

William and Reed Academy Summer Reading 2025

AP Language and Composition



Dear Student,

Congratulations on being amongst the amazing students at William and Reed Academy, and we look forward to an exciting year in AP English Language and Composition. We hope you are as excited as we are to embark on this fantastic journey. Your year will be full of considering enlightened thoughts, creating complex arguments, and learning to interpret the world around you. In twelve months, you will no longer simply be a William and Reed Academy student – you will be a William and Reed Academy AP scholar and ready to take on the world.

Note: It is expected that you complete your summer assignments individually. Although you may struggle, put forth your best effort and make sure that you complete all of what is detailed below. Coming in with incomplete work and claiming, "I didn't get it," is unacceptable. This is the first impression that I will have of you as a student -- make it excellent!

Congratulations, Good Luck, and Have Fun!

- The William and Reed English Department

Directions: Complete Parts 1-5 and bring on the first day of school.

Please read this entire document carefully, so you understand all aspects of the assignment.

Complete these items in the order listed. Get comfortable writing in pen! All assignments must be turned in or will be collected the first day of school.

Anywhere below where it states *annotate*, treat these items as valuable resources that should expand your knowledge. Don't just annotate for me. Annotate for you. These texts will make you a better writer, and they will help you pass the exam in May.

Part 1: Join our Google Classroom with your W&R email address.

- Classroom Code: **xtzfmwjw**

Part 2: Reading and Annotating Like an AP Student

THESE ARE TWO OF THE MOST IMPORTANT READS OF THIS COURSE!

1. Print and read the article titled: [Close Reading for AP Lang & Comp Overview](#)
 - This document can be located on page 9. A digital copy is available in Google classroom. Apply what you learn to Part 3 and Part 4 of the summer reading assignment.
2. Print and read the article titled: [Guided Questions for Annotating a Text](#)
 - This document can be located on page 10. A digital copy is available in Google classroom. Apply what you learn to Part 3 and Part 4 of the summer reading assignment.

Part 3: *Thank You for Arguing*

1. Please purchase this edition:
 - Heinrichs, Jay. *Thank You for Arguing, Fourth Edition (Revised and Updated): What Aristotle, Lincoln, and Homer Simpson Can Teach Us About the Art of Persuasion* Paperback – April 21, 2020, 4th edition
2. Read Chapters 1-2, 4, 6-13, and 25
 - a. Feel free to read the omitted chapters; we will visit them all over the course of the year. The chapters assigned are all you need to succeed on part 4!
3. As you read complete the following:
 - Using a notecard or similarly sized sticky note, provide a brief (2-3 sentence or bulleted) summary of each chapter. You must write out your summaries by hand in **black ink**. Place this summary at the back of each chapter.

This is a minor assessment grade

Part 4: Written Assignment

1. Print and Read President Barack Obama's Speech [A More Perfect Union](#)
 - a. This speech can also be found on Google Classroom
2. Use the "Guided Questions for Annotating A Text" documents from part 2 and "Close Reading for AP Lang and Comp Overview" to annotate the text. You will turn in your annotated speech on the first day of class.
 - a. When you are annotating, be on the lookout for concepts discussed in your assigned chapter of *Thank You for Arguing*
 - b. You would do well to research the time period, the context, and any figures or terms you are unfamiliar with while you read.
 - c. This document should be chock-full of good, varsity level annotations. No garbage summary annotations.
 - d. You will use this annotated speech to write an essay in class once the semester starts.
3. Respond to the essay prompt in the box below. Your essay must be typed and submitted on a Google Doc, follow [MLA guidelines](#), and be submitted to Google Classroom before the first day of class for credit. Your essay must have a thesis statement, use textual evidence to support your claims, and use your knowledge from *Thank You For Arguing* to inform your answer. Your essay must be between 750 and 1250 words in length, and conform to the grammar and style guidelines for formal writing in the [William and Reed Style Guide](#). Your essay will be graded using the argument [AP Lang Rubric](#).
 - a. MLA Guidelines, WR Style Guide, and AP Rubrics can be found in Google Classroom.
 - b. Using AI or other similar resources to help, write, or edit your essay in any way is considered cheating, and will result in a zero and a referral to administration. Don't try me on this.

