English III AP Summer Assignment
How to Annotate a Text

You will receive a test grade for annotating *The Scarlet Letter*. Your annotations are due the first day of school. I suggest purchasing your own copy of *The Scarlet Letter*. If you do not, make your annotations on Post-Its. Do not write in someone else’s property. In addition, you will have an essay test on the first day of school. If you have any questions, please email me at bday@vidorisd.org. Please allow 24 hours for a response. This is not an assignment that can be done in a few hours, so do not wait until the last minute.

1. **At the top of the page or on a post-it,** mark the important *plot events*. Every page will not necessarily be marked.

2. **Be sure to figure out any unfamiliar words** through context or by using a dictionary. You can write the definitions right in the text for yourself.

3. **Highlight and mark any conflicts** that occur with the protagonist. Note your ideas about these conflicts in the text (who/what is involved, attempts to resolve conflicts, etc.)

4. **Highlight and mark words and phrases** that help describe the *personality of characters*. Note your ideas about the characters right in the text (personality, motivation, fears, dreams, etc.).

5. **Highlight any symbolism** and note your ideas in the text as to what abstract ideas or concepts these tangible objects may represent.

6. **Don’t mark too much.** If you mark everything, nothing will stand out.

**Annotation** is a key component of close reading. Since we will annotate texts all year, you need to develop a system that works for you. Effective annotating is both economical and consistent. Use any combination of the following:

- Make brief comments in the margins. Use any white space available—inside cover, random blank pages, etc.
- Make brief comments between or within lines of the text. Do not be afraid to mark within the text itself. In fact, you must.
- Circle or put boxes, triangles, or clouds around words or phrases.
- Use abbreviations or symbols—brackets, stars, exclamation points, question marks, numbers, etc.
- Connect words, phrases, ideas, circle, boxes, etc. with lines or arrows.
- **Underline**—CAUTION: Use this method sparingly. Underline only a few words. **Always combine** with another method such as comment. Never underline an entire passage. Doing so
takes too much time and loses effectiveness. If you wish to mark an entire paragraph or passage, draw a line down the margin or use brackets.

- Highlight—CAUTION: Don't highlight everything!!
- Create your own code.
- Use post-it notes only if you have exhausted all available space.

**Close Reading:** What should you annotate? Again, the possibilities are limitless, Keep in mind the reasons we annotate. Your annotations **must** include comments. I want to see evidence of thinking.

- Have a conversation with the text. Talk back to it.
- Ask questions.
- Comment on the actions or development of a character. Does the character change? Why? How? What is the result?
- Comment on lines/quotations you think are especially significant, powerful, or meaningful.
- Express agreement or disagreement.
- Summarize key events. Make predictions.
- Connect ideas to each other or to other texts.
- Note if you experience an epiphany.
- Note anything you would like to discuss or do not understand.
- Note how the author uses language. Note the significance if you can:
  - Effects of diction or syntax
  - Point of view/effect
  - Repetition of words, phrases, actions, events, or patterns
  - Narrative pace/time/sequence of events
  - Irony
  - Contrasts/contradictions/juxtapositions/shifts
  - Allusions
  - Any other figure of speech or literary device
  - Reliability of the narrator
  - Motifs or cluster ideas
  - Tone/mood
  - Imagery
  - Themes
  - Setting/historical period
  - Symbols

The most common complaint about annotating is that it slows down your reading. Yes, it does; that is the point. If annotating as you read annoys you, read a chapter, then go back and annotate. Reading a text a second time is preferable anyway.

Approach the works with an open mind. Let them inspire you and stretch your imagination.
Before reading:

1. Examine the front and back book cover
2. Read the title and any subtitles
3. Examine the illustrations
4. Examine the print (bold, italic, etc.)
5. Examine the way the text is set up (book, short story, diary, dialogue, etc.)

As you examine and read these, write questions and make predictions and/or connections near these parts of the text.

During reading:

1. Mark in the text
   A. Characters (Who)
   B. Setting (When)
   C. Setting (Where)
   D. Vocabulary
   E. Important ideas or information

2. Write in the margins:
   A. Summarize
   B. Make predictions
   C. Formulate opinions
   D. Make connections
   E. Ask questions
   F. Analyze the author’s craft
   G. Write reflections, reactions, and comments

After reading:

1. Reread annotations—draw conclusions
2. Reread introduction and conclusion—try to figure out something new
3. Examine: patterns/repetitions—determine possible meanings
4. Determine what the title might mean

Annotation Instructions and Rubric

Print this page and cut out the attached bookmark. Use it to help you read for important information.

Obviously, annotation is as personal as reading, and there are many ways to annotate a book. This system is just a suggestion. For example, some people prefer to use colors to differentiate elements, and some prefer to use Post-Its. If you already have a system, feel free to use what you are comfortable with.

What I will be looking for when I collect your books is the level of critical thinking that went into your reading. So no matter what system you use, make your thinking visible.

To make an A
For an annotated book to receive an A, I expect to see markings and written commentary throughout the entire book. There will probably be something significant noted in nearly every chapter.

To make a B
A B book may be lacking in written commentary, but the “highlighted” areas will reflect significant elements discussed at left.

To make a C
A C book may be missing some significant elements, but will still be highlighted generally throughout the book showing your basic understanding of the characters and plot.

Lower grades will reflect a lack of reading, possibly in skipped sections or random highlights of insignificant material.