

Annotating a Text:

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
- 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 – See *underline*. You cannot write with a highlighter anyway.
- 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. (Reread the second paragraph of this letter.) Your annotations **must** include comments. I want to see evidence of thinking.

(Note for AP Lit: Many of these suggestions will not apply to *Elements of Style*)

- 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 something that intrigues, impresses, amuses, shocks, puzzles, disturbs, repulses, aggravates, etc.
 - 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.

***Bring all of your annotated texts to class the first day.

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 e-mail your teacher then as well. We look forward to seeing you in August.

How-to-Annotate-a-Book Mark

Before Reading:

- Examine the front and back covers (books)
- Read the title & any subtitles
- Examine the illustrations
- Examine the print (bold, italic, etc.)
- Examine the way the text is set up (book, short story, diary, dialogue, article, etc.)

As you examine and read these, write questions and make predictions and/or connections near these parts of the text.

During Reading:

Mark in the text:

- Characters (whp)
- When (setting)
- Where (setting)
- Vocabulary (squiggly underline)
- Important ideas or information (straight underline)

Write in the margins:

- Summarize
- Make predictions
- Formulate opinions
- Make connections
- Ask questions
- Analyze the author's craft
- Write reflections/reactions/comments
- Look for patterns/repetitions

After Reading:

- Reread annotations—draw conclusions
- Reread introduction and conclusion—try to figure out something new
- Examine patterns/repetitions---determine possible meanings
- Determine what the title might mean

Annotation Instructions and Rubric

Print this page and cut out the attached bookmark. Use it to help you read for important information.

Obviously, annotation is as personal as reading, and there are **MANY** ways to annotate a book. This system is just a suggestion. For example, some people prefer to use colors to differentiate elements, and some prefer to use "Post Its." If you already have a system, feel free to use what you are comfortable with. We're not going to hold you to specific squiggly lines or circles.

What we will be looking for when we collect your books in the fall is the level of critical thinking that went into your reading. So, whatever system you use, **make your thinking visible**. We will look to see if you have recognized the elements at left--characters, setting, vocabulary and important information. Comments and questions in the margins and at the end of chapters also show us your thinking process.

A Grade:

For an annotated book to receive an A, we would expect to see markings and written commentary throughout the entire book, including recognition of significant plot points or ideas. There will probably be something significant noted in nearly every chapter.

B Grade:

A B book may be lacking in written commentary, but the "highlighted" areas will reflect the significant elements discussed at left.

C Grade:

A C book may be missing some significant elements, but will still be highlighted generally throughout the book, showing your basic understanding of the characters and plot.

Lower Grades will reflect a lack of reading, possibly in skipped sections or random highlights of insignificant material.

Your English Teachers