The essay is a major assessment grade.

The annotated speech is worth a minor grade.

Argument Prompt:

In his 2008 speech *A More Perfect Union*, presidential candidate Barack Obama posits "today, whenever I find myself feeling doubtful or cynical [about our country's ability to change for the better], what gives me the most hope is the next generation."

Write an essay that argues your position on the extent to which Obama's claim about the hope for change in America relying on upcoming generations is valid.

In your response, you should do the following:

- **Respond to the prompt with a thesis that presents a defensible position.**
- **Provide evidence from outside the speech to support your line of reasoning.**
- **Explain how your evidence supports your line of reasoning**
- **Use appropriate grammar and punctuation in communicating your argument**

Part 5: “Choice” Novel Annotations

This year, you will read 6 complete novels in this course: 1 over the summer, 1 over Minimester, and 2 each semester. Although this class does not focus on literature, it is imperative that you read - especially in an AP English course. In her 2024 article for The Atlantic which analyzes the reason for the decline in the academic ability of elite college students in the past ten years, Rose Horowitch writes:

*“Nicholas Dames has taught Literature Humanities, Columbia University’s required great-books course, since 1998. He loves the job, but it has changed. Over the past decade, students have become overwhelmed by the reading. College kids have never read everything they’re assigned, of course, but this feels different. Dames’s students now seem bewildered by the thought of finishing multiple books a semester. His colleagues have noticed the same problem. Many students no longer arrive at college—even at highly selective, elite colleges—prepared to read books . . . The issue that Dames and other professors have observed is distinct from the problem at community colleges and nonselective universities, where some students arrive with literacy and comprehension deficits that can leave them unable to complete collegiate courses. High-achieving students at exclusive schools like Columbia can decode words and sentences. But they struggle to muster the **attention** or **ambition** required to immerse themselves in a substantial text.”*

Over the course of the year, you will choose from a list of preselected novels from a variety of categories to avoid falling into this trap. These novels are novels that are important or excellent in some way. For your summer reading:

1. **Choose a novel from the table below that you have not read before.**
 - a. Keep in mind, none of the novels on the list are “easy”. If a novel is short, it probably has an incredible level of complexity or depth.
2. **Purchase your novel.**
 - a. Amazon is usually the cheapest, fastest, and most convenient, but if you feel like supporting local businesses, Read-it-Again books down the road from the school gets my vote.
3. **Read and annotate your novel as per the [AP English Annotation Guide](#).**
 - a. **You must complete 20 annotations on sticky notes**, label them correctly, and place them neatly in your novel. Failure to do so will result in a loss of points. Please read the

entire handout to maximize your chances! Use the annotation guide on page 11 to help create excellent, AP level annotations. Your annotations will be a minor grade.

- 4. You will have a test over your novel in the first few weeks of school.**
 - a. It will be an open book and open annotation exam, but merely understanding the plot of the novel will not be helpful. ENGAGE in your reading.

Summer Reading “Choice” Novel Options:

*Read the description of each novel, then choose **ONE** to read and annotate over the summer. Over the course of the year, you can read more of these if there are multiple you wish to experience! Note that some are long and some are short, but **ALL** of them are important, topical, or excellent in some capacity - a shorter novel isn't easier, it just has more going on at any given time.*

