

Annotation Station

What is annotation?

Annotation is the process of making notes on a text. Generally when you annotate, you want to try to do the following things:

1. **Write down questions** (either big philosophical questions, or just things you're confused about).
2. **React to ideas or events in the text.** These could be emotional or intellectual responses.
3. **Identify major themes and events in a text.** This can help you keep track of the main ideas in a text, and may make the text less confusing.
4. **Mark passages in the text that you find interesting or beautiful,** and jot down a few thoughts. These could serve as inspiration for your writing or seminar contributions later.
5. **Make connections to other texts, topics, or experiences.** This will help your brain to put the text you are reading in the context of something you already know.
6. **Define unfamiliar terms.** Use a dictionary!

Why do have to do this, anyway?

While annotation may seem like a big pain in the behind, it is a crucial reading strategy. Nobody expects you to remember everything you read, especially when you're reading a long book or article. Because we don't have memories like robots, annotation can help us to find key ideas and passages in a text quickly. In addition, annotating a text actively will actually help your reading comprehension, as it forces to you "talk to the text" and engage with the ideas. That said, there is no one right way to annotate. Here are some options for you to choose from:

Marginal Notes

This strategy is great for papers that you don't have to give back. In this strategy, you write notes directly on the paper itself.

Sticky Notes

In this strategy, generally used when you are reading someone else's book, you use sticky notes to make marginal notes. They are easily removed, and can be placed on the page to mark the exact passage you want to refer back to. I highly recommend this approach for annotating novels.

Stand-Alone Notes

Some students prefer to keep their annotations in a separate document from the actual text. This could be on a typed document, or a handwritten record. One of the benefits of this technique is that you will not run out of space for your annotations and notes! If you choose to do this, please use the following format:

Page#	Paragraph	Annotation
36	2	Why did Paul get so upset when they killed the horses? He's seen people die, but only had a reaction to the death of horses.
45	4	The schoolteacher reminds me of the militarism activity...he seems to really believe in that stuff.

