

Why Annotate?

Unlike highlighting, which is a passive activity, the process of annotating text helps you to stay focused and involved. To become a truly active reader, you should have questions in your mind when you read any text. As you read, you should be looking for answers to these questions, and formulate new questions. Annotation is a kind of self-teaching that -- in addition to revealing patterns and meaning perhaps unclear in an initial, surface reading -- trains your mind and develops critical thinking that can be applied to any text, and any subject.

You will be a stronger reader and a better writer. Every collected annotated text is a chance at a 100%. You will have something to contribute to discussion when called on. You will have great notes to use when asked to write about the text.

While there is no precise measure of how detailed an annotation must be, here are a few basic guidelines and techniques for a successful annotation. Your annotations may use a variety of these strategies:

1. Underline or highlight important terms.
2. Circle definitions and meanings.
3. Research and provide your own definitions.
4. Write key words and definitions in the margin.
5. Signal where important information can be found with key words or symbols in the margin.
6. Write short summaries or analyses in the margin at the end of paragraphs or sections.
7. Write the questions in the margin next to the section where the answer is found.
8. Pose questions to be answered in discussion or by the teacher.
9. Indicate steps in a process by using numbers in the margin.
10. Make note of repeated ideas and dominant themes.
11. Make connections to other texts, films, art, or materials you have read.
12. Explain the historical context.

Immerse yourself in the reading!