

ANNOTATING: Talking to text

The Basic Definition

Annotation **is the act of "talking" to a text as you read** through the act of making notes, highlighting, and asking questions. Typically, annotating means to write "margin notes" next to things we consider important, or interesting, in a piece of writing.

- Annotating does include highlighting, but with an extra step: an explanation or **mini-discussion** about **WHY** you highlighted what you did.
- Annotating gives purpose to your reading, and keeps you engaged in your reading. The fewer the **QUALITY** notes, the greater the likelihood you haven't been giving the reading your full attention 😊

Please realize: annotating is a significant skill to learn to help understand what you are reading.

Content Annotations

Understanding and connecting with the writer's **PURPOSE/INTENT** is key to annotating!! Essentially, you'll engage in four processes:

1. **PREDICTIONS** (e.g., concerning plot, setting, character, symbol, foreshadowing, etc.) & **INTERPRETATIONS** —co-creating, making meaning.

Key Question: What is happening or might happen? Why are these "happenings" important?

2. **OBSERVATIONS** —concerning "impressive" details - especially **patterns** that you notice - that contribute to the writer's purpose and intent. Identify these (use an **!**) and write margin notes to explain why you observed what you did.

Key question: Why did the author include these details/patterns? Why did I notice them - what was their impact on me?

3. **QUESTIONS and ANSWERS** - Use **?'s** to indicate where you have questions about the text.

Key questions: Why did the author do "this"? What was the purpose of "that"? and so on.

Ask questions **while** you read the text, as well as at the end. Try to answer the questions!

THE MOST IMPORTANT SKILL OF ANNOTATING is.....

4. **SIGNIFICANCE** - *Thanks for the predictions, interpretations and observations...Now, **so what?***

Key question: What does this text – and this author's purpose/intent and ideas mean **to me, the reader?** To others? Connections? Reminds me of?

ABSOLUTLEY ESSENTIAL: your connection to the text! **Not to the plot, but to the "ideas" the writer is raising** - about people, challenges, accomplishments, and conflicts that you see in your own life and in the lives of people, in general.

ESSENTIALLY, content annotating is your way of DEMONSTRATING EVIDENCE of CRITICAL THINKING and PERSONAL CONNECTION. Through annotating, you show the depth of your understanding and the broadening of your appreciation of the writer's experiences as well as your own.

Craft Annotations

Recognize the writer's craft!! Find the **STRONGEST** examples you can of the various *stylistic devices/techniques*. Special emphasis is on:

- parallel structure
- sentence fragments for effect (REMEMBER: a sentence fragment is NOT a complete sentence!);
- one word sentences;
staccato sentences (REMEMBER: these are short, "startling" sentences, typically located in the midst of longer sentences. They are **attention grabbers!**);
- vivid words, especially powerful verbs;
- repetition, **for emphasis**;
- figurative language;
- strong sensory details (words/phrases that create **"word pictures"** in our minds, by appealing to our **senses** of sight, sound, taste, touch and hearing;
- any other "patterns" that you might notice.

Once you have found these quality sentences:

- identify what they are, and
- in the margin, indicate the reason for your selection – a short phrase where you aim to explain what you think the writer's purpose was in having used the technique or the impact the technique had on you, as a reader. **Respond to the technique from either a reader's or a writer's perspective.**

ESSENTIALLY, craft annotating is your way of DEMONSTRATING EVIDENCE of the CRAFT of writing impressive and engaging stylistic devices/techniques. Through annotating, you show the depth of your understanding and the broadening of your appreciation of the writer's skills and expertise.

Student Exemplar: Amy's Poetry Annotations

2nd Read

3rd Read

4th Read

Innocence of the child

Speaker wants child to explore and not be ashamed.

"Reach Out and Touch" by Maxine Tynes

- Child's too young to speak
- Making "buh, buh, buh" sound
- Gurgling or crying?

baby girl, baby boy behind me on the bus

alliteration

reach out

and touch the curly electric of my hair

- Innocence of the child
- Can picture it in my mind

your fingers dipped in the

brown magic of my neck

shows the child's curiosity

to see if it comes off

your mama

slapping hands away

Mom teaching child to be afraid of people because of the color of their skin.

hush-up of your questions

Is Mom embarrassed? Ashamed? Angry?

and wondering out loud

why it doesn't come off.

I feel sad that this is Mom's reaction. Different time, though, than the present. Still happens?

Reassuring tone

I turn and smile for you

but you're already lost

Opposite of what speaker wants and reality of what is happening.

in the silence and fear that motherlove wraps you in.

personification

I should have sat beside you

snuggled my big warm self up close

held you while your mama juggled parcels.

Tone is reassuring conversational

then you would know it's o.k.

Tone - casual, reassuring
Mood - I feel sad for the speaker that people judge her. Racism was taught with a single "hush-up."