



An Introduction to Annotating Text

Annotation is like having a conversation with the author of the text.

Why do we annotate? It helps you to understand the text better by reading closely and it is a skill that we will use throughout our academic careers. Plus, it beats answering a packet of questions because it gives you freedom to make note of items that you notice, instead of what the teacher or other classmates notice.

When you **annotate** a text you are doing the following:

- *identifying key words, phrases, concepts, terms or ideas
- *asking (writing down) questions that come to mind
- *making connections between ideas in the text and other information, experience, etc.
- *recording thoughts, reflections, and feelings about what the author is saying

TO BEGIN-----

1. **Gather your materials:** text, pencil/pen, highlighter, post-it notes (if you want to use them).
2. **Read everything at least TWICE.**

The first time, read quickly to get a sense of what the text is about.

The second and (any other) times, read carefully.

Mark anything that you think is:

- A. confusing
- B. interesting
- C. surprising
- D. important

Mark anything that is unfamiliar and keep going.

3. **Begin to annotate.**

****Underline, star, question mark, highlight, box, or circle whatever words, phrases, or sentences that catch your attention. Write brief comments in the margins and/or on post-it notes.***

- observations about what is being said or done 
- what you are reminded of (people, feelings, places, moods)
- questions you have 
- ideas that occur to you
- things that you agree or disagree with
- any connections you are making between this text and other texts you have read, information from other classes, personal experiences, etc. 
- identify themes being developed
- characters 
- any literary devices being used

Literary Devices to Consider: alliteration, allusion, characterization, denotation/connotations, diction (word choice), point of view (1st, 2nd, 3rd, etc.) oxymoron, personification, simile, foreshadowing, hyperbole, syntax, imagery, irony, tone, metaphor, onomatopoeia, etc.

***Define any difficult vocabulary words.**

***Write notes in the margin or on post-it notes to indicate the following:**

- why the author is saying something
- how you feel about what the author is saying
- whether you agree or disagree and why
- any thoughts you have related to the information and ideas

***Write a summary at the end of each chapter or section. Bulleting is extremely useful here!**

You can do this by writing it on the page OR by writing/typing it up and taping it to the page. This is for quick reference and to keep your minds' fresh!



HINTS:

You might like to: color code items, create your own system of codes, etc.

ALWAYS explain why you have marked something. Randomly highlighting an entire page is NOT annotating---you explain so that at the end of the book you remember WHY you marked something.

EXAMPLE:

From *The Chosen*

CHAPTER ONE

FOR THE FIRST FIFTEEN YEARS of our lives, Danny and I lived within five blocks of each other and neither of us knew of the other's existence.

Jenkins Family 9/16/10 7:29 AM

Comment: 1st person narrator

Danny's block was heavily populated by the followers of his father, Russian Hasidic Jews in somber garb, whose habits and frames of reference were born on the soil of the land they had abandoned. They drank tea from samovars, sipping it slowly through cubes of sugar held between their teeth; they ate the foods of their homeland, talked loudly, occasionally in Russian, most often in a Russian Yiddish, and were fierce in their loyalty to Danny's father.

Jenkins Family 9/16/10 7:29 AM

Comment: Now days we might not think so much about not knowing our neighbors that live five blocks away, but for this time in history that seems strange to me.

A block away lived another Hasidic sect, Jews from southern Poland, who walked the Brooklyn streets like specters, with their black hats, long black coats, black beards, and earlocks. These Jews had their own rabbi, their own dynastic ruler, who could trace his family's position of rabbinic leadership back to the time of Ba'al Shem Tov, the eighteenth-century founder of Hasidism, whom they all regarded as a God-invested personality.

Jenkins Family 9/16/10 7:30 AM

Comment: VOCAB: A tea kettle that keeps the liquid at a constant boiling temperature.

Jenkins Family 9/16/10 7:30 AM

Comment: Hasidic Jews sound very stern. I wonder if the author is using the tradition of drinking tea as a metaphor? Keeping the sweetness (the sugar) separate from the bitterness (the tea).

Jenkins Family 9/16/10 7:30 AM

Comment: I saw a movie called *Yentel* with Barabra Streisand in it where they were drinking teas just like this!! It seemed rather tedious to me, but it is a tradition. I would much rather just mix the sugar in with the tea.

Jenkins Family 9/16/10 7:31 AM

Comment: Danny's dad must be pretty powerful, the author starts and ends the paragraph talking about Danny's dad.

Jenkins Family 9/16/10 7:31 AM

Comment: SIMILE! Specters are almost ghost-like in nature—has a darkness to the image.

Jenkins Family 9/16/10 7:31 AM

Comment: Tons of imagery—everything is dark, black, somber...

Jenkins Family 9/16/10 7:32 AM

Comment: From the 1st page it seems as though there will be quite a bit of religious reference in this novel. TRADITION seems EXTREMELY IMPORTANT!

*note: It is not the expectation that EVERY page of a text is annotated as thoroughly as this sample. I was making use of this short bit of text to provide a multitude of annotating ideas.