- 1. Fahrenheit 451 - Ray Bradbury**
 - a. An increasingly important and relevant dystopian fiction text detailing the dangers of censorship. An all time classic.
- 2. Of Mice and Men - John Steinbeck**
 - a. Realistic Fiction set in 1940's California. For my money, it is the most perfect short novel ever written. Do not spoil it for yourself if you choose to read it. My all-time favorite novella.
- 3. The Awakening - Kate Chopin**
 - a. A classic romance novel set in 19th century New Orleans. The novel dives into gender roles and female empowerment.
- 4. The Sound and the Fury - William Faulkner**
 - a. A style-heavy, gritty fiction that follows the perspectives of a flawed family in the southern United states. An absolute fantastic showcase of narrative storytelling styles.
- 5. The Stranger - Albert Camus**
 - a. A philosophical fiction set in Africa following a French immigrant. A fantastic text if you are interested in philosophy or morality.
- 6. Their Eyes Were Watching God - Zora Neale Hurston**
 - a. A classic work of fiction from the Harlem Renaissance. Hurston's style (especially her diction) is extremely intentional and vivid.
- 7. All the Pretty Horses - Cormac McCarthy**
 - a. A gritty, violent western that begins the iconic Border Trilogy. McCarthy's unique style creates a staggering amount of suspense and fear. This is one of my favorites on this list.
- 8. Things Fall Apart - Chinua Achebe**

- a. A sobering text of realistic fiction set in colonial Africa that follows a flawed man as he struggles to keep his family, village, and culture alive.
- 9. The Joy Luck Club - Amy Tan**
- a. A semi-autobiographical fiction following four Asian-American families in San Francisco. Tan is one of my favorite authors on this list.
- 10. Othello - William Shakespeare**
- a. A classic tragic play of betrayal and injustice. One of my favorites on this list and one of Shakespeare's best plays.
- 11. My Summer in the Sierra - John Muir**
- a. A beautifully written text from one of the nation's preeminent conservationists and naturalists detailing Muir's time in the Sierra mountains of California. If you are a lover of the outdoors, you owe it to yourself to read this novel.
- 12. The Boys in the Boat - Daniel James Brown**
- a. A sports book for people that want to graduate past the garbage you read in middle school. The novel touches on the world of an athlete, human nature, and WWII. A must read for athletes.
- 13. The Great Gatsby - F. Scott Fitzgerald**
- a. A work of highly symbolic fiction that usually ends up with the "favorite novel assigned in class" championship belt. A classic work of fiction that most every high schooler reads before graduation.
- 14. The Perks of Being a Wallflower - Stephen Chbosky**
- a. A traditional upper-grades novel that has similar beats to the YA coming-of-age/romance novels you might have enjoyed in middle school, just rooted in more realism, dealing with more mature themes, and written with infinitely better prose.
- 15. Into Thin Air - Jon Krakauer**
- a. My favorite nonfiction novel of all time, and my favorite author. If you liked the journalistic style of *Into the Wild* but hated Chris McCandless, read this. It details the author's disastrous summit attempt of Mt. Everest, and analyzes the dangers of commercializing this pinnacle achievement.

Advice from the past...

Words of Wisdom from the Ghosts of AP Langers Past...

- Do not wait to complete this work, or you will be overwhelmed. Break it down into chunks!
- Be prepared to have your minds blown week after week.
- Relax and enjoy the ride.
- You'll hate it and love it. You will be immensely prepared for the exam, and you will go in confident!
- It's all worth it!
- Study to remember, not to memorize. This isn't a course in which you take a test and move on. Everything you will do builds upon what comes before it.
- Take the class and the learning environment seriously; don't worry about the numerical grade. Worry about what you actually LEARN from the class.
- Don't save long-term assignments for the night before! It's very stressful.
- Be ready to think. This class is more than just an English writing class; you will really develop your thoughts and learn a lot about your identity as a thinker.
- No matter how great you did last year, accept and submit to the colossal booty-kicking AP could put you through, and always put forth your best efforts even though it's tough.
- Even though you will want to fall asleep sometimes or scream at the wall while writing a paper, pull it together because it's worth that qualifying score.
- This class will be more difficult than any other English class before it, but it is worth all your blood, sweat, and tears; put one hundred percent of your effort into this class, as it will help you grow as a rational, thinking individual as well as a writer and student. Don't shirk work.
- Don't stress—Do your work—Take notes—Ask questions. Don't be afraid. Be bold.
- Pay attention. Do your homework. Work hard. Have fun.

