

## Annotation Guide for Non-fiction Text

Annotation is the process of writing down the thinking that occurs during reading. If you're not thinking while you read, then you're probably not reading very well. Annotation allows the reader to interact with the text by asking questions, making comments, or noting observations. Here are some specific aspects of a text that you might choose to annotate:

- 1. Reader Response:** Be able to trace your reactions, to ask questions in class, to remind yourself when you find answers to earlier questions. This should help note the writer's effectiveness. Make note of the following items:
  - Your reactions/emotional responses (humor, surprise, sadness, anger, frustration, disappointment, tension/suspense, disgust, criticism, disagreement, confusion)
  - Your questions or lack of understanding or doubts (ask "Why?")
  - Your revelations: when "things" become clear to you, when you make links
  - Similarities to other works: "Reminds me of..."
  - Wonderful writing- passages that strike you artistically/aesthetically and why
- 2. Speaker:** Think about how who the writer is and what he/she knows is communicated. This should help you decide the author's credibility. Make note of the following elements:
  - Introductory facts: author backgrounds and relationship to the topic, bias, etc.
  - Ethos- how the author establishes credibility and character on the given topic
  - Note words and language that indicate the author's attitude or tone and where it shifts or changes and why
  - When the author directly or indirectly states how he/she feels
  - Note key lines that stand out as crucial to the author's argument
- 3. Occasion:** Think about what caused the author to write about this topic and whether or not it is a valid reason. Make note of the following items:
  - The author's reasons for writing- what is the motivation?
  - Historical, political, social issues surrounding the topic
  - The author's personal reasons and well as the greater world/national reasons for the piece
  - Evidence of views characteristic of the time period and culture surrounding the work
  - Descriptions of class judgments, racism, gender biases, stereotypes, etc.
- 4. Audience:** Think about what kind of person or people the author intended as the audience and whether or not the author is able to connect with that audience effectively. Make note of:
  - Evidence of who (and it can be more than one) the author is trying to reach.
  - Where the author directly or indirectly address a specific audience
  - Any "Call to Action" that the author is issuing to the reader.
  - Pathos- where the author appeals to your sense of emotion through anecdotes and figurative language
- 5. Purpose:** Think about the author's purpose in writing this book and whether or not they are effective in that purpose. Make note of the following items:
  - Specific reasons for writing: informing, persuading, arguing, refuting, exemplifying- but make sure you note specifics.
  - Logos: the author's appeal to reason. Examine how he/she makes the reader believe in that purpose.
- 6. Subject:** Think about what the book is discussing and whether or not the author shows why this subject is important. Make note of the following items:
  - Elements related to the problem and issue
  - How the author develops or deepens the aspects of the problem/issue
  - How the author show the complications related to the subject and the implication of it to you, the nation, the world, etc.
- 7. Authorial Devices and Structures in the Argument:** Think about the author's techniques in delivery and how effective author's methods are for rhetorical purposes - the use of subtleties, patterns, style, structure, etc. Make note of the following items:
  - Changes in point of view/emphasis
  - Crucial language/vocabulary- not just a word that you don't understand, but one that seems crucial to understanding the argument- look these up!
  - Stylistic techniques: irony, satire, humor, exaggeration, repetition/patterns, possible symbols, significant metaphors and other notable literary and rhetorical devices
  - How the author's structure of the argument/book influence the reader and relate to the subject, audience and purpose.