Core B | Guide to Annotating

Annotation can be understood as entering into a conversation with the literature you read. It involves thinking and commenting upon the text. It forces you to **SLOW DOWN!** as you read and think about the author's particular word choice. Here are some helpful tips when annotating:

1. Have your supplies ready! While reading, you should have a pen ready at the minimum. Make use of other tools as well, such as **colored** pencils, highlighters, post-it notes, or fine-line markers.

2. Plan on reading the text twice. The first time, read for overall meaning and impressions. The second time, read more carefully making note of important text features.

3. Use these guidelines to get you started, but do not be limited by them! Annotation is *Personal* to individual readers. As you become more comfortable with the process, your annotations will take on their own unique personality.

   - Make initial observations about the author and title – these could be questions or comments about each.
   - Remember, every question you ask must have an answer somewhere in your annotations. If you ask a question and your answer isn't obvious from the text, ask for help or look up the information to find the answer, jotting it down near your question.
   - As you read, summarize important ideas in your own words. Summaries may include what each chapter of a book contains or significant character traits or events in the story.
   - Define unfamiliar words in the margins. Definitions should include both the word and the meaning.
   - Make note of topics you'd like to consider during class discussions.
   - Use descriptive adjectives to define characters (Ex: Mickey Mouse = cheerful) and trace character development that reveals additional information about each character.
   - Underline new characters and make notes in the margin about their introduction.
   - Comment on things that surprise, impress, intrigue or disturb you. Then make notes on what causes you to have this reaction.
   - Note how the author uses language: identify literary devices in the margin.
   - Note repeated words, phrases, events, etc., and try to guess at their significance.
   - Note significant themes throughout the story. What is the author trying to communicate about his/her worldview through the theme?
   - If you highlight, underline, or bracket a word/phrase/sentence/passage, you MUST include a brief explanation of why you marked this part of the text.

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4. Things to **AVOID** when annotating:
   - Nonsense exclamations such as:
   - Undefined vocabulary
   - Highlighting, bracketing, or underlining only.
   - Highlighting or underlining excessively. Remember, only call out the important parts of the text.
   - Acronyms or abbreviation without explanation. Anyone should be able to pick up your book and reasonably understand your notes.
   - Messy handwriting.
   - Fulfilling only the minimum requirement

5. The grid below includes many of the different types of text features we'll be examining, discussing, and applying throughout the year. As we learn these concepts, students will be asked to begin adding these terms to their annotations. Other than setting features, all of the terms below are defined on the Core B Literary Term Guide on the following pages.

Characterization	Setting	Plot Structure	Plot Devices	Literary Devices	
Protagonist	Clothing	Exposition	Allusion	Allegory	Oxymoron
Antagonist	Colors	Rising Action	Chekov's Gun	Alliteration	Paradox
Anti-hero	Customs/beliefs/values	Climax	Deus ex machina	Diction	Parallelism
Foil	Furnishings	Falling Action	Flashback	Hyperbole	Personification
Stock	Indoor/outdoor	Resolution	Foreshadowing	Idiom	Repetition
Round	Lighting	Conflict	Irony (3 kinds!)	Imagery (6 senses!)	Simile
Flat	Season/weather/climate	Theme	Suspense	Juxtaposition	Symbol
Static	Sounds/smells		Twist Ending	Metaphor	Tone
Dynamic	Speech/dialect			Mood	Understatement
Character Traits	Time of day			Onomatopoeia	
Character Development	Universal symbols				
Direct vs. Indirect Characterization					

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Allegory – a story that has a second meaning beneath the surface. The characters, objects, or events in the story stand for another person, idea, or moral principle.

Antagonist – character(s) or situation that represents the opposition against which the protagonist must contend.

Alliteration – the practice of beginning several consecutive or neighboring words with the same sound. (e.g., "The twisting trout twinkled below.")

Allusion – a reference to a mythological, literary, or historical person, place, or thing. (e.g., "He met his Waterloo.")

Anti-hero – protagonist who lacks conventional morals, and who struggles for values which are not considered admirable

Character Development – the craft of giving a character a personality, depth, and motivations that propel them through a story. Also defined as how a character evolves throughout the course of a story.

Character Traits – all the aspects of a character's behavior and attitudes that make up that person's personality. Often portrayed using descriptive adjectives.

Chekov's Gun – an object mentioned early in a story that does not take on significance until later

Climax – the turning point in any story. It is the highest point of tension or drama in the plot. Often, climax is also when the main problem of the story is faced and solved by the protagonist.

Conflict - literary element that involves a struggle between two opposing forces, usually the protagonist and antagonist. Conflict is generally expressed in one of the following ways:
1. Man v. man – conflict that pits one person against another
2. Man v. self – character battles some aspect of him-/herself
3. Man v. nature – character must confront, or try to assert dominance over nature
4. Man v. society – conflict in which character fights against some aspect of society
5. Man v. divine or supernatural – character is trapped by some kind of inescapable fate, challenging their freedom and/or free will
6. Man v. technology – conflict that focuses on a character attempting to prevail against machines or other technology

Deus ex machina – (Latin for "god from a machine") an unexpected or improbable end to a story, usually as a result of some divine, magical, or extraordinary solution.

