

The “Why” and “How” of Annotating Texts

Why annotate?

Think of annotating as having a conversation with the text. Active readers have thoughts, questions, and observations as we read literature. Annotating, or jotting ideas and questions in the margins of our texts as we read, helps us to:

- Stay focused on the text
- Better understand and analyze literature
- Remember information
- Locate important passages and words quickly

How do I annotate?

REMEMBER: Keep it simple and stick to what is important and relevant to the task at hand.

For highlighting, the example on the next page uses two colors a yellow and a purple. It does not matter what colors you use. You can switch colors when you change topics or use one color for words that are defined and another color for important points.

- ✓ Make brief comments in the margins.
- ✓ Make brief comments between or within lines of the text.
- ✓ Circle or put boxes, triangles, or clouds around words or phrases.
- ✓ Use abbreviations or symbols.
- ✓ **Underline:** Underline only a few words at a time and always try and explain why it is underlined.
- ✓ **Highlight** – CAUTION – don’t go highlight crazy, too many will confuse you.
- ✓ **Place “?”** near places that confuse you.

- ✓ Have a conversation with the text. Talk back to it.
- ✓ Ask questions (important to what you have read).
- ✓ Comment on the actions or events.
- ✓ Comment on changes to a character or setting.
- ✓ Summarize main ideas and key events.
- ✓ Connect to what you already know.

Note how the author uses language: Look for and label the following in literature and poetry specifically:

- Point of view
- Narrative pace/time/ order of events
- Irony
- Allusions
- Other figures of speech
- Tone/mood
- Themes
- Symbols

- Reliability of narrator
- Imagery
- Repetition
- Diction
- Similes/ metaphors
- Personification

EXAMPLE

Europe's Heritage of Ideas (pages 99-101)

Main Idea: Something given from the past
Ancient cultures laid the foundation of many modern ideas.
to the present

Direct dem
Everybody
votes over
time

Kind
of Gov.

The idea of democracy developed in the ancient Greek city of Athens during the 400s B.C. The Athenians practiced direct democracy. They met and voted on laws firsthand.

Kind
of Gov.

Ancient Rome began as a republic. In the form of government, citizens elect their leaders. This idea later shaped the founding of the United States government. Rome also contributed the idea of the "rule of law." This means that the law should apply equally to everyone and that all people should be treated the same. The American legal system today is based on the rule of law.

Republic
pick people
to speak for
the group

In the ancient world, most people worshipped many gods. The Jews believed in only one god. The Hebrew Bible describes a covenant, or agreement, between the Jews and their God. The idea of a covenant later influenced the way colonists set up their societies in North America. The Ten Commandments found in the Hebrew Bible shaped the moral laws of many nations. The new religion of Christianity, based on the message of Jesus, a Jewish teacher, shaped values around the world.

Don't steal,
kill, lie

Muslims, the followers of Islam, also believed in one God. Islam began in the Arabian Peninsula with the Preaching of Muhammad. Jewish and Muslim scholars saved much of the learning of the ancient world. Muslims made advances in mathematics and medicine. They introduced the Arabic numerals used today.

Rome
Greeks

Religious
thought

A new way of thinking called scholasticism began to change theology, or the study of religion and God. Its followers used reason to explore questions of faith. One follower, Thomas Aquinas, emphasized the idea of natural law. This is the belief that people have certain rights from birth. Governments do not have to grant these rights. Among these are the rights to live, learn, worship, and reproduce. Americans' belief in human rights can partly be traced to the ideas of Aquinas.

Reason

Natural Law

People have rights
they are born with