

ANNOTATION ASSIGNMENT

*Due: every reading, graded periodically**Robert Utterback*

Annotation is a key skill of active reading. It does not have a common definition beyond marking or making notes on a text, but often annotations practices are personal and develop over years of academic and scholarly work. Here are some guidelines that may be useful in finding your own meaningful annotation practice.

1 Elements of Annotation

- Circle unfamiliar words and key terms and write a brief definition in the margin. (This should *always* be done.)
- For texts without chapter titles or sections headings, write titles that reveal the main points or actions of that section.
- For tracking the development of a story or argument, either come up with or select two in-text words that summarize or are key to what is happening or being discussed.
- For characters in narrative texts: make notes about behaviors or spoken words that seem to reveal key aspects of personality/identity. You might consider motivations for words or actions of characters.
- For more academic/scholarly texts: make notes about the flow of the argument and how each paragraph or section contribute to the point that the author is making. Also, note and evaluate the quality or amount of evidence an author is using to support the argument.
- For texts with a clear voice of the author: question the assumptions made by the author and look for rhetorical devices, such as emotional pleas or other argumentative fallacies that seem to strengthen or weaken the author's point.

You *don't* need to do all of these all the time. Only do those that apply, and don't overdo it. It should be clear that you are reading and making sense of the text. The point of this kind of writing is to help you explore and crystallize your thoughts. In particular, to further your understanding, draw conclusions, or identify potential sources of confusion.

2 Grading

You should be annotating every reading, but I will only occasionally grade your annotations. I may do look through your texts in class while you are in groups or doing a quiz/writing activity. Or I may collect your texts to grade outside of class, provided we don't need that text soon. (Make sure you have your name written in each book!) Or, I may have you take a picture of a random page and email it to me.

I will usually assess annotation in a simple way: a check plus for full points, a check for most points, a check minus for few points.

I may occasionally give more thorough feedback. You can use the following rubric as a guide:

VOCABULARY (indicating unfamiliar words and including a definition)									
Rare	Occasional			Consistent but thin			Consistent & thorough		
0 1 2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
INDICATING MAIN IDEAS (underlined, highlighted, or summarized)									
Rare	Occasional			Consistent but thin			Consistent & thorough		
0 1 2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
RESPONDING TO THE TEXT (margin notes)									
Rare	Occasional			Consistent but thin			Consistent & thorough		
0 1 2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
QUESTIONING THE TEXT									
Rare	Occasional			Consistent but thin			Consistent & thorough		
0 1 2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	

3 Resources

- See "12 Ways to Mark Up a Book" handout
- You don't need to limit yourself to the annotations examples I gave above. A Google search will reveal many other resources about annotation.
- If you have the Bedford handbook for other classes, chapter 4 (in the 9th edition) talks about annotation.