Diction – the words or phrases used by a writer to evoke a specific emotional response.

Direct Characterization – details about character that are presented openly through direct statements from the narrator or other characters

Dynamic (character) – character who changes over time, usually as a result of resolving a central conflict or facing a major crisis.

Exposition – beginning of a story in which the author introduces the characters, setting, and basic plot.

Falling Action – action that occurs after the climax, leading toward the resolution

Flashback – a scene that interrupts the action of a work to show a previous event.

Flat (character) – character with only one kind of personality trait or characteristic.

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Foil – any character whose personal qualities contrast with another character (usually the protagonist), helping the reader understand more about the other character

Foreshadowing – the use of hints or clues in a narrative to suggest future action

Hyperbole – a deliberate, extravagant, and often outrageous exaggeration; it may be used for either serious or comic effect. (e.g., "The shot heard 'round the world.'")

Idiom – an accepted phrase or expression having a meaning different from the literal. (e.g., to drive someone up the wall.)

Imagery – the words or phrases a writer uses that appeal to the senses.

Indirect Characterization – details about character that are made through inferences (logical conclusions and/or educated guesses) from the text. May come through actions or reactions to others, through speech/word-choice, how they interact with setting, etc.

Irony – there are three types:
1. Verbal irony – when a speaker or narrator says one thing while meaning the opposite; sarcasm is a form or verbal irony. (e.g., "It is easy to stop smoking. I've done it many times.")
2. Situational irony -- when a situation turns out differently from what one would normally expect; often the twist is oddly appropriate. (e.g., a deep sea diver drowning in a bathtub is ironic.)
3. Dramatic irony – when a character or speaker says or does something that has different meaning from what he or she thinks it means, though the audience and other characters understand the full implications. (e.g., Anne Frank looks forward to growing up, but we, as readers, know that it will never be.)

Juxtaposition – when an author places two concepts, characters, ideas, or places near or next to each other so that the reader will compare and contrast them. (e.g., "All's fair in love and war.")

Metaphor – a comparison of two unlike things not using "like" or "as." (e.g., "Time is money.")

Mood – the atmosphere or predominant emotion in a literary work.

Oxymoron – a form of paradox that combines a pair of opposite terms into a single unusual expression (e.g., "sweet sorrow" or "cold fire.")

Paradox – occurs when the elements of a statement contradict each other. Although the statement may appear illogical, impossible, or absurd, it turns out to have a coherent meaning that reveals a hidden truth. (e.g., "Much madness is divinest sense.")

Parallelism- words or phrases that are syntactically similar. (e.g., that government of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from the earth)

Personification – giving something that is not human (an animal, an inanimate object, an idea) human characteristics. (e.g., "The wind cried in the dark.")

Protagonist – central character in the story and is often referred to as the main character. He/she is faced with a conflict that must be resolved. The protagonist may not always be admirable (see "Anti-hero"); nevertheless, he/she must command involvement, and even empathy, on the part of the reader.

Repetition – when an author chooses to repeat a word, phrase, or sentence throughout the text. Aside from helping stress or highlight important thoughts and points, repetition can be a key tool for authors in developing style, mood, and rhythm.

Resolution – the conclusion of a story's plot and is a part of a complete conclusion to a story.

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Rising Action – the section of the plot leading up to the climax, in which the tension stemming from the story's central conflict grows through successive plot developments

Round (character) – any character with a complex personality in which the audience sees many different kinds of traits.

Setting – the time and place in which the story takes place, providing the backdrop for the story and helping to set the mood. It can also include social statuses, weather, historical period, and details about immediate surroundings. Settings can be real or fictional, or a combination of both real and fictional elements.

Simile – a comparison of two different things or ideas using words such as "like" or "as." (e.g., "The warrior fought like a lion.")

Static (character) – character who does not change over the course of the plot

Stock (character) – characters who have become conventional or stereotypical through repeated use in particular types of stories. Stock characters are instantly recognizable and are typically both flat and static (e.g., damsal in distress, mad scientist, boy next door, etc.).

Suspense – a quality that makes the reader or audience uncertain or tense about the outcome of events.

Symbol – any object, person, place, or action that has both a meaning in itself and that stands for something larger than itself, such as a quality, attitude, belief, or value: e.g., a tortoise represents slow but steady progress.

Theme – the central message of a literary work. It is expressed as a sentence or general statement about life or human nature. A literary work can have more than one theme, and most themes are not directly stated but are implied. (e.g., pride often precedes a fall.)

Tone – the writer's or speaker's attitude toward a subject, character, or audience; it is conveyed through the author's choice of words (diction) and details. Tone can be serious, humorous, sarcastic, indignant, etc.

Twist ending – An unexpected occurrence or turn of events at the end of the story that completely changes the direction or outcome of the plot from the direction it was likely to go.

Understatement (meiosis, litotes) – the opposite of hyperbole. It is a kind of irony that deliberately represents something as being much less than it really is. (e.g., "I could probably manage to survive on a salary of two million dollars per year.")