

A Reader's Guide to Annotation

Marking and highlighting a text is like having a conversation with a book – it allows you to ask questions, comment on meaning, and mark events and passages you want to revisit. Annotating is a permanent record of your intellectual conversation with the text.

Laying the foundation: A Resource and Planning Guide for Pre-AP English

As you work with your text, think about all the ways that you can connect with what you are reading. What follows are some suggestions that will help with annotating.

~Plan on reading most passages, if not everything, twice. The **first time**, read for overall meaning and impressions. The **second time**, read more carefully. Mark ideas, new vocabulary, etc.

~Begin to annotate. Use a pen, pencil, post-it notes, or a highlighter (although use it sparingly!).

- *Summarize important ideas in your own words.
- *Add examples from real life, other books, TV, movies, and so forth.
- *Define words that are new to you.
- *Mark passages that you find confusing with a ???
- *Write questions that you might have for later discussion in class.
- *Comment on the actions or development of characters.
- *Comment on things that intrigue, impress, surprise, disturb, etc.
- *Note how the author uses language. A list of possible literary devices is attached.
- *Feel free to draw picture when a visual connection is appropriate
- *Explain the historical context or traditions/social customs used in the passage.

~Suggested methods for marking a text:

- *If you are a person who does not like to write in a book, you may want to invest in a supply of post it notes.
- *If you feel really creative, or are just super organized, you can even color code your annotations by using different color post-its, highlighters, or pens.

- *Brackets: If several lines seem important, just draw a line down the margin and underline/highlight only the key phrases.
- *Asterisks: Place an asterisk next to an important passage; use two if it is really important.
- *Marginal Notes: Use the space in the margins to make comments, define words, ask questions, etc.
- *Underline/highlight: Caution! Do not underline or highlight too much! You want to concentrate on the important elements, not entire pages (use brackets for that).
- *Use circles, boxes, triangles, squiggly lines, stars, etc.

~Literary Term Definitions:

- **Alliteration* – the practice of beginning several consecutive or neighboring words with the same sound: e.g., “The twisting trout twinkled below.”
- * *Allusion* – a reference to a mythological, literary, or historical person, place, or thing: e.g., “He met his Waterloo.”
- * *Flashback* – a scene that interrupts the action of a work to show a previous event.
- **Foreshadowing* – the use of hints or clues in a narrative to suggest future action
- **Hyperbole* – a deliberate, extravagant, and often outrageous exaggeration; it may be used for either serious or comic effect: e.g., “The shot heard ‘round the world.”
- **Idiom* – an accepted phrase or expression having a meaning different from the literal: e.g., to drive someone up the wall.
- **Imagery* – the words or phrases a writer uses that appeal to the senses.
- **Irony* – there are three types;
 - verbal irony* – when a speaker or narrator says one thing while meaning the opposite; sarcasm is a form of verbal irony: e.g., “It is easy to stop smoking. I’ve done it many times.”
 - situational irony* -- when a situation turns out differently from what one would normally expect; often the twist is oddly appropriate: e.g., a deep sea diver drowning in a bathtub is ironic.
 - dramatic irony* – when a character or speaker says or does something that has different meaning from what he or she thinks it means, though the audience and

other characters understand the full implications: e.g., Anne Frank looks forward to growing up, but we, as readers, know that it will never be.

**Metaphor* – a comparison of two unlike things not using “like” or “as”: e.g., “Time is money.”

**Mood* – the atmosphere or predominant emotion in a literary work.

**Oxymoron* – a form of paradox that combines a pair of opposite terms into a single unusual expression: e.g., “sweet sorrow” or “cold fire.”

**Paradox* – occurs when the elements of a statement contradict each other. Although the statement may appear illogical, impossible, or absurd, it turns out to have a coherent meaning that reveals a hidden truth: e.g., “Much madness is divinest sense.”

**Personification* – a kind of metaphor that gives inanimate objects or abstract ideas human characteristics: e.g., “The wind cried in the dark.”

**Rhetoric* – the art of using words to persuade in writing or speaking.

**Simile* – a comparison of two different things or ideas using words such as “like” or “as”: e.g., “The warrior fought like a lion.”

**Suspense* – a quality that makes the reader or audience uncertain or tense about the outcome of events.

**Symbol* – any object, person, place, or action that has both a meaning in itself and that stands for something larger than itself, such as a quality, attitude, belief, or value: e.g., a tortoise represents slow but steady progress.

**Theme* – the central message of a literary work. It is expressed as a sentence or general statement about life or human nature. A literary work can have more than one theme, and most themes are not directly stated but are implied: e.g., pride often precedes a fall.

**Tone* – the writer’s or speaker’s attitude toward a subject, character, or audience; it is conveyed through the author’s choice of words (diction) and details. Tone can be serious, humorous, sarcastic, indignant, etc.

**Understatement (meiosis, litotes)* – the opposite of hyperbole. It is a kind of irony that deliberately represents something as being much less than it really is: e.g., “I could probably manage to survive on a salary of two million dollars per year.”