

## How to Annotate a Book (From Professor Waters)

This outline addresses why you would ever want to mark in a book. For each reason, the outline gives specific strategies to achieve your goals in reading the book.

1. Interact with the book – talk back to it. You learn more from a conversation than you do from a lecture (this is the text-to-self connection.)

1. Typical marks

- i. Question marks and questions – be a critical reader
- ii. Exclamation marks – a great point, or I really agree)
- iii. Smiley faces and other emoticons
- iv. Pictures and graphic organizers. The pictures may express your overall impression of a paragraph, page, or chapter. The graphic organizer (Venn diagram, etc.) may give you a handy way to sort the materials in a way that makes sense to you.

2. Typical writing

- i. Comments – agreements or disagreements
- ii. Random associations
  1. Begin to trust your gut when reading! Does the passage remind you of a song? Another book? A story you read? Write the association down in the margin!
  2. Cross-reference the book to other books making the same point. Use a shortened name for the other book – one you’ll remember, though. (e.g., “Harry Potter 3”  
(This is text-to-text connection.)

2. Learn what the book teaches (this is the text-to-world connection.)

a. Underline, circle or highlight key words and phrases.

2. Cross-reference a term with the book’s explanation of the term, or where the book gives the term fuller treatment.

- i. In other words, put a reference to another page in the book in the margin where you’re reading. Use a page number.
- ii. Then, return the favor at the place in the book you just referred to. You now have a link so you can find both pages if you find one of them.

3. Put your own summaries in the margin

- i. If you summarize a passage in your own words, you’ll learn the material much better.
- ii. Depending on how closely you wish to study the material, you may wish to summarize entire sections, paragraphs, or even parts of paragraphs.
- iii. If you put your summaries in your books instead of separate notebooks,

the book you read and the summary you wrote will reinforce each other. A positive synergy happens! You'll also keep your book and your notes in one place.

4. Leave a "trail" in the book that makes it easier to follow when you study the material again.
  - i. Make a trail by writing subject matter headings in the margins. You'll find the material more easily the second time through.
  - ii. Bracket or highlight sections you think are important.
5. In the margin, start a working outline of the section you're reading. Use only two or three levels to start with.
6. Create your own index in the back of the book!
  - i. Don't set out to make a comprehensive index. Just add items that you want to find later.
  - ii. Decide on your own keywords – one or two per passage. What would you look for if you returned to the book in a few days? In a year?
  - iii. Use a blank page or pages in the back. Decide on how much space to put before and after the keyword. If your keyword starts with "g," for instance, go about a quarter of the way through the page or pages you've reserved for your index and write the word there.
  - iv. Write down a keyword and a page number on which the keyword is found. If that isn't specific enough, write "T," "M," or "B" after the page number. Each of those letters tells you where to look on the page in the question; the letters stand for "top," "middle," and "Bottom," respectively.
  - v. Does the book already have an index? Add to it with your own keywords to make the index more useful to you.
7. Create a glossary at the beginning or end of a chapter or a book.
  - i. Every time you read a word you do not know that seems important for the purposes of reading the book, write it down in your glossary.
  - ii. In your glossary next to the word in question, put the page number where the word may be found.
  - iii. Put a very short definition by each word in the glossary.
8. Pick up the author's style (this is the reading-to-writing connection.)
  1. Why? Because you aren't born with a writing style. You pick it up. Perhaps there's something that you like about this author's style but you don't know what it is. Learn to analyze an author's writing style in order to put up parts of his/her style that becomes natural to you.
  2. How?
    - i. First, reflect a bit. What do you like about the writer's style? If nothing occurs to you, consider the tone of the piece (humorous, passionate, etc.) Begin to wonder: how did the writer get the tone across? (This method

works for discovering how a writer gets across tone, plot, conflict, and other things.)

- ii. Look for patterns.
  - 1. Read a paragraph or two or three you really like. Read it over and over. What begins to stand out to you?
  - 2. Circle or underline parts of speech with different colored pens, pencils, or crayons. Perhaps red for verbs, blue for nouns, even green for pronouns. Still remember to label.
  - 3. Circle or underline rhetorical devices with different colored writing instruments, or surround them with different geometrical shapes, such as an oval, a rectangle, and a triangle, and label them.

a. What rhetorical devices?

- i. How he/she mixes up lengths of sentences
- ii. Sound devices, alliteration, assonance, onomatopoeia, repetition, internal rhymes, etc.