

Journaling for Self Discovery: Being Awake, Aware, and Alive!

Key Concepts

Discerning	Germinating	Remembering
Exploring	Disciplining	Recording
Gleaning	Curating	Honing

Overview This is a year-long course in journal writing that is highly adaptable and meant to be integrative with any and all other disciplines of study. Twelve types of journal entries are introduced and adjustable to use whenever they enhance already-in-place curriculum.

Materials Needed

- A sturdy, non-electronic journal or notebook with at least 180 pages, preferably lined
- A pleasant, effective writing utensil, ink preferred over pencil because it is more legible over time
- Various objects with which to practice observation and close examination (e.g.: acorns, pine cones, coins, flowers, compass, magnifying glass, magnets, stamps, vintage clothing, photographs or letters)
- Various texts, quotes, images, videos, songs, poems, and activities to create an experience that ignites the imagination and engagement of writer
- An adult figure modeling journaling as the students are journaling

Objectives

TO:

- Utilize writer as primary source
- Encourage introspection
- Foster higher thinking skills
- Teach and model organization, discipline, and fortitude
- Practice informal writing
- Introduce and play with writing tools and forms, such as compare-contrast charts, letter writing and email etiquette, summary, description, argument, persuasion, and poetry forms like Haiku, Diamante, etc.
- Hone observation and listening skills
- Develop internal dialoguing skills to strengthen communication skills
- Disconnect from technology to improve “quality time” with self
- See and experience the world more deeply and clearly
- Educate about the benefits of self-reflection for mental health
- Expand understanding of journaling as a form of processing: in writing, speaking, thinking, and remembering

- Tap into multiple intelligences to strengthen learning and affirm uniqueness of self
- Use place with journaling as a means of learning about self, community, nature, nation, and history
- Connect writing as a form of prayer and meditation
- Encourage and cultivate self awareness and compassion for others
- Link students with other journal writers, e.g.: Henry Thoreau, Anne Frank
- Inspire life-long learning of reading and writing in genres such as memoir, journal, nature and travel writing, using excerpts from *Orion* and *The Sun* magazines, for example
- Utilize journaling in re-drafting for essays and speeches (optional, see Assessment Strategies for Additional Journaling Exercises if including this objective)
- Practice editing and proofreading with journaling (optional, see Assessment Strategies for Additional Journaling Exercises if including this objective)
- Build vocabulary and encourage a life-long curiosity for and love of words (optional, see Assessment Strategies for Additional Journaling Exercises if including this objective)
- Expand journaling techniques to develop skills in note taking: of lectures, speeches, guest speakers, and for research (optional, see Assessment Strategies for Additional Journaling Exercises if including this objective)

Formats

- Maintain a quiet room environment. Dim lights or use only natural light at times, or regularly, to affect calmness. This can be a very effective way to set classroom tone as students are entering, to get them to sit and focus more efficiently. Consistently having your room set in this way in the beginning of class will allow students to develop a routine that may be a source of solace and calm amid a busy school day.
- Ending class with journaling, and the quiet environment, has some compelling benefits and can be done at times when it enhances a lesson, but the typical routine for journal time is best at the beginning of class and can be a built-in anticipatory set for any lesson.
- Model writing in your journal as students are expected to journal. To effectively convey how important you as teacher believe journaling is, for all the above-listed objectives, you must put in the time and develop the discipline for yourself as well. This will strengthen and deepen your relationship with your students, build trust with them, and build your teaching skills.
- Each student in the classroom should have the same journal notebook. If possible, provide them for each student. It is important not to allow for individualization of the notebooks, so no one student stands out, and no one student's notebook stands out. Each student is given the same size notebook, same number of pages, same line spacing, design, and sturdiness. Composition notebooks are inexpensive if bought in bulk from most office or school supply stores. See if your school will spring for the expense. If not, students can purchase their own if the teacher provides clear details about where to purchase and how much the expense will be. Maybe some students would volunteer to purchase more than one and donate the extras to the classroom set. I usually get five different colors so there is some differentiation, and I let students doodle on the covers.
- Set clear time parameters for students. At times, you may want to project, on the overhead, a timer with a countdown. At other times, tell the students they can journal as long as it remains quiet in the room (if you can afford the time), or until the end of class. You may also tell them that they can journal as long as the music is playing, or until they hear the chimes, or some other method of marking the end of the journaling session. Vary up the amount of time you spend journaling. Yet, clearly tell students how long they have to write before you begin (or write it into the prompt).
- Reserve a minimum of 5 minutes and a max of 20 for a typical journaling experience in the classroom routine. Sometimes 5 minutes is too long and 20 minutes is not enough. Learn to read the students and their moods, and their connections with the material they are learning in class. Some students will be on fire to journal every day; others will have to be coaxed into making contact with the page. Allow for both and any response in between. Create the space but let students fill it in their own way, guiding them with deliberate and prescribed parameters.
- Establish a routine. A journaling routine is essential to meet the objectives and gain the benefits of this writing activity. However, this is part of the

beauty of journaling: the routine can be whatever allotment fits with the schedule. The teacher may do any configuration of the following, for example: daily journaling, once a week journaling, a ten-day stint of journaling, or an every-other-day method. Realistically figure out (and stretch a little if necessary!) what the curriculum can allow, and incorporate the journaling with it. Once the teacher decides how often journaling can be done, the goal is to stick to it and practice disciplining self and students to follow through. Avoid random journaling; be deliberate in planning your prompts.

