

ANNOTATING A TEXT

Annotate (v) - to supply with critical or explanatory notes; comment upon in notes: *to annotate the works of Shakespeare*

Annotation (n) – a critical or explanatory note or body of notes added to a text: *write an annotation on the page*

As an "active reader," when you read a text for an assignment, you should have a **purpose** in mind. You should also have a pencil in hand so that you can "annotate" your text. As the word suggests, you "take notes" in the margins and/or on the text itself. As you read, you should add purposeful notes, identify key words and phrases, note definitions, and make connections tied to specific sections of the text.

Purpose:

Unlike "highlighting," which is a passive activity, the process of annotating a text helps you to stay focused and involved with the reading because you are actively involved in a conversation with the text. It will also help you to monitor and improve your comprehension. If you come across something that you don't understand or that you need to ask your teacher about, you'll be able to quickly make note of it, and then go on with your reading. In addition, you can clarify and synthesize ideas, pose relevant questions, and capture analytical thinking about the text. Simply put, annotating a text can lead to a deeper initial reading and an understanding of the text that lasts.

You can easily improve the depth of your reading and extent of your understanding over long periods of time by developing a systematic form of annotating. Such a system is not necessarily difficult and can be completely personal and exceptionally useful.

Why Annotate?

Annotate any text that you must know well, in detail, and from which you might need to produce evidence that supports your knowledge of the text, such as an informative article or a short story that will be the center of class discussion. The purpose of annotating may include, but is not limited to, the following:

- locating evidence in support of a claim
- identifying main idea and supporting details
- analyzing the validity of an argument or counter-argument
- determining author's purpose or theme
- giving an opinion, reacting, or reflecting
- identifying character traits/motivations
- summarizing and synthesizing
- defining key vocabulary
- identifying patterns and repetitions
- identifying literary and rhetorical devices

Don't assume that you must annotate when you read for pleasure; if you're relaxing with a book, well, relax. Still, some people—let's call them "not-abnormal"—actually annotate for pleasure.

Tools: Pen or Pencil, Highlighter (optional) and Your Own Text (Post-It-Notes if using a school text)

Sample of Annotated Text:

repetition; shows how angry he is;
can't think straight

choppy logic—
doesn't make sense

Capulet: How, how, how, how, choplogic? What is this?

He mimicks {
her-- see {
her previous {
lines {

“Proud” — and “I thank you” — and “I thank you
not” —

alliteration servant

And yet “not proud”? Mistress minion you,
Thank me no thankings, nor proud me no prouds,
But fettle your fine joints ‘gainst Thursday next
To go with Paris to Saint Peter’s Church, “get yourself ready”

criminals were

“picked up” in {
carts in the {
the streets and {
carried to prison {

Or I will drag thee on a hurdle thither,
Out, you green-sickness carrion! Out, you baggage!
You tallow-face!

“get yourself ready”

connotation

dead, decaying flesh

pale; anemic looking

metaphors

note degrading
terms—servant,
criminal, baggage;
views daughter as
property, something
that can be thrown
away

Annotation Codes

- Box** unfamiliar words
- Star** important or repeated ideas
- Question Mark** confusing passages
- Exclamation Point** for surprises
- Bracket** important passages
- Circle or Highlight** key words or details
- Underline** ideas to come back to