**It would definitely be in your best interest to start applying what you read to everyday life -- pay attention to the world around you -- (advertisements, movies, current events, podcasts, etc...). You'll thank me later. Happy Reading and writing!

If you have any questions, you may contact Mr. Wyatt (Jwyatt@williamandreed.com)

Close Reading for AP Lang & Comp: Overview

Of all the skills on the two AP English exams (Lang and Lit), the art of close reading is the toughest to master for students who tend to think very literally or concretely. The concept that words and ideas can have deeper meanings or implications beyond the surface is a difficult idea to master for some students.

The following provides specific focus for students or classes who struggle with the notion of close reading. This page focuses specifically on skills such as reading for tone, diction, syntax, etc.

What is Close Reading?

Close reading is the fine art of asking the following questions:

- **Why THIS word?** Of all the words in the English language from which an author could have chosen, why did she choose THAT SPECIFIC ONE and no other? For example, consider the difference between these two statements: *He is prone to making a fool of himself* versus *He is apt to make a fool of himself*. In the first example, the word *prone* suggests passivity, supinity, someone lying on the ground going "AAAAAH, UUHHH, I CAN'T HELLLLP IIIIT." In the second example, our protagonist takes more bold and assertive action: He knows the edge of the cliff is there and boldly proceeds toward it undeterred. Word choice matters.
- **Why THIS order?** Commonly, word order in English proceeds in a subject-verb-object order: *The gargoyle did relish the taste of unwary unicorns*. However, *Relish the taste of unwary unicorns did the gargoyle* is grammatically correct -- but it feels very different, seeming to have a stilted, almost medieval quality to it. If your significant other were to say, "I love my car and you," you would be wise to question your actual value to this person and relationship. After all, reassure yourself though you might with the idea that s/he was saving the best for last, the inescapable fact is that s/he said, "I love my car," leaving the "and you" like a tacked-on afterthought.
- **Why THIS figure of speech?** Imagine this sentence: *Estelle slithered into the conversation without a second thought*. The tacit comparison here links Estelle to a serpent. Without saying much beyond this, we have the sense that our hapless Estelle might be more than just a schemer -- she might be seriously destructive or poisonous (metaphorically speaking, perhaps).
- **Why THIS tone?** Remember that great authors rarely indulge in the expected or the ordinary. A woman may look at the struggle of a dying moth with little more than detached, scientific interest. A man may watch his own mother's cremation with a sense of joy. A poet may be presented with a perfect red rose from a loved one and feel utter boredom and disappointment. In short, great literature DOESN'T give you what you expect, and for some readers, this can be very frustrating. ("After all," they argue, "you're not SUPPOSED to feel that way.") However, tone is crucial to understanding the author's purpose and meaning, just as it would be crucial to know whether my statement, "You look nice today" is said sincerely or sarcastically.
- **Why THIS tool?** What rhetorical tool(s) of ethos, pathos, or logos are being used? What appeals to altruism, selfishness, morality, convention, tradition, or patriotism are being offered up for your consumption here? Why THOSE TOOLS and no other?

Guided Questions for Annotating a Text

AP Language and Composition

When you annotate a text you generate a record of your response to your reading. Such a record can prove valuable to you when you proceed to analysis.

Annotating a text is not the same thing as underlining a few words or highlighting several lines. Annotating a text involves an interactive approach with a text's language and images. This approach should help you discover what you find important, what you want to explore, and/or what you find puzzling about a text.

