

Annotation Instructions

There are many ways to annotate a novel. Some students prefer to use different colored highlighters or pencils to identify various literary elements and details, while others prefer to use “Post-it” notes. If you already have a system, feel free to use what you are comfortable using.

When your English teacher inspects your book on the first day of school, the teacher will be looking for the level of critical thinking that went into your reading assignment. So, whatever annotation system you use, make sure that your thinking is visible, just like in math--show your work. Showing your work, or annotating, will increase your retention and comprehension of the text, and improve your chances of doing well on the open-book test that you will take during the first week of school.

Elements to mark within your text (highlight, Post-it, circle, underline, etc.):

- Write important **plot** events at the end of each chapter. You will not mark on every page. If you mark too much, nothing will stand out. Remember that the plot includes exposition (introduction of the setting and characters), rising action, climax (turning point), falling action, and resolution.
- Mark words and phrases that describe the personality of the **characters**. Pay specific attention to each character’s physical description, personality, weaknesses, motivation, fears, goals, etc.
- Mark descriptions of the **setting** that are important to the plot.
- Mark **unfamiliar words** and use context clues and a dictionary to define these words.
- Mark any **conflict** that occurs with the protagonist (main character) and the type of conflict (man vs. man, man vs. self, man vs. nature, etc.) in each case. Mark who or what is involved in the conflict and how the conflict is resolved.
- Identify any indications of **symbolism** throughout the book, and identify **motifs** and **themes** at the end of the book. Also, write a short **summary** of what happened at the end of each chapter. This will help you find key information when you are taking the open-book test.
- Mark significant **quotes**.

Annotation Requirements

To remain in an English AP or Pre-AP course after the first day of class, the summer reading assignment must be annotated to the following expectations: annotation markings and written commentary are present throughout the book, significant plot points or ideas are identified, something consequential is noted in nearly every chapter, and purpose, theme and literary elements are identified. Students must also pass a reading comprehension test associated with the summer reading assignment.

Students will be removed from an English AP or Pre-AP course if the above criteria is not met. In other words, students will be removed from the course if the novel is sparsely annotated with commentary and highlights, or annotated and highlighted sections appear random or insignificant. Also, students who do not pass the reading comprehension test will be removed from the class.

Annotating a Book (Example)

The diagram shows an open book with annotations on both pages. The left page is titled "Portraits of Artists" and "Chapter I." The text on the left page includes: "The studio was filled with the rich odour of roses, and when the light summer wind stirred amidst the trees of the garden, there came through the open door the heavy scent of the lilac, or the more delicate perfume of the pink-flowering thorn. From the corner of the divan of Persian saddle-bags on which he was lying, smoking, as was his custom, innumerable cigarettes, Lord Henry Wotton could just catch the gleam of the honey-sweet and honey-coloured branches of a laburnum whose tremulous" (the word "laburnum" is circled). The right page text includes: "branches seemed hardly able to bear the burden of a beauty so flamelike as theirs; and now and then the fantastic shadows of birds in flight flared across the long tussore silk curtains that were stretched in front of the huge window, producing a kind of momentary Japanese effect, and making him think of those pallid, jade-faced painters of Tokyo who, through the medium of an art that is necessarily immobile, seek to convey swiftness of motion. The sullen murmur of the bees" (the word "flared" is circled). Handwritten annotations include "Fine imagery" with an arrow pointing to "flared" and "Where is this taking place?" with an arrow pointing to "tussore silk curtains".

Inside Cover
Keep a list of all characters and a description of each.
Write down page numbers to reference key ideas or concepts.

Within the Text
Highlight anything that seems important, significant, memorable, etc.
Circle vocabulary words that you need to look up and provide a synonym in the margin.
Use brackets instead of underlining for especially long passages to reduce clutter.

Write an Open-Ended Question for each chapter. It should be one you might use for a short answer or essay.

Give each chapter a title
Write it at the beginning of each chapter.

Side Margins
Write interpretive notes, questions or remarks that pertain to the meaning of the passage.

At the End of Each Chapter
Write one or two sentences to summarize the plot as it occurred in that chapter.