

## Notes for Making Annotations

When reading, you should habitually annotate your text (make marginal notes). For texts of your own in print, you can write directly on your copy. For books that belong to the school/library, you can make notes on a separate piece of paper. For digital texts, you can use the annotation tools in various programs or apps. Annotating helps you to dissect texts and discern meaning from them. Following you will find a list of items to look for as well as suggestions for training yourself to be an excellent annotator.

### HOW TO BEGIN:

#### 1. SUMMARY

- Summarize as you read.
- You may do this by paragraph, by stanza, by page, etc. depending on the complexity of the text.
- The more dense or complex the text, the more summarizing you will need to do.
- When summarizing, stick to the plot and be as concise as possible.
- You will look for other literary elements, as well, but your summary is your first (and basic) level of comprehension.

#### 2. FIRST IMPRESSIONS—As you read, write down first impressions:

- Likes and dislikes.
- Questions that arise (self-questioning is an excellent way to improve comprehension).
- Points that are unclear or that you don't understand and the reasons why.
- Any initial revelations/discoveries/reflections, etc.
- You will likely be able to answer some of your own questions by the end of the text or after a second read. *Those that remain unclear should be brought up in class.*

#### 3. PATTERNS—Look for patterns:

- Repetition and recurring elements including (but not limited to): images, symbols, phrases, situations, mood, etc.
- Mark these repeated elements and make connections.
- Ask yourself why these repetitious elements are important. Why is the author using them? Do you derive any meaning from them?
- Answer these questions in the margins or on a separate piece of paper.

#### 4. SIGNIFICANCE

- Identify any passages that strike you as highly significant and note why.

- Don't just highlight or bracket a passage without writing an explanation for the indication. Even though you find it important at one point, you might very well forget what you saw in the passage initially.

## 5. OTHER TEXTS

- Relate elements of the text you are reading to other texts you've read.
- Are there commonalities in theme, character, symbolism, etc.?

## 6. CONTEXT—Read the text in context. Consider the following:

- The time period in which it was written (and set).
- The social and political atmospheres of the time/setting.
- Author's background.
- This may take a little research on your part to identify such context.
- How does the author reveal these contextual elements in the literature?
- Does the author tend to take a position on any issue? How does the author accomplish this?

## STRATEGIES:

1. Number the paragraphs (and pages if necessary), so that you can make easy reference in discussions or find information quickly and easily when writing about the text in an assignment.
2. Circle unfamiliar words, look them up, and define them. Also practice using context clues to identify possible meaning for unfamiliar words.
3. Underline, bracket, or highlight anything of importance that you notice and make notes to identify why that section is important or significant. Likewise, indicate any passage that you might have a question about so you can bring it up in discussion. Write your question in the margins or on another sheet of paper.
4. Underline sentences/ideas that stand out to you and note why in the margins.
5. Connect important ideas, words, or phrases with arrows or number them in groups.
6. Summarize each paragraph/stanza/page in the margins for quick reference.
7. Use different symbols, abbreviations, or highlight colors to represent different concepts. (For example, you might highlight all unfamiliar words in yellow or all metaphors in green, etc.)