S**uggestions for Literary Close Reading & Annotating**

Annotate – *v.* To furnish (a literary work) with critical commentary or explanatory notes [LATIN *ad* near + *nota* a mark, note]

Annotation is CRITICAL for thorough literary analysis. There is no singular or perfect system of annotation; therefore, you should devise *one of your own*, allow yourself to modify it as it develops, and use your system consistently. Before you know it, annotation will become easy, rote, and indispensible.

Think of annotating as “showing your work” while you read. You are showing and reminding yourself of what you are thinking while you read and analyze the text (and you don’t have to freak out about remembering what is important!!). Thinking is how you connect to the text and requires ACTIVE participation with the text, engaging your mind while your read, not simply skimming the page. We read for a **purpose** in an English class while hoping the reading is pleasurable. Sometimes, what your read is just not going to be your cup of tea, and that’s ok.

Ideally, your should write directly on your text, but if you cannot, using small Post-it notes can be very helpful as well as taking notes in a notebook (record page numbers). Also, using different symbolic colors allows a quick visual reference as your review the text. The following is a list of SUGGESTIONS for creating your own annotation system. Use them, modify them, or add to them, but it is critical that your develop a system of your own and USE IT consistently.

**Underlining** is the cornerstone of annotation; however, avoid its overuse and underlining only. Underline only that which strikes you as important, significant, memorable, etc. Write symbols or brief comments within the side margins that indicate your reason for underlining. Remember, color-coding is an option, too.

**Intertextuality** - Make connections to other texts that you have read, including books, stories, songs, poems, films, news events, historical events, etc. (make a note in the margain)

**Vocabulary** – Circle words that are unfamiliar to you or strike you as unusual or significant; jot a brief definition or synonym nearby in the margin.

**Symbols / Abbreviations** – Consider color-coding

Stars / asterisks – Make a not in the margin about why it’s important.

\* = important

\*\* = very important

= of the utmost importance; crucial to understanding theme, author’s

purpose, use of language, etc.

TH – theme (connections to / supportive of the theme)

POV – point of view (type, significance)

CH – relevant character information / elements of characterization

S – setting (relevant aspects)

CF – conflict (relevant to theme, author’s purpose, characterization, etc.)

TP – turning point (a significant change)

CX – climax

? – a passage raises a question. Write and ideas you have about the answer, too.

??? – a passage is confusing or hard to understand. Write reason why.

WC – word choice (relevant / connective vocabulary use)

! – a passage is surprising, interesting, shocking (make a note in margin)

**Additional literary terms** - color-code or create a symbol

Irony

Tone

Foreshadowing

Symbolism

Archetype

Allusion

Personification

Simile

Diction

Etc.