

How to Annotate

Notice and comment upon a literary device - simile, metaphor, alliteration, repetition, irony, symbolism, etc.
What effect does it create for you?

Discuss a part that is confusing to you.

Ask the author a question about a passage.

Jot down any connections to other texts, movies, or historic/current events that you notice. Is the author alluding to something else? If so, discuss this.

Explain the moments of emotional impact. How are you feeling? Is this what the author hoped you would feel? How did the author create this feeling in you?

Why did the author phrase a passage in a particular way? What is the effect of that word choice?

Do you agree or disagree with an idea being presented? Why?

When you encounter a word that you don't know, look it up in the dictionary and write down its definition.

Discuss your changing feelings toward specific characters. What's caused this shift?

Describe what's missing in the text. What do you wish the author had included?

Use your inference skills. Is the author using a passage or relationship to try to tell you something deeper than what is being said directly?

Or write about anything else that comes to mind as you're reading...

It's important to annotate, or interact with a text, as you read. As you naturally have ideas, feelings, questions, or make mental connections to other things in your world based on the bit of text you just read, you need to pause and jot down those thoughts. An easy way to do this is with sticky notes. Just write your thought and stick it on the page next to the bit of relevant text. (If you own the book you're reading, feel free to write directly on the page.) Each annotation needs to include at least two well-developed sentences that help me understand what you're experiencing as you read.

Check out these models of what to do - and what **not** to do:

Do this

Thunder cracks outside as Vivian walks into the room, which gives me a small knot in my stomach. I think the author is using that weather effect to make readers fear this new character. Will Vivian be the ultimate villain of this story or is the author just trying to trick me?

The author keeps taking us back to this post office. This is the third time we've been here, so I'm wondering what's significant about this. I think it might be symbolically important, but I don't get it. Author, what's with your post office obsession?

Not this

*I LOVE this!
I'm so happy right now.*

*Wait, what?
I don't understand.*

← Make your own bookmark. Just clip along the dotted line and you'll have easy access to annotation-inspiration as you read. Enjoy.

Making Annotations: A User's Guide

As you work with your text, consider all of the ways that you can connect with what you are reading. Here are some suggestions that will help you with your annotations:

- Define words or slang; make the words real with examples from your experiences; explore why the author would have used a particular word or phrase.
- Make connections to other parts of the book. Feel free to use direct quotes from the book.
- Make connections to other texts you have read or seen, including:
 - Movies
 - Comic books/graphic novels
 - News events
 - Other books, stories, plays, songs, or poems
- Draw a picture when a visual connection is appropriate.
- Re-write, paraphrase, or summarize a particularly difficult passage or moment.
- Make meaningful connections to your own life experiences.
- Describe a new perspective you may now have.
- Explain the historical context or traditions/social customs that are used in the passage.
- Offer an analysis or interpretation of what is happening in the text.
- Point out and discuss literary techniques that the author is using.