- Assign some journaling as take home, as an option. (Or not, see Procedures below.) A take home entry can replace a daily journal entry or enhance one. It can be used as an extra credit option at the teacher's discretion. This allows students to incorporate other places than the classroom as observatory and learning environment. Using places like nature preserves, historical markers, museums, coffee shops, and shopping malls is a great way to incorporate nature, history, science, technology, sociology, anthropology, art, theater, and pop culture, for example.
- Use music to help establish a mood or as a way to integrate your lessons with journaling. Having students listen to meditative, cultural, or historical music, and having them experience different music genres affirms multiple intelligences and listening skills. It also adds variety to journaling. Also allow journaling with no music and allow some days where students can listen to their own music through their headphones as a choice. Definitely use music consciously and do not overuse it. Silence is as important for journaling as music is.
- Encourage flexibility of thinking and experimenting with journaling forms and methodologies. Allow sketching, doodling, drawing, bullet points, brainstorming, stream-of-consciousness, writing upside down or sideways, skipping lines, starting at the bottom and working up, etc. Encourage students to play with the page and convey to students there is no judgment based on the journaling methodology as long as there is variety in those methodologies. (i.e., not every entry can be a doodle.)
- Honor and guard the privacy of the student journaler. Tell students their journals are private, but clearly and vigorously caution them that their school journals are not locked and that ultra-private writing should be kept in a separate journal that only the student is aware of, and it is kept at home. Tell students their school journals will be graded but not read, and the teacher determines how to grade them. See Assessment Strategies below for ideas.
- Daily, or weekly, etc., connection with the journal is required, but what the student writes about, where s/he goes with the prompt, and how that student makes contact with the page on any given day is up to the student. The prompts are there to guide and inspire thinking but not to control it.
- Sometimes an "M" can be added to the prompt—next to the entry number. Tell students when they see the "M," the entry topic is considered "mandatory," and students are required to address the prompt. Don't overdo the "M" prompts. The more control the students have over what and how they write, the more they will buy in. The first time you introduce a specific

- type of journal, you may want to make it mandatory so students have to try all twelve entry types (if you choose to use all twelve) at least once.
- Never force a student to share or follow a prompt. Consider that a student may be sensitive to the topic at hand or processing something internally that s/he does not feel comfortable sharing. Never read a student's journal unless a student requests a reading (see page 9). Never make a student share with other students or allow students to read each other's journals. If sharing is involved, it must be voluntary and the journaler is in charge of his/her journal at all times.
 - Above all: think creatively about using the blank page of the journal as a way to incorporate lessons, to process information, to establish classroom mood and routine. Trust and allow yourself (and your students) to be spontaneous with journaling time. Let the prompts come from you or your lesson materials, or the students themselves, organically and without judgment. Allow for experimentation and failure.

Procedures

Each journal entry must contain:

1. An Entry Number: students record the entry number in the same place on the page every time. Establish this routine, but allow students flexibility in *where* they put the number on the page and *how* it is represented. Students may want to highlight the entry number, or circle it, or box it. Tell students the number needs to be clearly identifiable and visible on the page. It is required as part of the assessment of the journal.

2. The Entry Date: students record the day's date with each entry number. It, too, should be in the same place on the page every time. Next to the entry number is preferred, but maybe allow students flexibility in where they put the date on the page and how the date is recorded. (e.g.: 8/4/17 or August 4, 2017, etc.) Encourage (or require) consistent formatting. Consistent dating of entries is an important measure of a journaler's discipline and an assessment factor.

3. A Key Word: students record a key word for the journal entry. What is the entry primarily about or related to? Students choose a key word (or phrase) as a way to sharpen their ability to discern what is important about a writing topic. The teacher may offer his/her key word to model discernment, or one could be provided with the prompt. The key word needs to be clearly identifiable and visible on the page and it is used as a part of the assessment of the journal. Instead of, or in addition to, a key word, the teacher may require students to copy down the prompt for each journal entry, or allow students to choose to do so as a way to "fill up" some of the entry, if writing *about* the prompt feels overly challenging or difficult.

4. Entry Content: students strive to write for a minimum of ½ page when doing a journal entry. Sketches, doodles, bullet points, and other forms of entries must demonstrate appropriate effort for the time allotted. Using up a minimum of 50% of a page is a good guideline for students to adhere to when creating an entry. Encourage students to strive for quality connection with the blank page over meaningless quantity, though even meaningless quantity has its place.