Approach a text as if you were entering a discussion with it. While a text cannot literally speak, its written words, images and phrases do indeed communicate. At times a particular text's meaning is clear, while at other times it isn't. Either way, you can note such encounters and offer comments. Your discussion with a text occurs as you engage with its words, phrases and ideas. You think; these thoughts can find their own way onto the text's margins and between the lines. As you underline telling phrased, note ideas, link portions of the text, and raise issues and questions around particular observations, you establish a written record of your interactive discussion. You discern a purpose and an argument.

If you fail to note what you find remarkable, the initial ideas and important questions you have while reading may be lost to you. By annotating a text, you can return to it later to rethink what you consider important.

Techniques for annotating a text will vary since each reader generates his/her known reading, each person will identify upon different portions of the text as worthwhile, interesting or remarkable.

Here are some questions to guide your annotations:

What do you find remarkable?

Where do you engage with the text?

What do particular ideas/claims pull you in or capture your attention? What ideas emerge from the text?

What features are at work?

What patterns emerge from your markings?

Do particular portions of this text link or connect with each another? Do key words or phrases and ideas emerge in several places?

What choices in syntax, diction and punctuation communicate the intent? Who is the primary audience? Why?

Given multiple readings, how have your annotations emerged?

Have you asked questions? Have any new questions emerged?

When you review your annotations, what do you discover?

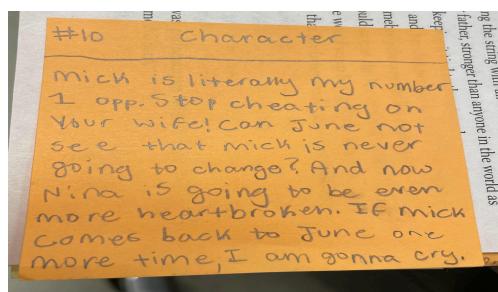
Are there places where the rhetor's intentions are clear?

Can you link this text with others you have read?

AP English Language and Composition Annotation Guide

Annotation Guide

Please mark your book for any of the following:

Character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the main character narrating the story? If not, how are they presented to us? If so, how do they present themselves to us? • How does the main character feel? • How does the main character interact with others? What relationships do they form over the course of the text? • How does the author draw from real, human experiences to create a believable, relatable character? • How might a character serve as a symbol or traditional archetype?
Conflict	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the main source of conflict in the story? • How does this conflict develop throughout the text? • Which characters exacerbate, participate in, or mitigate this conflict? • What real-world events does this conflict mirror?
Style	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What literary devices does the author use? Why are they used? What impact do literary devices have on the reading experience or author's purpose? • Is there any interesting use of language (diction) in the passage? • How does the author's syntax help them achieve their purpose? • How does the author manipulate stylistic elements to create important tones or moods? • How does the author manipulate the actual physical structure of the text to create a desired effect?
Theme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the main ideas in the passage? • How are those ideas developed as a result of plot, conflict, motifs, and symbols? • How are those ideas reflected in character, setting, and style? • What does the author or narrator want us to think about those ideas? • What symbols or motifs are present in the text? How does the reader or a character interact with these elements?
Sample Annotation (Don't forget to put the annotation number on the post-it note!)	

Annotation Rubric

Grade Range: 100-90

The student **included at least 20 thoughtful annotations**. They made annotations **throughout** the text. The student has included some of the following:

- written commentary;
- responded to lines, words, and/or phrases in the text;
- shared a personal connection or shared a connection to other texts;
- commented on the voice (*narration*) of the text;
- analyzed the author's motives;
- analyzed the structure of the text;
- asked questions about the author or text;
- wrestled with confusing aspects of or challenging words in the text; and/or
- made connections to BIG ideas

Grade Range: 89-80

The student **proficiently** annotated the text. They made consistent markings **throughout** the text. The student has included some of the following:

- written commentary;
- responded to lines, words, and/or phrases in the text;
- shared a personal connection or shared a connection to other texts;
- commented on the voice (*narration*) of the text;
- analyzed the author's motives;
- asked questions about the author or text;
- wrestled with confusing aspects of or challenging words in the text; and/or
- made connections to BIG ideas

Grade Range: 75-70

The student **somewhat** annotated the text. They made somewhat consistent markings **throughout** the text. The student has included some of the following:

- written commentary;
- responded to lines, words, and/or phrases in the text;
- shared a personal connection or shared a connection to other texts;
- commented on the voice (*narration*) of the text;
- analyzed the author's motives;
- analyzed the structure of the text;
- asked questions about the author or text;
- wrestled with confusing aspects of or challenging words in the text; and/or
- made connections to BIG ideas

Grading Range: 50-0 The student made **little to no effort** on his or her annotations.

