

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 . . .
 - l. 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!

How-To-Annotate-A-Book-Mark	Annotation Instructions and Rubric
<p><u>Before reading:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Examine the front and back book cover * Read the title and 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) <p>As you examine and read these, write questions and make predictions and/or connections near these parts of the text.</p> <p><u>During reading:</u></p> <p><u>Mark in the Text:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Characters (who) * Setting (When) * Setting (Where) * Vocabulary (squiggly underline) * Important ideas or information (straight underline) <p><u>Write in the Margins:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Summarize * Make Predictions * Formulate Opinions * Make Connections * Ask Questions * Analyze the Author's Craft * Write – reflections / reactions / comments * Look For patterns – repetitions <p><u>After Reading:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * 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 	<p>Print this page and cut out the attached bookmark. Use it to help you read for important information.</p> <p>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. I am not going to hold you to specific squiggly lines or circles.</p> <p>What I will be looking for when I collect your books in the fall is the level of critical thinking that went into your reading. So, whatever system you use, <u>make your thinking visible</u>. I 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 me your thinking process.</p> <p><u>A</u> Grade</p> <p>For an annotated book to receive an <u>A</u>, I would expect to see markings and written commentary throughout the entire book, including recognition of significant plot points of ideas. There will probably be something significant noted in nearly every chapter.</p> <p><u>B</u> Grade</p> <p>A <u>B</u> book may be lacking in written commentary, but the "highlighted" areas will reflect the significant elements discussed at left.</p> <p><u>C</u> Grade</p> <p>A <u>C</u> 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.</p> <p>Lower grades will reflect a lack of reading, possibly in skipped sections or random highlights of insignificant material.</p>

USING ANNOTATIONS TO ENHANCE YOUR UNDERSTANDING OF A TEXT

If you have the habit of asking a book questions as you read, you are a better reader than if you do not. But . . . merely asking questions is not enough. You have to try to answer them. And, although that could be done, theoretically, in your mind only, it is easier to do it with a pencil in your hand. The pencil then becomes the sign of your alertness while you read.

When you buy a book, you establish a property right in it, just as you do in clothes or furniture when you buy and pay for them. But the act of purchase is actually only the prelude to possession in the case of a book. Full ownership of a book only comes when you have made it a part of yourself, and the best way to make yourself a part of it – which comes to the same thing – is by writing in it. Why is marking a book indispensable to reading it?

- First, it keeps you awake – not merely conscious, but wide awake.
- Second, reading, if it is active, is thinking, and thinking tends to express itself in words, spoken or written. The person who says he knows what he thinks but cannot express it usually does not know what he thinks.
- Third, writing your reactions down helps you to remember the thoughts of the author.

For this class, and for these reasons among others, you will be asked to annotate the novel selected for your outside reading. Feel free to purchase your own copy to annotate as you read. If you are using a borrowed copy, however, you will need to use post-it notes placed at the spot where you are commenting. Your copies of the novels will be collected and graded at the end of each novel unit.

NOTE: The outside reading assignment must be read and annotated before class begins. It is perfectly okay to add to your markings (in fact I encourage you to do so) after you finish the book and are working on an essay, but the bulk of the job should be done in conjunction with your reading for class preparations.

NOTE: If you find annotating while you read to be annoying and awkward, do it after you read. Go back after a chapter or assignment and then mark it carefully. You should be reading assignments twice anyway, so this isn't any less efficient than marking as you read and then rereading the material.

For the sake of standardization of annotating for class and for grading purposes, your book notes should follow this format:

Inside Front Cover Character list with small space for character summary and for page references for key scenes, moments of character development, etc.

Inside Back Cover Themes, allusions, images, motifs, key scenes, plot line, epiphanies, etc. List and add page references and / or notes as you read.

Bottom and Side Page Margins Interpretive notes, questions, and / or remarks that refer to meaning of the page. Markings or notes to tie in with information on the inside back cover.

Top Margins Plot notes – a quick few words or phrases that summarize what happens here (useful for quick location of passages in discussion and for writing assignments).

Additional Markings underlining – done while or after reading to help locate passages for discussion, essays, or questions

brackets – done while or after reading to highlight key speeches, descriptions, etc, that are too long to underline easily.

Marking and Note-Taking Tips (optional)

- ⇒ Use one color ink to do initial marking while reading, then go back with another color or colors to mark more thoroughly once you have finished a larger section, have had time to think about it, and are able to see development of images, etc., more clearly.
- ⇒ As chapter or sections end, stop to index page numbers on your front cover list of character information and traits as well as on your back cover list of themes, images, allusions, etc.
- ⇒ Do underlining as you read and side margin notes as you finish a page or two.
- ⇒ Add to side margin notes during class discussion also.