How to journal in class:

Have the journal notebooks readily available for the students as they walk into your classroom. They can be alphabetized, set up by teams, organized by seating chart, distributed by a notebook leader, whatever procedure you can develop that makes the journal writing process streamline and efficient. It should be explained clearly and performed often enough that the procedure becomes routine. I do not recommend that students keep journals with them as they go from class to class. Students will forget their journals often and use the "I forgot it" excuse to avoid a journal entry they don't want to write. In my classroom, for example, I have seven tables. Each table has 5-7 students sitting at it. The journals for the students at each table are bound together by two large rubber bands, across the middle and top to bottom. The bound packet of notebooks is stored on a shelf as close to the table as possible. Each table has a "notebook leader" who is responsible for getting the

bound notebooks to the table to start, and for binding the notebooks back together and returning to the shelf to finish. The notebook leader is a student who habitually arrives early to class and/or who likes to journal or to perform this everyday task.

To take home the journal or not?

There are perks to having students take their journals home. Switching up the environment where journaling happens is very powerful and helps students develop their self-awareness and world awareness. The down side is that students will forget their journals at home if they are assigned an at home journal. Another option is to have students do a journal entry at home, but on a separate sheet of paper. The separate sheet(s) of paper (call them “field entries”) can be taped or stapled into the journal when they come to class the next day. If journals are allowed to go home with students, remind students how important the entry number, date, and key word are when journaling outside the classroom routine. The teacher can create a checkout system for journals as well. If a student forgets the journal at home, have the student use a loose leaf sheet of paper, and if necessary, keep it for that student so s/he can tape or staple it into the notebook when it does get back to the classroom. I tell students if they lose their notebooks, they lose all credit for the entries that have not been assessed. This encourages keeping the notebooks in class at all times.

What to do about making up journal entries?

Students should have a journal buddy at their table or in their small group, or just a friend/partner in the class who can catch them up on missing prompts if they miss school. The student who needs to make up journal entries needs to do the make up work for past missing entries at some other time than the time designated for journal writing on the current day. In other words, come in before school, after school, or during homeroom time to get the prompts and write in their journals. Likewise, the teacher needs to write each required journal entry prompt, and/or a description of the prompt in his/her journal. The teacher should regard his/her journal as a “public” record for the class. The teacher needs to have each prompt carefully recorded so students can make up missing entries if their journal buddy is unavailable. The teacher should also record notes on how the class responded to the prompt, any notes about improving the prompt and/or student responses to the prompt that were unexpected or especially thought-provoking. The teacher should not regard this class journal as a personal journal or write any private thoughts within this class journal that s/he would not want read by a student.

Assessment Strategies

- In assessing the journal, the teacher must glance at each individual journal entry and take into account the bulk of the journal for the period of time being assessed. Assessing the journal is based on the overall impression the teacher gets regarding how the student connects with the page in his/her unique way and style. Check for the following things overall:
 - Consistency with the entry number, date, and key word
 - Exploration of ideas
 - Creativity with methodologies
 - Development (an identifiable measure of content progress, texture, depth, or evenness)
 - Unique and personal approach
- One simple way to assess journals is by checking, or “glancing through” the entries. Assign a ½ point, or one full point, each, for: entry number, entry date, key word, and entry content. Thus, if an assessment includes 10 entries, each entry could be worth 2 or 4 points, with 20 or 40 points overall. Giving points for entry numbers, dates, and key words puts value on the *discipline* of numbering and dating, and the *discernment* of using a key word. This diffuses the emphasis on, but does not ignore, the value of the *content* of each entry. Journal content is impossible to accurately assess, since teachers have bias, and each student’s journal is intended to be personal and unique. Content should not be the sole factor in assigning point-value when assessing student journals.
- Journals can be checked during class time, if the teacher can spare it, by either: A. having students come to the teacher’s desk individually Or B. the teacher can “make the rounds” by stopping at each student’s desk. This is best done during quiet reading, journaling, or independent study time. As the student flips through the pages of the journal for the teacher, the teacher: 1. counts each entry, 2. checks dates, key words, entry types and content, and 3. formulates an impression of the journal as a whole. This assessment strategy, though it may distract some students in the room and erode concentration, allows students to keep their journals in their possession and encourages them to take pride in and ownership of their work.
- Journals can also be checked during writing conferences between student and teacher, during class, after school, or by appointment. This is a wonderful way to affirm journaling by including it in important conversation the teacher has with students about all of the different kinds of writing (maybe using student portfolios) they do for the class. This is the optimal way to assess student journals. Consider how affirming it is for a student to be able to flip through his/her journal for the teacher, stopping at certain entries the student enjoyed or struggled with and having a dialogue about the ones that stand out for that student. Discuss process and record keeping here too.
- Journals can be collected and the teacher can take time outside of class to flip through the journals one-by-one. This is more time-consuming, but it does not take or erode valuable class time. This assessment method allows the