Remember, strong annotations:

- Are present throughout the text;
- move beyond and avoid a summary of plot points;
- demonstrate your ability to track thinking about character development, themes, conflicts, or other features in a book over time;
- show analytical thinking and the ability to recognize big ideas hidden in the book; and thoughtfully show active reading by connecting with the text, predicting and questioning, addressing confusion, and reacting to pivotal or relatable events.

Making Excellent AP Annotations

Annotations show a student's **active** reading process. Make annotations where you have a moment that makes you stop and think while reading! Annotations should be made throughout your **entire** novel - even if this means you have over 20!

Annotations are **NOT** summaries of chapters, single word reactions, or a book report.

Each annotation must be written on a sticky note, labeled with the annotation number and category, and placed on the page the annotation relates to. All sticky notes should be neatly placed into the book, slightly sticking out, for the ease of the teacher's grading experience (please).

4 Categories of Annotation

For each annotation, choose the category which your annotation best describes.

- Character
- Conflict
- Theme (The big lesson. Made by symbols and motifs)
- Style (How the author writes)

5 Ways to Show Active Reading:

For each annotation, choose at least **TWO** active reading concepts from below to discuss your category. Your annotations should be 2-4 sentences in length.

- **Connect** (Connect a moment in the text to a different text, to an experience, or to historical/current events)
- **Predict** (Make predictions based on context clues. How will your prediction affect the story if it comes true?)
- **React** (What are the true feelings you experience while reading the book?)
- **Question** (Ask HARD questions that actually pique your interest)
- **Analyze** (Explain HOW and WHY English class concepts affect the story)

