

# INSTITUTE WRITING PROGRAM

## THE WRITING CENTER

### Annotating Texts

Recording thoughts in documents, or annotating, helps you remember the material and makes you think more deeply about the text. Simply highlighting or underlining might draw your eye to that section later, while annotations will help you develop critical thinking.

**Good** annotations will summarize the text and define key terms.

1. Paraphrase what happened in a scene or chapter and its importance to either another scene or the story as a whole.
2. Draw a picture of the scene, your response or an idea.
3. Write down definitions of words you do not know. This will help you learn more words, but also help you better understand the text.

**Better** annotations will do more than summarize. They will challenge the text, make connections to other readings, and ask questions. Students may use annotations to brainstorm ideas for their projects.

1. Ideas, feelings, and questions occur naturally in the reading process. Write down your feelings; consider if the author wanted this reaction.
2. Write down any connections to other texts, movies, or events that you notice.
3. Write down what is confusing to you. Write down when one of your questions is answered.
4. Interact with the author of the text by asking a question about a passage. Consider responding as the author to your question.
5. Notice and comment if a point the author makes is a central idea, supporting evidence, or an idea they are refuting.
6. Notice and comment on relating ideas or themes that you begin to notice the author focusing on.
7. Evaluate the author's writing. Is the argument convincing? Do you agree or disagree with their point of view?
8. Relate sections of the text to your own life and experiences.
9. Notice and comment on a literary device – rhetoric, metaphor, foreshadowing, tone, paradox, irony, symbolism, etc. What effect does it create for you, the reader, the text, or the argument?
10. Explain the moments of emotional impact. The author just killed the main character; are you apathetic? angry? happy?
11. Use your inference skills. Is the author using a passage or relationship to try to tell you something deeper than what is being said directly?



Develop a system of symbols that are meaningful to you (e.g., checkmarks for main ideas, circles around unknown words, stars for interesting supporting evidence, etc.) If you cannot take notes in the text, consider using sticky notes.