- teacher to give students the option for further or more detailed feedback by having students label any entry ahead of time with “PLEASE READ” or the use of a sticky tab—this becomes then an invitation for the teacher to read that specific entry and make a comment or have a conversation with the student about the entry’s content.
- The teacher may choose to read every student’s journal entries, especially if the journaling timeframe is short, or the quantity of entries are not too overwhelming for the teacher. However, the teacher must respect the students’ journaling experience as something that is individualized and not up for judgment or criticism. The assessment is an evaluation of effort, with emphasis on quality and quantity. Entries need to be fulfilled, but not necessarily held to specific content requirements. Allow for and reward risk-taking with self-exploration and self-actualization—in whatever form it shows up on the page.
 - If the teacher does decide to read students’ entries as an assessment, the teacher must inform the students of this ahead of time. This is a matter of respect and trust. If the teacher reads something in a journal entry, that students know the teacher is going to read, or just by happenstance, where the eye happens to look when “glancing through”—and that content is alarming or requires attention—the teacher must take responsibility to follow up on the information found in the journal. Students must be informed that the teacher is obligated to—and will—take action in certain situations.
 - Journals should be checked at appropriate times throughout the year, or at the end of a specific journal writing stint or unit. Yearlong journal writing is best assessed at mid-trimester (or quarter) and end of trimester (or semester). Breaking up the journal-check is easier because there is less for the teacher or student to have to flip-through at one time, and it allows for the teacher’s feedback and possible ideas for improvement with students who struggle with journaling.
 - At the end of the year, or designated finishing point, a self-assessment can be made as well—of the journal itself and/or of journaling as a learning activity. Students can review their journals and use an index card, which they submit to the teacher, to give themselves a grade, finding three strengths and three weaknesses in their journal writing skills and techniques. Or instead of submitting an index card, students could make the last entry in their journals a self-assessment. The teacher may use this self-assessment as a “quick-grading” method for the grade book—or not.
 - Make sure to address with your journalers the idea of writing five entries at one time. This is not what journaling is meant to be. A student misses a week of school and then tries to write all five entries in one sitting. There is no way to completely avoid this situation as students will get clever and change their writing utensils, their handwriting, and make the entries look like they were not done all at the same time. Reiterate frequently that journaling is meant to be a one entry per day practice. Five entries in one day is really just one entry. The act of journaling is meant to capture the writer’s daily nuances.
 - It is important for students to take their journals with them at the end of the year, or whenever the journaling timeframe concludes. The journal, if used

consistently, becomes a unique “snapshot” or remembrance of the period of time in which the journal was kept. Students have a lasting record with which to revisit and examine their lives in a broader context as they grow up and move into different phases of their journey. Consider also holding onto the journals in a file cabinet and returning them to the students at the end of their senior year.

Assessment Strategies for Additional Journaling Exercises

JOURNALING AS A STEP IN THE WRITING PROCESS

- Another assessment strategy for journaling to emphasize and honor the writing process is to require students to review their entries within a designated period of time and submit a re-drafted entry for additional assessment from the teacher, another student, or a group—as an essay or a speech. This assessment could be done weekly, monthly, by trimester or semester, or by unit. This validates journaling as a way to germinate ideas, solutions, opinions, etc. Students have a chance to review their journal entries, discern development in their ideas and growth in their writing, and to practice their revising, editing, and proofreading skills.

JOURNALING FOR VOCABULARY BUILDING

- Another assessment strategy to encourage a life-long curiosity for and love of words is to have journalers create a separate section in their journals (or simply keep vocab entries in line with all other entries) dedicated to “Words.” If not in line with regular entries, this could be at the back or middle of the notebook. The Words section (or entries) is where students keep a running list of vocabulary they encounter throughout the year (or journaling period) that they do not know the meaning of. The teacher may choose to assign points for the words journalers look up in the dictionary and include the definition and part of speech for. These word lists can be good conversation starters when discussing a novel, story, film, poem, song, etc. The teacher can assign journal entries that focus solely on finding unfamiliar words in a text and having students look up their meanings and functions. Word list entries, or the Word section, should include, as the Key Word, a reference as to where the unfamiliar word was encountered.

JOURNALING FOR NOTE TAKING AND RESEARCHING

- Another assessment strategy is to have journalers create a separate section in their journals (or not, again, the other option is to keep all entries flush with no separate sections in the notebook whatsoever) dedicated to “Notes.” If not in line with regular entries, this could be at the back or middle of the notebook. The Notes section or notes entries are where students practice and develop their skills in taking notes on classroom lectures, speakers, films, discussions, etc. Each Notes entry should include, maybe as the Key Word, the name of the speaker, subject of the lecture, or title of the film, etc.
- Another assessment strategy to develop skills in researching is to have journalers create a separate section in their journals (or not) dedicated to

“Research.” Any research the teacher assigns in preparation for a paper or presentation could be a journal entry. Research entries should include, as the Key Word, where the researched information came from (the citation). The teacher can require the journaler to write the source(s) used in a research entry in MLA format (or whatever style guide the school uses for creating a works cited, bibliography, or reference list).

- Be careful about note taking and researching if this material is going to be needed for a test. Students will want to take the journals home to study their notes or research the night or two before a test. Teachers may allow students to take their journals home, see the “To take home the journal or not?” section on page 7 of this document. Or encourage students to have a different notebook for test-taking notes and research. Some students may take photos with their phones or tablets of the material in their journals they want to study. Consider allowing students to use their journals during a test; this will encourage better note taking and researching, and students will more likely take ownership of their journals and their study materials.