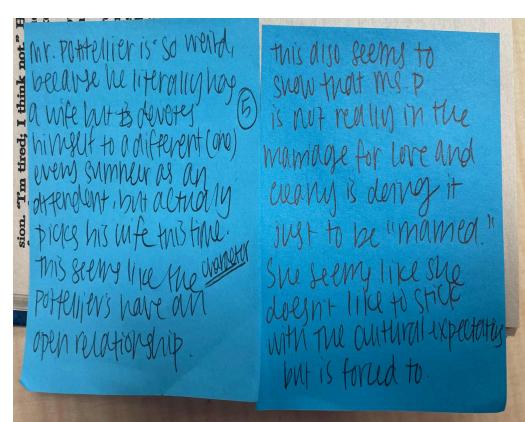
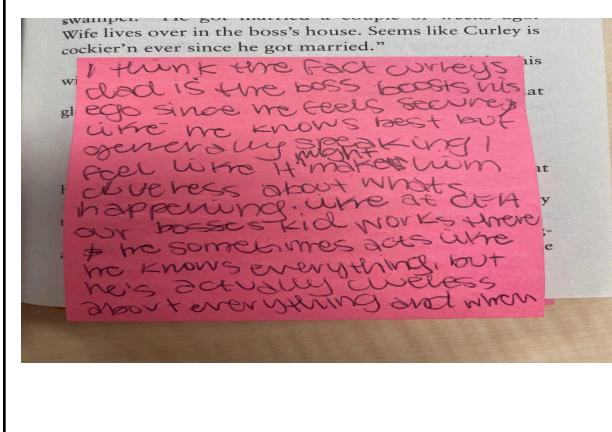
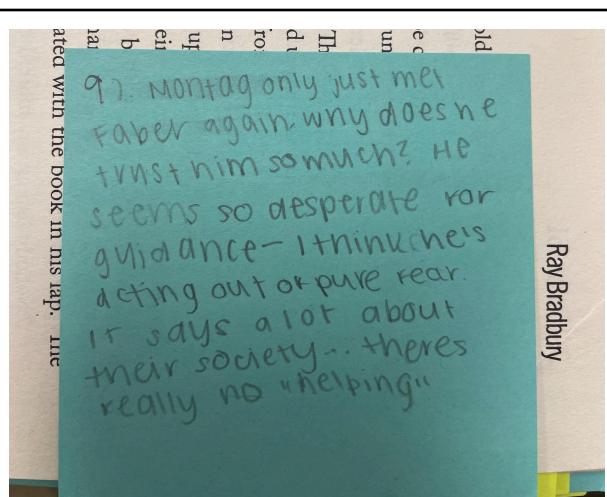
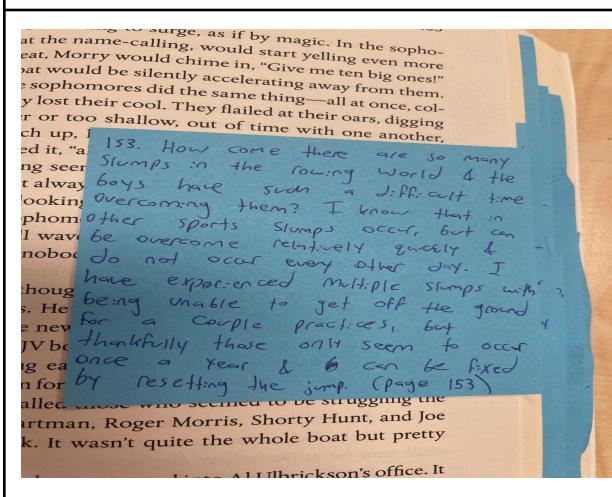
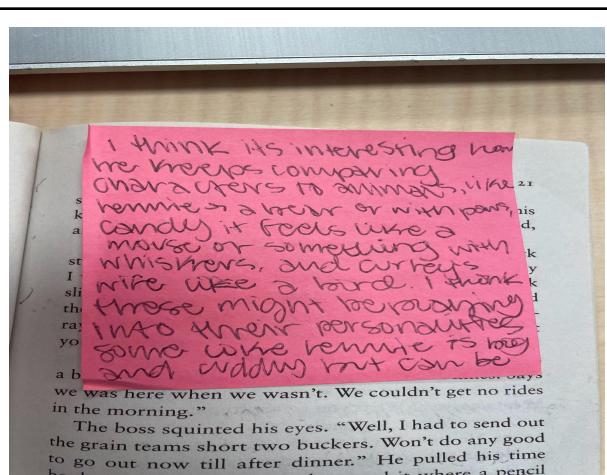
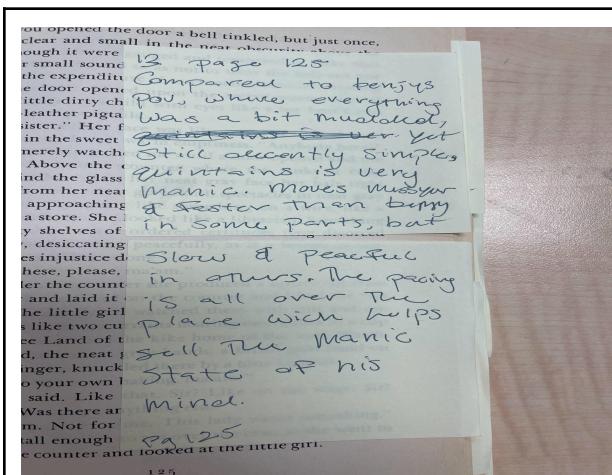
Tips

