in the smell of food, or like loneliness when love is withheld." (23)		Proverbs 14:30 -- A heart at peace gives life to the body, but envy rots the bones. Respond: Steinbeck describes envy as a living poison moving through the town. How does this verse speak to the way Kino's good fortune transforms the people around him?
"The priest came to Kino's house... He spoke of the great heritage of the church... and he said, 'My son, you have this great chance. Give thanks to God.' And he thought, 'I must speak of the pearl to my bishop.'" (28)		Matthew 23:27-28 -- You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men's bones. Respond: The priest's public words and private thoughts are completely different. What does Steinbeck suggest about the corruption of those who use faith as a cover for greed?
"Kino's pearl had stirred up something infinitely evil... Every man suddenly became related to Kino's pearl, and Kino's pearl went into the dreams, the schemes, the speculations, the schemes of everyone." (24)		1 Timothy 6:10 -- For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. Respond: The pearl spreads like a disease through the community. How does this verse explain why

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		good fortune can become a source of danger rather than blessing?

Side B | Odd Question Column

Text from The Pearl	Your Response / Analysis	Odd Question Column
"The news stirred up something infinitely black and evil in the town; the black distillate was like the scorpion, or like hunger in the smell of food." (23)		Odd Question: Have you ever felt genuine envy -- not just wanting something someone else had, but actually resenting them for having it? Describe the situation without excusing yourself. What did the envy feel like from the inside?
"The priest came... He said, 'My son, you have this great chance. Give thanks to God.' And he thought, 'I must speak of the pearl to my bishop.'" (28)		Odd Question: Describe a time you witnessed someone say one thing publicly while clearly thinking or doing something completely different privately. What did you feel observing that gap between their words and their intentions?
"Kino's pearl... went into the dreams, the schemes, the speculations of everyone." (24)		Odd Question: Think of a movie, story, or real situation where one person's good luck made others turn on them. What does that pattern tell you about the way people respond to someone else's fortune when their own life is hard?

Text from The Pearl	Your Response / Analysis	Odd Question Column

Side A | Bible Verse Column

Text from The Pearl	Your Response / Analysis	Bible Verse Column
"The pearl buyers...were not individuals buying pearls, but were the tentacles of the central office... one man, and this was to protect the buyers from each other and the community from a panic of heady wealth." (47)		Amos 5:11-12 -- You levy a straw tax on the poor and impose a tax on their grain... You oppress the innocent and take bribes and you deprive the poor of justice. Respond: The dealers are presented as a system rather than individuals. How does this verse speak to the structural nature of the injustice Kino faces?
"Kino looked into his pearl to find his vision. 'When I sell it I will have a rifle,' he said, and that thought was good... and it took the place of the rifle thought. 'My son will read,' he said quietly. 'He will know and through him we will know.'" (39)		Proverbs 22:6 -- Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it. Respond: Kino's deepest dream is not wealth but his son's education and freedom. How does this verse illuminate the kind of love that drives Kino's refusal to accept the dealers' offer?
"Kino's face was impassive, but his eyes were fierce... 'It is a pearl of great value,' he said. The dealer's fingers spurned the pearl so that it bounced and rested on the black velvet pad and he said, 'I see there are spots and a dead place.'" (51)		Proverbs 31:9 -- Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy. Respond: The dealer uses language as a weapon to undervalue what Kino holds. How does this verse name what is missing in every encounter Kino has with institutional authority?

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Side B | Odd Question Column

Text from The Pearl	Your Response / Analysis	Odd Question Column
"The pearl buyers...were not individuals buying pearls, but were the tentacles of the central office." (47)		Odd Question: Describe a time you encountered a system -- a school policy, a rule, a process -- that felt designed to protect the people in power rather than the people it was supposed to serve. What happened and how did you respond?
"'My son will read,' he said quietly. 'He will know and through him we will know.'" (39)		Odd Question: What is the most important thing someone older than you has sacrificed or worked for so that you could have something better? Name the person, describe the sacrifice, and be honest about whether you fully appreciated it at the time.
"Kino's face was impassive, but his eyes were fierce." (51)		Odd Question: Think of a moment when you had to stay calm on the outside while something entirely different was happening on the inside. Where were you, what were you feeling, and why did you choose not to show it?

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Side A | Bible Verse Column

Text from The Pearl	Your Response / Analysis	Bible Verse Column
"He had said, 'I am a man,' and that meant certain things to Juana. It meant that he was half insane and half god. It meant that Kino would drive his strength against a mountain and plunge his strength against the sea." (59)		Proverbs 16:18 -- Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall. Respond: Juana understands Kino's nature with complete clarity. How does this verse speak to the way pride and identity can drive a person past the point where wisdom could have saved them?
"But Kino had become every man's enemy. The news came to the doctor where he sat with a rich patient... and his eyes were crafty and he thought of pearl and of money and of his trip to the capital." (66)		Jeremiah 17:9 -- The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it? Respond: The doctor's response to the news reveals the depth of his corruption. How does this verse explain why Kino can find no ally among those with power?
"The killing of a man was not so evil as the killing of a boat... A man can be replaced and a boat cannot be replaced." (71)		Genesis 4:10 -- The Lord said, What have you done? Listen! Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground. Respond: Steinbeck's narrator makes a chilling observation about what the community values. How does this verse directly confront that inversion of human worth?