Types of Journal Entries

1. Distilling
2. Contexts
3. Close Examination
4. Mirrors
5. Memories
6. Encounters
7. Daily Log
8. Inquiry
9. Bullets
10. Stream of Consciousness
11. Response
12. Creative

Employing these twelve types of journal entries, the teacher can meet the objectives for journaling for self discovery with great success. Flexibility abounds with these twelve options, and the teacher can determine what works best for his/her students, considering their grade and maturity level, the subject, curriculum, and lessons being taught, and the engagement level of the students with the material and with journaling. The teacher can utilize whichever types of journal entries best fit with the lessons already in place for their classes. The teacher can present all twelve types of journal entries to his/her students and let them decide which type of entry works for them in each situation where journaling is used.

Following is more detail about each type of journal entry. Each type is worth exploring, and the teacher could provide an example of each type, as well as techniques and tips for optimal practice. Examples could come from the teacher's personal journal or from another journal writer, well known or not. Thoreau is a great source for prompts, and in my yearlong journal writing, Thoreau factors in regularly.

DEFINE "PROMPT": this is the "thing" used to get them started writing in their journals. Usually it should be projected on the overhead, written on the board, or read aloud by the teacher, speaker, or a student in the class. It could be handed out as an entrance ticket. It could be a slip of paper picked out of a hat. It could include, but is not limited to: quotes, excerpts, photos, cartoons, pictures, music, poetry, a skit, a play, a tableau, artwork, videos, TED talks, films, etc. There is no limit to what a prompt can be and the teacher needs to be actively looking for ways to use his/her lesson material as journal prompts. Each prompt should include, or the teacher can address verbally: the journal entry number, the day's date, and possibly a Key Word for the entry.

1. Distilling: DISCERNING ESSENTIAL MEANING. What words, images, sensations, feelings "rise to the top," or stand out, when students are given a prompt and told to react? What is the most important idea? What is the first idea? What is the lasting idea? What is the purpose or essential meaning of this prompt? How did you figure this out? What words, specific images, actions, etc. contribute to your distillation of the information? How does one best distill information? What techniques are used to distill?

2. Contexts: EXPLORING A WORLD. When I encounter this prompt, what do I already know about its context? What is its history, what might its future be? What specific issues surround this prompt today, right here and now? How does my community look at this prompt? How might my family, my race, my history, my culture look at it? How does the creator of this prompt affect the prompt? How does the creator's family, race, history, or culture look at this prompt?

3. Close Examination: HONING OBSERVATION SKILLS. When I study the prompt, what do I see, hear, feel, taste, smell? What details can I record? What do these details explain or reveal? What questions arise as I examine closely? How can I examine something more closely? What biases might I have in examining certain prompts? How does my environment, my possible bias, and my mood affect my ability to observe accurately? Comparing and contrasting.

4. Mirrors: EXPLORING WITHIN. When I encounter this prompt, what does it make me think about for me personally? What do I see and feel inside me when I behold the prompt? How does this prompt affect me—physically, emotionally, mentally, spiritually? What can I learn about myself from looking at this prompt? What does my reaction to this prompt say about me? What areas do I need to work on in regards to this prompt, within myself, to become a more whole person?

5. Memories: CURATING THE PAST. What is your happiest memory? Remember someone in your life who is no longer with you. When did you learn to write? What is your earliest memory? What do you remember about kindergarten? What does this prompt evoke in my memory? What associates in my past come to light when I contemplate this prompt? How do I feel about the memories that come to mind as I consider this prompt? Capturing vivid details and images from memories. Dream recollections. Curating memories and why these memories stand out and are remembered.

6. Encounters: GLEANING EXPERIENCES WITH TEXT, SELF, OTHERS, ENVIRONMENTS. What happens to me—or what do I notice--when I interact with this person? What do I feel when I read this text? What happens to me when I am in a particular environment? What happens to the other person? What happens to the environment? These could be dialogues, interviews, and/or descriptions of/with people, places, and aspects of self. Process and explore negative emotions or actions. This kind of entry could follow a silent meditation or prayer. How did the meditation go? What did you experience as you meditated?

7. Daily Log: RECORDING THE HERE AND NOW. What's happened to me, in my world, today? What did I see, experience, feel, wonder? This could be a recording of one's daily routine, or an event that was out of the ordinary in the daily routine. Focusing on what's happening right this minute, right here, is the essential aspect of this kind of entry. Good for recording current events, school assemblies, and seemingly unimportant sensations of the present moment. When students aren't "in the mood" on a given day, I suggest they write a daily log entry. Offer this: "write what a typical morning is like for you on a school day, or on a non-school day." It's a relative "no brainer" and an interesting thing for the student to have recorded for looking back on someday.

8. Inquiry: GERMINATING IDEAS & QUESTIONS, DELVING DEEPER. What is going on underneath the surface? What might happen in the future regarding this prompt? What might happen if the parameters change? What changes could you predict? What changes might occur that you might not predict? How can I use this information again in a different way? How can I adapt this information to other situations? This could be an interview with an emotion, an event, or person in history or in the student's life. Students could ask the emotion Anger (or Joy) questions. Can be simply brainstorming ideas or mind mapping on a topic.

