



Annotating Literature Selections

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When studying a book, students will be making annotations to help them with follow-up activities (these include discussions, essay writing, tests). Annotating makes locating information easier. Listed below are the basics. Students may do additional notations which they find helpful but must follow these basic guidelines.

Ideally, a student should read a selection twice. The first reading is simply reading, to get a basic understanding of the story, its characters, themes and plot. After this first reading, annotating is easier because students can more easily identify foreshadowing, themes, etc. Of course, two readings may not be possible and annotating must be part of the first reading.

Highlighting

Highlighters are used to identify basic literary components of a story and to tag them for easy identification later during study and review. PVCP students are expected to annotate using the color guide which follows.

Blue: Vocabulary Any unfamiliar word should be highlighted in Blue (including words which a student thinks he/she knows in context but does not use in his/her working vocabulary—words often have multiple meanings and context does not always reveal the correct meaning) Next, the student should use a dictionary to define the word and use a red or blue ballpoint to write a simple definition in the side margin of the book (this allows the student to easily review the word when referring to it later). Care must be taken to use the correct meaning of words with multiple definitions.

Green: Setting Time, place, weather, and other elements of setting should be highlighted in green. If a change in setting occurs, this should also be marked in green. A note in the side margin should be made (in red or blue ballpoint) to help identify the details of the setting. (i.e. Grandmother's bedroom, fog thickens, or no computers working)

Pink: Character Description When a new character is introduced or described use pink to highlight it. When additional details about a character are revealed, highlight those. Use a ballpoint to make a side margin note identifying the character and any relevant details.

Orange: Quotes Any line in the story (whether dialogue or narrative) which is worth remembering should be highlighted in orange. These may be used later as part of an essay or class discussion. (i.e. "It was the best of time, it was the worst of time", "It is very foolish to shut oneself into any wardrobe", "Luke, I am your father.") Again, use a red or blue ballpoint to make a side margin note which helps identify the quote.

Yellow: Important Events and Themes Highlight important events and plot developments in yellow and use a red or blue ballpoint to make a side margin note to help identify the event.

Purple (optional) Packs of highlighter often contain a purple highlighter. These may be used for additional annotation. If, for example, two important events occur together, the first is highlighted in yellow and the second can be highlighted in purple. (If there is no purple, both should be highlighted in yellow and the use of side margin notes will differentiate them.)

Additionally, use a red or blue ballpoint to label the top of each page. Use a label that will help identify the key events on that page (i.e. Lucy finds the wardrobe, Fog cuts Scrooge off from reality, Darth Vader is Luke's father). If the page is very short (such as the last page of a chapter often is), no label may be needed. No more than ten unlabeled pages should occur in a novel.

Red or Blue Ballpoint: Red and blue contrast with the black ink of a book and makes location of the notations easier. Be certain the pen is a ballpoint (Roller balls, gel pens and other hybrid pens often bleed through the pages of a book and make a mess). Using a fine point pen makes reading the small margin notes easier.