Grading

Since everyone's notes will be similar in format, yet somewhat different in content (there is obviously no one correct phrase to have at the top of page 112 of *The Scarlet Letter*, for example), book grades will be based on thoroughness, clarity, neatness, and apparent effort ("apparent effort" because I will obviously not read all notes on every page of everyone's book).

Some suggested ABBREVIATIONS / SYMBOLS	
b/c = because + = and W/ = with W/O = without b/t = between e.g. = for example ex = example info = information b4 = before ↗ = increase, improvement, rising ↘ = decrease, decline, falling * = important ** = very important ★ = of the utmost importance, crucial to understanding ▶ = use caret to point to an exact location △ = change	PLOT = plot item (and / or use one of the following: EXP = exposition TP = turning point CF = conflict RA = rising action CX = climax FA = falling action RES = resolution CH = characterization S = setting POV = point of view (mention type: 1 st person, limited omniscient, etc. TH = theme LT = literary term (identify the term by name – irony, tone, foreshadowing, personification, metaphor, symbol, etc.

ADDITIONAL ANNOTATION STRATEGIES

Tracking Nouns – important people, places, things, and ideas. Put a box around the name (or nominal) if the character / setting object is unnamed of [1] a character the first time you encounter the character, [2] a place (or other aspect of the setting) whenever it seems important or relevant, and [3] an object when it seems crucial to the story. "Re-box" a character / setting / object whenever he / she / it returns to the text after a long absence. Track important people, places, things, and ideas by supplying page numbers whenever possible that point to previous encounters. Cross reference all of this tracking / tracing by also writing page numbers at the spot of the earlier instances of people / places / things, and ideas. Write brief comments whenever possible to make these connections clear and to note any evolution or development. On the inside cover of the book, keep a list of the characters you encounter, the page on which they first appear, and a very

brief description of each. You may need to add to or modify these descriptions as the story unfolds. In this way, you will develop a comprehensive list of characters. Keep track of important aspects of the setting and important objects in a similar manner. Do the same for ideas. Keep track of themes (motifs) by noting them as they are perceived and by tracing their development.

Chapter Summaries / Titles. At the end of each chapter, write a brief summary of the plot as it occurred in that chapter. This does not have to be long or greatly detailed, but should include all relevant incidents. Use plot-related language (TP, CF, CX, RA, etc.) whenever possible in your summary. Supply an instructive title for each chapter of the book. This may prove useful for books in which chapters are already titled. This practice will help you solidify your understanding of a chapter in just a few of your own words.

Underlining. Within the text of the book, underline or otherwise note anything that strikes you as important, significant, memorable, etc. If possible and profitable, write brief comments within the side margins that indicate your motivation in underlining. Focus on the essential elements of literature (plot, setting, characterization, point of view and theme) and any other aspects of literature study as instructed by your teacher. You need not underline every word. Often, I underline isolated words and phrases. Occasionally, I connect such underlinings with a line, in essence creating a new sentence, a distillation of ideas or meaning.

Vertical Bars. Use vertical bars and double vertical bars together with abbreviations and symbols to indicate passages that contain important themes, wonderfully nuanced descriptions, especially delightful phrasing and/or syntax, provocative assertions, figurative language, etc. And, of course, write comments and analytical snippets to clarify your thinking.

Vocabulary / Unusual Diction. Within the text of the book, circle words that are unfamiliar to you or whose use strikes you as unusual or inventive. Look up words in a dictionary that seem essential to an understanding of the meaning or the sense of the author. If it helps to do so, jot a brief definition or synonym nearby.

Questioning. Actively engage the text and further / confirm your understanding of each chapter by writing at least two open-ended questions for each. Short essay questions are most useful. If you have time, you may profit, however, from writing multiple choice, fill in the blank, matching, and true / false questions as well.

Shifts. Note all shifts in point of view. Note all shifts in time. Note all shifts in diction and syntax.

Final Thoughts on Annotation. I expect you to think critically about what you are reading. While the amount of annotation may vary widely from page to page, any notes you add to a text will help you to read more critically – any attempt to annotate your book will help you to understand the reading as you read – and, I hope this handout has made clear, will help you return to the reading with confidence later.

Annotation is a discrete skill, and like any skill, it takes significant practice to hone your ability to the point of acquiring expertise. So push the pencil! Push the pencil! Push the pencil!