9. Bullets: DISCIPLINING TO BE SUCCINCT. Making lists, providing steps to completing a task, summarizing, providing details. Great journal type for note taking. Instruct students on how to shorten a thought, paragraph, article, etc. to bullet points of key ideas. This entry type works well for the reluctant journaler. Make a list of your favorite (or least) songs, foods, places, words, people. List the steps you take before you play a hockey game. What steps do you take before a performance?

10. Stream-of-Consciousness: LETTING IT ALL OUT. Allowing students to write whatever comes to their minds. Recording the thought process as it happens, examining the thinking. Repeating words, phrases, thoughts, and ideas, over and over if necessary, until the next word, phrase, thought, or idea comes along. Use for initial responses to prompts and for helping students begin to think about new ideas and concepts. Use for students to examine their thoughts. Strive for recording without judgment or hesitation. Great for having students react to music or specific sounds: bird calls, buzzers, rainfall, wind, etc. Great entry type for reluctant journalers as it is nearly frameless and not hard to do.

11. Response: DEVELOPING FEEDBACK. After giving students a prompt, have them write a response to it. How can the idea/image presented in the prompt be improved? What is the strength of the idea? What is the weakness? What is your opinion of the image? How do you back your opinion up? This could be a letter to the prompt creator. Summarize a story and assess its value. Developing rhetorical strategies for argument. Charting similarities or differences. Great entry type to use with quotes, photographs, biblical readings. This type can be used to have students "grade" themselves on their performance or produced material.

12. Creative: FREE FORM JOURNALING. Sketching what a word looks like, doodling what you think a character looks like. Drawing a map of a novel's setting, Writing poetry or song lyrics. Using your non-dominant hand to write/doodle. What does the music "look" like? How would this taste/sound/visual be captured in words? Sketch a concept. Close your eyes and write/draw. Encourage this kind of entry for students who really struggle with writing sentences/paragraphs, etc. Playing with words.

Prompt Ideas (in a general sense, to be adapted to specific lessons)

- Use quotes, excerpts, passages, dialogue
- Use poetry, song lyrics, jingles, commercials, ads, radio broadcasts
- Create or view a cartoon
- Read an op-ed from the newspaper, use current events
- Create or view artwork, use art slideshows
- View photos of a person or place, then and now
- Move the chairs around in the classroom, up-end the seating chart
- Play with lighting, sound, scents to create different atmospheres and moods
- Send students to different parts of the room/school to observe what they see
- Take a field trip—or assign an independent field trip—to a nature preserve, conservatory, aquarium, historical landmark, library, mall, coffee shop, college campus, park, rooftop, backyard
- Have students walk around the block outside with a partner, or solo, and record what they experienced
- Have students journal or take field notes “on location” at their jobs, with their family or friends, at a play, movie, sporting event, concert
- Draw a map of the student’s present environment
- Sketch a feeling, draw a word, create a self portrait using different forms
- Brainstorm adjectives, nouns, verbs to capture thoughts, scenes, actions, moods
- Use entries to draft speeches, letters, confessions, love notes, interview questions, eye witness accounts
- Brainstorm and flesh out ideas for group projects, skits, performances
- Draw a book cover, a movie poster, a bookmark, animate a character
- Doodle while listening to a story being read aloud
- Interview an author, musician, poet, character, family member, peer, teacher, famous or infamous person (in real life or make it up)
- Write questions you wish people would ask you
- Write questions you hope people don’t ever ask you
- Brainstorm things that inspire you, things you are afraid of, people you’d like to meet, places you’d like to go, historical people you wish you could meet who are dead
- Rewrite a story or poem in a different context, play with the time period, switch out a character, rewrite the ending or the beginning
- What would you do if you had unlimited money and resources?
- What superpower would you have if you could have one? Why?
- Provide a solution to a problem
- Give advice to a character in a movie, play, story or book—or to parents, teachers, friends, principals, the president
- Predict an ending before you know what the ending actually is
- Write a prequel to a story or a character’s story
- Chart the pros and cons of an issue or a decision a student or character has to make
- Play with sarcasm and tone by having students rewrite a line of dialogue or quote in a different tone or with sarcasm

Sample Reading for Journaling in Ninth Grade

Walden and selected *Journal* entries (Henry David Thoreau)

Aphorisms of Ben Franklin, R.E. Emerson

The Diary of Anne Frank (Anne Frank)

Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl (Harriet Jacobs)

The Alchemist (Paulo Coelho)

Impressions of an Indian Childhood (Zitkala Sa)

Until They Bring The Streetcars Back (Stanley Gordon West)

Romeo and Juliet (Shakespeare)

Speak (Laurie Halse Anderson)

Orion Magazine

The Sun Magazine

Miscellaneous stories, poems, articles, songs

In the following pages are four lessons incorporating the first four journal types listed on page 12 of this document. I don't have the other eight types developed into lessons yet, but they will be developed as the year unfolds.

