

Annotation Tips

- **Annotating is your conversation with the text.** To be an active reader, to think deeply about the text, and to appreciate the writer's craft we **MUST** annotate.
- **Don't mark too much.** If you mark everything, nothing will stand out .
- Make brief notes at the top of the page or on a sticky note to mark important plot events.
- Circle or highlight words that are unfamiliar or unusual. Try to figure out what the words mean through the way they are used; supplement your guesses by consulting a dictionary.
- When new characters are introduced, highlight phrases that describe them. (Try not to highlight whole sentences).
- Highlight words, images, and details that seem to form a pattern throughout the text. For example, if a large clock appears in the first chapter, and then you notice the author using the words "timely" or "ticking" in the text, and then an incident occurs in which a character breaks a watch or is late for an appointment, you may have uncovered a pattern of imagery which will lead the close reader to discover a thematic idea. Highlight these related strands and observe the rest of the text closely to see if the author uses other linked words, images, or details.
- Highlight passages you think might be symbolic.
- Mark key ideas and note briefly your reflections about them in the margins.
- Highlight passages in which figurative language appears.
- When you get an idea while reading the text, note it in brief form in the margin. You may never think of this idea again unless you write it down.
- If you have a question about something in the text, write it on the page when it first occurred to you.
- While listening to a lecture or participating in a discussion about the text, write down insights you hear or discover. Writing these notes directly in the text assures you that you will be able to reference the exact passage that triggered the ideas. Also, it is less likely that you will lose track of the notes.
- Use brackets, checks, stars, bullets, or asterisks to mark very important items or things you want to come back to later.

Ideas to consider:

Annotation and highlighting can be a permanent record of the reader's intellectual conversation with the text. It can help a serious reader to keep track of patterns, contrasts, plot events, and character development. It can assist a student in studying for a test or writing a paper that requires the use of quotes to support ideas. Students who learn to highlight and annotate become active readers and recursive thinkers who notice patterns, symbolic elements, and contrasts almost effortlessly as they absorb the text.¹

¹ Laying the Foundation. Advanced Placement Strategies, Inc.