- Annotate throughout your novel. If you have 200 pages that aren't annotated, I don't think your read them when I grade your novel.
- **Do not create end of chapter annotations**
- Do not summarize
- **Really try to connect with your novel. What does it remind you of from your life?**
- Any time you stop to think, cry, laugh, judge, or otherwise emote - make an annotation
- Be on the lookout for English class concepts from years past. Once you identify one, ask yourself: What is the purpose for including this in the big picture? What is it developing?
- **Get specific! Good annotations are more than just a sentence or two. Really try to explain, connect, and analyze specifically.**
- **Be vulnerable and real. That embarrassing connection? Share it. That sad moment? Tell me how you cried during it. When you couldn't put the novel down during a certain part? Explain why.**

Poor Annotation Types to Avoid and How to Adapt Them

Avoid Annotations That Only:	Try This Instead!
Summarize a chapter	<p>Question a character's decision in the chapter and predict what will happen next.</p> <p>Analyze an author's stylistic decision that impacts the story, and question the motives of a character or the author.</p> <p>React to a pivotal moment in the chapter, and connect to it.</p>
Copy a direct quote	Analyze how the content in the quote impacts a narrative concept, and connect this quote.
Describe what just happened on a page	React to what just happened, and predict what will happen because of the event.
Identify English class concepts on the page	<p>Analyze HOW that concept affects the reader's perception of events, a character's development, the creation of a theme, etc. and react to the effect of the style.</p> <p>Analyze HOW that concept affects the reader's perception of events, a character's development, the creation of a theme, etc. and connect the developed concept to another text, historical event, or personal event.</p>
Identify the Point of View or Verb Tense	Comment on the tense or PoV, then analyze how that style choice affects narrative elements in the story.
Identify the setting	<p>Analyze the author's development of the setting and predict how the setting might have an impact on the plot, theme, characters, conflicts, etc.</p> <p>Connect to a similar setting in your life, and question the characters' interactions with the setting.</p>

Examples of past excellent AP Annotations



use
the
united
west
at
topics

Topics → and plot, characters, theme, setting

How to Annotate

Notice and comment upon a literary device – simile, metaphor, alliteration, repetition, irony, symbolism, etc. What effect does it create for you?

Discuss a part that is confusing to you.

Ask the author a question about a passage.

Jot down any connections to other texts, movies, or historic/current events that you notice. Is the author alluding to something else? If so, discuss this.

Explain a moment of emotional impact. How are you feeling? Is this what the author hoped you would feel? How did the author create this feeling in you?

Why do you think the author phrased a passage in a particular way? What's the effect of that word choice?

Do you agree or disagree with an idea being presented? Why?

When you encounter a word that you don't know, look it up in the dictionary and write down its definition.

Discuss your changing feelings toward specific characters. What's causing this shift for you?

Describe what's missing in the text. What do you wish the author had included?

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?

Or write about anything else that comes to mind as you're reading...

It's important to annotate, or interact with a text, as you read. As you naturally have ideas, feelings, questions, or make mental connections to other things in your world based on the bit of text you just read, you need to pause and jot down those thoughts. An easy way to do this is with sticky notes. Just write your thought and stick it on the page next to the bit of relevant text. Each annotation needs to include at least two well-developed sentences that help me understand what you're experiencing as you read.

Check out these models of what to do – and what not to do:

Do this →

Thunder cracks outside as Vivian walks into the room, which gives me a small knot in my stomach. I think the author is using that weather effect to make readers fear this new character. Will Vivian be the ultimate villain of this story or is the author just trying to trick me? (character) pg 23

The author keeps taking us back to this post office. This is the third time we've been here, so I'm wondering what's significant about this. I think it might be symbolically important, but I don't get it. Author, what's with your post office obsession? (plot) pg 6

Not this →

I LOVE this!

I'm so happy right now.

Wait, what?
I don't understand.

← Make your own bookmark. Just clip along the dotted line and you'll have easy access to annotation-inspiration as you read. Enjoy.