Lesson 1 – First Journal Entry of the Year

Type of Entry: #1 – Distilling

Length of time needed for this lesson: A full class period

The prompt is written on the board or overhead:

“Write while the heat is in you. The writer who postpones the recording of his thoughts uses an iron which has cooled to burn a hole with. He cannot inflame the minds of his audience.”
-Henry David Thoreau, *Journal*, February 10, 1858

And

“To him whose elastic and vigorous thought keeps pace with the sun, the day is a perpetual morning.”
-Henry David Thoreau *Walden*, chapter 2

Choose one, and write it down *exactly* in your notebook as a part of this journal entry. Copy the punctuation, the citation, & capitalization exactly.

What are at least 2, but no more than 5, most important words found in this quote? Underline them. What do those words specifically mean in relation to the quote? What do you think the quote is saying? What does this quote mean for you personally?

You have 10 minutes

Entry #1

Date

Key Word: Distilling (or choose your own)

Teacher’s Steps

1. Hand out notebooks and pass around permanent markers. Make sure each student writes his/her full name, the school year, the class name and class period. Show the students exactly where to write this information (in the box right in the center of the front cover of the composition notebooks). Walk around and check each notebook individually. You want some uniformity and to be able to identify on sight whose notebook it is. However, I tell students if they want to doodle on the covers, that’s ok, but not required.

2. Instruct students to open to page 1 and decide how they want to approach the blank page: right side up, upside down, sideways, etc. Explain that there are specific requirements for each journal entry and go through those requirements using the teacher’s journal as an example: show them entry #’s, date, key word and about how long a typical entry is expected to be.

3. Talk to students about other journaling requirements, how often journaling will take place, what their options are as far as what to write. You may briefly go over the 12 types of journal entries at this time, or tell students you will go over the types of entries as you introduce each kind individually.

4. Tell students how you will be assessing their journals: whether you will be reading them or not, and if not, how to request a reading of a specific journal entry if a student would like an entry to be read by the teacher. Tell them how often and when you will be assessing the journals. Ask them if they have any questions about this assessment process.

5. Have students read the two quotes on the board and pick the one they prefer and copy it exactly into their journals as a part of entry #1. Make sure they know they should copy the quote exactly, word for word, including all punctuation marks. Tell them they also need to get the citation written correctly. Explain what a citation is, if students need clarification.

6. Next, have students read the quote they wrote in their journals again quietly to themselves. Have them underline the 2, 3, 4, or at most 5 words in the quote they feel are most important to the meaning of the quote. Have them take a few minutes to explain in their journals what they think the quote means based on the words they underlined as significant. Next, have them explain what they think Thoreau's advice is to them in their own words (do this in the journal, in writing).

7. Give students 6 minutes to write on the prompt. Tell them they have six minutes and watch the time carefully. When they are done writing, ask two students to read one of the two quotes aloud for the class. Ask students to raise their hand if they chose to write down the first quote, and ask those with their hand up why they chose that quote. Then do the same for the second quote. Discuss the quotes with as much time as you can allot to this.

8. Talk to students about how journaling is a way to "capture the heat while it's in you" and to create "elastic and vigorous thoughts." Tell the students a little bit about Henry David Thoreau and how he journaled and used his journal to write books and lectures. Tell students they will be hearing and reading a lot from Thoreau when they are writing in their journals.

9. Explain putting away or the "packing up" of the journals. Where they go, how to get them to where they go, and who (if anyone) is responsible for the notebooks for that table (or small group). Then let the students pack up the journals until next time.

10. Ask the class if there are any questions about journaling, about Thoreau, about his quotes, or about the journal requirements or assessments.

Lesson 2 – Beginnings

Type of Entry: #2 – Contexts

Length of time needed for this lesson: 15 minutes

The prompt is written on the board or overhead:

“Letter to a young Poet

You are so young, so before all beginning, and I want to beg you, as much as I can, to be patient toward all that is unsolved in your heart and to try to love the questions themselves—like locked rooms and like books that are written in a very foreign tongue. Do not now seek the answers, which cannot be given to you because you would not be able to live them. The point is, to live everything. Live the questions now. Perhaps you will then gradually without noticing it, live along some distant day into the answer.” -Maria Ranier Rilke

You may choose to copy down the quote, or parts of it, but it is not mandatory. Read it carefully, though, and think about it for a minute before you go to the questions below. Choose any or all the questions to answer in your journal. You have 15 minutes.

How do you feel about beginning this class, this school? What are your fears? What are your hopes in going through it? What makes you curious? What questions do you have right now?

What makes you excited about this beginning? What makes you nervous? How do you feel about beginning something, in general? Recall a time you began something and it failed miserably. Why did it fail? What did you learn from the experience? What did you learn about yourself? How would you approach the beginning differently if you could do it over? Recall a beginning to something you experienced that went perfectly. Why did it work? What feelings do you have now, thinking back to that beginning?

Entry #2

Date

Key Word: Beginnings, or Questioning (or choose your own)

Teacher's steps

1. Write the prompt on the board or overhead. Make sure to include the entry # and the date. Set a timer for 15 minutes.
2. Write for the allotted time, and if you have time, ask for any responses. If not work to incorporate beginnings to the rest of your lesson on this day.