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Side B | Odd Question Column

Text from The Pearl	Your Response / Analysis	Odd Question Column
"He had said, 'I am a man,' and that meant certain things to Juana." (59)		Odd Question: Describe a time you or someone you know held onto a position or a decision past the point where it made sense, simply because backing down felt like losing. What was at stake and what was the actual cost of not backing down?
"But Kino had become every man's enemy." (66)		Odd Question: Think of a story -- a book, a film, or something real -- where a person with something valuable became a target rather than a beneficiary. What does that pattern reveal about how communities respond to inequality?
"The killing of a man was not so evil as the killing of a boat." (71)		Odd Question: What is something in your world that is treated as more valuable than a person but should not be? It could be an institution, an object, a tradition, or a reputation. Be honest about why that inversion exists.

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Side A | Bible Verse Column

Text from The Pearl	Your Response / Analysis	Bible Verse Column
"And in the surface of the pearl he saw Coyotito lying in the little cave with the top of his head shot away. And the pearl was ugly; it was gray, like a malignancy, and in it were all the shapes that had terrified him." (87)		Ecclesiastes 1:2 -- Meaningless, meaningless, says the Teacher. Utterly meaningless. Everything is meaningless. Respond: The pearl that once contained Kino's every dream now holds only death. How does this verse frame the ending of the novel as a meditation on the hollowness of what we chase?
"Juana and Kino looked up at the shore together... and when they came to the water's edge they stopped and stared out over the Gulf... Then he reached back and took the pearl from his pocket and held it... and he flung it with all his might." (90)		Job 1:21 -- Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised. Respond: Kino returns what the sea gave him. How does this verse reframe his act of throwing the pearl back as something closer to surrender and acceptance than simply defeat?
"In the town they tell the story of the great pearl -- how it was found and how it was lost again... If this story is a parable, perhaps everyone takes his own meaning from it and reads his own life into it." (1)		2 Timothy 3:16-17 -- All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. Respond: Steinbeck frames the entire story as a

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		parable. What truth do you take from it -- not what the story means in general, but what it means specifically to you?

Side B | Odd Question Column

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"And in the surface of the pearl he saw Coyotito lying in the little cave with the top of his head shot away." (87)		Odd Question: Describe a moment -- from your own life or something you have read or watched -- when someone finally saw the full consequence of a series of choices they had made. What was that moment of realization like and was it too late to change anything?
"He reached back and took the pearl from his pocket and held it... and he flung it with all his might." (90)		Odd Question: Have you ever let go of something you had worked hard for because keeping it was costing you something more important? Describe what you gave up, why you did it, and what it felt like the moment you let go.
"If this story is a parable, perhaps everyone takes his own meaning from it and reads his own life into it." (1)		Odd Question: Steinbeck says this story is a mirror. What does it reflect back to you specifically -- not a theme, not a character, but something true about your own life, your own desires, or your own fears? Write honestly. No one else needs to understand it but you.

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Dialectical Journal Rubric

Category	Exemplary	Proficient	Developing	Insufficient
Critical Analysis (30 pts)	27–30: Interprets rather than summarizes; identifies craft (irony, symbolism, syntax, etc.) and explains effect; precise textual evidence; insightful, close reading.	22–26: Goes beyond summary; some literary observation; mostly accurate; could push further on craft or implication.	16–21: Slips into summary or general theme; lacks passage-specific insight; misses obvious craft.	0–15: Retells/paraphrases; vague, generic claims; no real engagement with author’s craft.
Bible Verse Engagement (20 pts)	18–20: <u>Directly</u> answers prompt; deep, meaningful connection between verse and passage; wrestles with complexity; well-chosen substitute verse if used.	15–17: Connects verse to passage; answers prompt; reasonable but not deeply developed.	10–14: Mentions verse but doesn’t answer prompt; treats verse and passage separately; connection feels forced.	0–9: Drops verse in; generic or unrelated commentary; entries skipped.
Odd Question — Specificity & Honesty (25 pts)	23–25: Highly specific (names, places, details); honest, reflective, risk-taking; clearly personal and authentic.	18–22: Specific and believable; identifies real people or moments; could go deeper.	12–17: Generic responses; lacks concrete detail; avoids discomfort of <u>prompt</u> .	0–11: Vague, evasive, or AI-like; contradicts known facts; entries skipped.
Diction — Verb Choice & Mechanics (10 pts)	9–10: Strong verbs (reveals, exposes, complicates, etc.); tight sentences; clean mechanics; precise language.	7–8: Mostly strong verbs; few weak ones; mechanics mostly clean.	4–6: Frequent weak verbs; repetition; mechanics distract.	0–3: Weak verbs dominate; errors undermine meaning.
Completion & Submission (15 pts)	14–15: All entries complete; legible; clear photos; organized; name/date included.	11–13: Mostly complete; minor issues; one or two thin entries.	6–10: Several missing/partial entries; poor photo quality or missing pages.	0–5: Many missing; no handwritten copy = no credit.