

ANNOTATING A TEXT

This method of interaction with your text requires you to write directly in the book (or on sticky notes if you're not allowed to write in the book) by highlighting key words and phrases, writing questions or comments in the margins, bracketing important ideas or passages, connecting ideas that are important to understanding the text, and circling or highlighting unfamiliar words. Your PURPOSE in reading should influence the way you annotate.

- **Highlighting/Underlining:** Be careful not to mark too much information. Focus on key words and phrases.
- **Brackets:** Put [] or { } around longer phrases and highlight/underline key phrases within them.
- **Asterisks:** * Use these to indicate unusual, special, or important information. Multiple asterisks indicate a stronger degree of importance.
- **Marginal Notes:** Use space in the book or on your sticky notes to respond to ideas that are highlighted, underlined, bracketed, etc. Ask questions, summarize critical information, explain ideas, make comments, define terms, etc. This is the CRITICAL component of annotation! Highlighting, bracketing, etc. by themselves aren't enough. The marginal notes provide the active engagement with the text and the context for the key points you've marked.
- **Summarization:** Write a summary at the end of the chapter or at the end of critical sections of the chapter to help you rethink and remember the main points of each chapter.

QUESTIONS TO ASK WHEN ANNOTATING A TEXT:

1. What is your purpose in reading this text?
2. Where does the writer identify the text's purpose and thesis/claim (or main idea)?
3. What are the main points, definitions, and examples?
4. What questions does this text suggest to you?
5. What key words play an important role in the discussion?
6. What passages seem particularly crucial?
7. What role, if any, do images and graphics play?
8. Do your personal experiences, values, or knowledge of the subject cause you to question the author's assertions, evidence, or method?

You may want to consider using a key as you annotate your text or sticky notes:

(Write your key inside the front cover so you, and I, know what things mean.)

- For example: Q=Question, R=Response (funny, interesting, something you agree/disagree with), T=Thought outside the text – connection to your life, experience, etc., V=Vocabulary; Th=Theme, etc.
- For example: Color code your highlighting or use different color pens while annotating. red=literary device or figurative language; blue=vocabulary; yellow=text to text, text to self, text to world; green=theme; pink=symbolism, etc.
- For example: Use symbols to note different things you're looking for. ?, ☺, ☹, ➔, ★, ✓, etc.

REMEMBER: The important thing about annotating is that it SHOULD slow down your reading and force you to interact more fully with the text. You also need to find a method that works for you; not everyone will find highlighting useful, or using a key beneficial. Everyone should, however, be writing thoroughly in their texts (or using a dialectical journal) to make their thoughts visible.