Lesson 3 – My Backyard

Type of Entry: #3 – Close Examination

Length of time needed for this lesson: 15 minutes

Teacher's Steps

1. Bring in as many items as you think you will need (I bring 14, two for each table) from your backyard. Place one or more items on each table, or one item per student, before or as they are entering the classroom. (I bring two of each of these: a pine cone, an acorn, a hydrangea flower, a marigold flower, a beet, the flowering head of an onion, a post-peak daylily flower, a maple leaf.)

2. Set a timer for 4 minutes and tell student they have that amount of time to observe and take notes about the items at their table. Make sure you have the journal entry # and date written on the board. They are allowed to touch the items, pick them up, and smell them, but they have to allow for others at their table to do the same. If they need a number, tell them 20 bullet points with details, per item. That will get them going.

3. When the 4 minutes are finished, have them stop.

The prompt is written on the board or overhead:

Look over your list of details about the items you observed. What assertions can you make about the items you observed? What do these items, collectively, say about my backyard? About my neighborhood? About me? How correct do you think your assertions are based upon what you observed? What further questions arise from your observations?

You have 4 minutes to address this prompt.

Your homework tonight is to find something from your backyard that you can bring in to school. It needs to be small enough to fit nicely on the table and interesting enough to spend time observing. We will use it for tomorrow's journal.

Entry #3

Date

Key Word: Close Looking (or choose your own)

Teacher's steps (continued)

4. Set the timer for 4 minutes, finish addressing the prompt.

5. Ask students to volunteer some observations and assertions. Talk about the power of observation, and the cautions of making too strong assertions without enough information. Talk about the importance of being curious, and really looking at something. Give this discussion 5 minutes if you can. If not, wait until tomorrow's

journaling time when you do the same exercise, but with the items the students bring in from their back yard. Or split the time between the two days.

5. Here's a quote from Thoreau that you could use with tomorrow's journal entry:

“All this is perfectly distinct to an observant eye, and yet could easily pass unnoticed by most.” –Henry David Thoreau, “Walking”

7. A possible entry for the Word Section of the journal:

Assertion: noun
a confident and forceful statement of fact or belief: [with clause] : *his **assertion that** his father had deserted the family.*
• the action of stating something or exercising authority confidently and forcefully: *the assertion of his legal rights.*

8. This type of entry works well with historical items also. When teaching about the 1920s or 1950s, for example, bring in articles of clothing from those eras, or photographs—include hairstyles, food samples from a region, old newspaper or magazine ads or articles.

Lesson 4 – Ice Books

Type of Entry: #4 – Mirrors

Length of time needed for this lesson: 15-20 minutes

Teacher's steps

1. Visit the *Orion* website and learn about Basia Irland and her amazing books of ice and what she does with them and rivers. You may want to show the video of the story, which is 4:17 long. Or you may want to show a few pictures of the ice books and talk about them. Or maybe just show one picture of one ice book without any commentary except the prompt. The article can be found in the March/April 2013 issue of the magazine.

<https://orionmagazine.org/article/books-of-ice/>

<https://vimeo.com/59928892>



The prompt is written on the board or overhead:

You may want to describe an ice book as you understand it first, but this is optional.

Choose to answer any (or all) of the following questions in your journal. You have 10 minutes.

1. What do you think about Basia Irland and her ice books? What does she value?
2. Symbolically what would you press into your own ice book? What favorite items could you stash there that captures your essence?
3. What would you want to release into your river? What river (or lake) would you release your ice book into?
4. The river could also be symbolic. Rivers often symbolize the journey of life in stories. If the river was the river of your life, what “seeds” would you plant in your book in hopes of them “coming to fruition” in your life?

Entry #4

Date

Key Word: Ice Books, Seeds, Rivers (or choose your own)

Teacher’s steps (continued)

2. Notes: examples of “seeds” I would sow into my ice book, to be released into my river of life: (i.e., What do you see in yourself that you find worth preserving and hope to nurture?)

Dedication	Curiosity	Compassion
Doing good works	Innovation	Creativity

3. Students might ask about whether what they stash into their ice books has to be real seeds or not. My answer: Think real-life, organic material, if you know enough about nature to think of some cool plants that represent you. Here are some sample ideas in my region: water lily seeds, weeping willow cuttings, cattails, acorns, sumac seeds, wild rice, or tall grasses. Many kids have cabins on lakes. What grows in their lakes that they could sow there in an ice book? Or even: sea glass, agates, shells, sand dollars, starfish, white sand—they are organic, but not seeds.

OR give yourself poetic license and don’t worry if the items you choose are natural or not—you may have a vintage jewelry collection, or a fishing lure set, or baseball cards, key chains, or love letters . . . not good for the river, but this is just an exercise in looking at self. The items stashed in the ice are symbols of what you value or love.

4. This journal is great to pair with studying rivers, rivers as symbols, the journey of life, influential books and how they plant seeds in people’s minds, how we form our identities. How does what we value reflect upon our individual character and our communities?