

## HOW TO ANNOTATE A TEXT

*(Half of the test grade will be based on your annotated text)*

1. At the top of the page or on a post-it, mark the important plot events. Every page will not necessarily be marked.
2. Be sure to figure out any unfamiliar words through context or by using a dictionary. You can write the definitions right in the text for yourself.
3. Highlight and mark for yourself any conflicts that occur with the main character (protagonist). Note your ideas about these conflicts in the text (who / what is involved, attempts to resolve conflicts, etc).
4. Highlight and mark for yourself words and phrases that help describe the personality of characters. Note your ideas about the characters right in the text (personality, motivation, fears / dreams, etc).
5. Highlight and mark for yourself any symbolism and note your ideas in the text as to what abstract ideas or concepts these tangible objects may represent.
6. Don't mark too much. If you mark everything, nothing will stand out.
7. Once you are completely finished the book and annotating, pick the three most important thematic statements from the following list that your book addresses. Write those themes on an inside cover or any blank pages of your book AND find supporting evidence from the text to support your ideas. Mark those supporting passages with post-its.
  - a. A just individual has obligations toward society.
  - b. A just society has obligations it owes to an individual.
  - c. Individual freedom is limited by . . .
  - d. An individual can develop methods for judging right and wrong.
  - e. . . . kind of government is effective.
  - f. Society must contend with the dichotomies presented by freedom and equality.
  - g. An individual can experience redemption through . . .
  - i. The accumulation of money and power leads to a loss of spirituality.

Annotation is a key component of close reading. Since we will annotate texts all year, you need to develop a system that works for you (within the following guidelines). Effective annotating is both economical and consistent. The techniques are almost limitless. Use any combination of the following:

- ✓ Make brief comments in the margins. Use any white space available – inside cover, random blank pages, etc.
- ✓ Make brief comments between or within lines of the text. Do not be afraid to mark within the text itself. In fact, you must.
- ✓ Circle or put boxes, triangles, or clouds around words or phrases.
- ✓ Use abbreviations or symbols – brackets, stars, exclamation points, question marks, numbers, etc.
- ✓ Connect words, phrases, ideas, circles, boxes, etc. with lines or arrows.
- ✓ Underline – CAUTION : Use this method sparingly. Underline only a few words. Always combine with another method such as comment. Never underline an entire passage. Doing so takes too much time and loses effectiveness. If you wish to mark an entire paragraph or passage, draw a line down the margin or use brackets.
- ✓ Highlight – use CAUTION – don't highlight everything!
- ✓ Create your own code.
- ✓ Use post-it notes ONLY if you have exhausted all available space (unlikely).

**Close Reading.** What should you annotate? Again, the possibilities are limitless. Keep in mind the reasons we annotate. Your annotations **must** include comments. I want to see evidence of thinking.

- ✓ Have a conversation with the text. Talk back to it.
- ✓ **Ask questions** (essential to active reading).
- ✓ Comment on the actions or development of a character. Does the character change? Why? How? The result?
- ✓ Comment on lines / quotations you think are especially significant, powerful, or meaningful.
- ✓ Express agreement or disagreement.
- ✓ Summarize key events. Make predictions.
- ✓ Connect ideas to each other or to other texts.
- ✓ Note if you experience an epiphany.
- ✓ Note anything you would like to discuss or do not understand.
- ✓ Note how the author uses language. Note the significance if you can:
  - ☆ effects of word choice (diction) or sentence structure or type (syntax)
  - ☆ point of view / effect
  - ☆ repetition of words, phrases, actions, events, patterns
  - ☆ narrative pace / time / order of sequence of events
  - ☆ irony
  - ☆ contrasts / contradictions / juxtapositions / shifts
  - ☆ allusions
  - ☆ any other figure of speech or literary device
  - ☆ reliability of narrator
  - ☆ motifs or cluster ideas
  - ☆ tone / mood
  - ☆ imagery
  - ☆ themes
  - ☆ setting / historical period
  - ☆ symbols

The most common complaint about annotating is that it slows down your reading. Yes, it does. That's the point. If annotating as you read annoys you, read a chapter, then go back and annotate. Reading a text a second time is preferable anyway.

Approach the works with an open mind. Let them inspire you and stretch your imagination. If you have questions before school starts, feel free to email me. Bring all of your annotated texts to class the first day. I look forward to seeing you in August!