

ANNOTATION

The skill of annotation is an important tool for helping readers understand challenging texts of all kinds--articles, literature, essays, novels.

Annotating means "taking notes"--but in a focused way. Through annotation, you can enter into a dialogue with an author, with his/her words right on the page itself. As you annotate, you can come to an understanding of what the text means, you can uncover a pattern of meaning.

As you read, what should you annotate? Here are some guidelines for annotation.

Guidelines for Annotation

1. Circle and look up unfamiliar vocabulary. Write the definitions of these words in the margins of the story/poem.
2. Underline or highlight important names of places and people, as well as critical dates.
3. Underline or bracket passages that strike you. Perhaps you like an idea, a phrase, a character, or an image, or perhaps you are struck by a section of dialogue, or maybe you are puzzled or mystified by a passage.

* = important

? = a question you need answered

! = something striking (idea or use of language)

4. Once you underline, bracket, or mark passages that strike you, in the margins jot down:

--an explanation of what it is about the way the author writes that appeals to you

--questions provoked by the text

--paraphrases of important ideas, summaries of what a passage is saying

--things you need to clear up--your own questions. For example, why do characters act as they do? What causes events to happen? Why does the writer include certain information? Look for answers to your questions as you read on.

--literary analysis/interpretation of text's meaning
explain any symbols, images, metaphors, similes, allusions, etc.

explore any patterns that occur in an author's
choice of words

examine a character's/narrator's/speaker's
personality traits

examine the structure of the piece

note any shifts in tone, mood, word choice,
imagery; indicate any places where the text seems to
shift direction and explain the impact that such a
shift has on the meaning of the piece as a whole

interpret the title of the text

examine what you believe to be the overall
theme(s)/meaning of the text

Read the following poem carefully. Then, write an essay in which you analyze how the language of the poem reflects the changing perceptions and emotions of the speaker as he considers the metamorphosis of the dead groundhog.

The Groundhog

In June, amid the golden fields,
I saw a groundhog lying dead.
Dead lay he; my senses shook,
And mind outshot our naked frailty.
There lowly in the vigorous summer
His form began its senseless change,
And made my senses waver dim
Seeing nature ferocious in him.
Inspecting close his maggots' might
And seething cauldron of his being,
Half with loathing, half with a strange love,
I poked him with an angry stick.
The fever rose, became a flame
And Vigour circumscribed the skies,
Immense energy in the sun,
And through my frame a sunless trembling.
My stick had done nor good nor harm.
Then stood I silent in the day
Watching the object, as before:
And kept my reverence for knowledge
Trying for control, to be still,
To quell the passion of the blood:
Until I had bent down on my knees
Praying for joy in the sight of decay.
And so I left : and I returned
In Autumn strict of eve, to see
The sap gone out of the groundhog,
But the bony sodden hulk remained.
But the year had lost its meaning.
And in intellectual chains
I lost both love and loathing,
Mured up in the wall of wisdom.
Another summer took the fields again
Massive and burning, full of life.
But when I chanced upon the spot
There was only a little hair left.
And bones bleaching in the sunlight
Beautiful as architecture:
I watched them like a geometer
And cut a walking stick from a birch.
It has been three years, now.
There is no sign of the groundhog.
I stood there in the whirling summer,
My hand capped a withered heart,
And thought of China and of Greece,
Of Alexander in his tent:
Of Montaigne in his tower,
Of Saint Theresa in her wild lament.

--Richard Eberhart

MODEL ANNOTATION

Read the following poem carefully. Then, write an essay in which you analyze how the language of the poem reflects the changing perceptions and emotions of the speaker as he considers the metamorphosis of the dead groundhog.

The Groundhog Poet uses much imagery - especially heat

In June, amid the golden fields,
 I saw a groundhog lying dead.
 Dead lay he; my senses shook,
 And mind outshot out naked frailty.
 There lowly in the vigorous summer
 His form began its senseless change,
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Use of different seasons parallels stages of life?

Spring = life - rebirth
 repeats image to imprint in the reader's mind

basic meaning of entire poem - death & disappearance of individual

humans/society

describes nature's actions as wast logic, as not caring, indifferent, barely making an impact

indicates that poet is not exactly sure why death occurs
 bugs that are small have great power over ground who once probably ate them - role reversal

characterizes nature as a type of monster

imagery - sun baking the groundhog's body

once again using hot imagery "fever, flame, sun"

nothing can affect the fate of a dead creature

poet feels strongly rather silly

poet hopes that some god will come out of groundhog's death

still some of the memory/significance remains

beginning to die and decay, beginning of cold weather

very dark & cold
 pays respect to death of groundhog - realizes and acknowledges the loss
 why does the groundhog evoke such feeling?

some force pulls the poet back to the groundhog, still feels a connection
 beginning to lose its shape as memory is fading
 after a year the loss of a simple groundhog is no longer significant

connection begins to fade

memory is gone -> poet does not look for groundhog - it is a random happening that leads him to the remains

parallel/opposite of the dead groundhog - life/world goes on even though he is gone

still affects poet's emotions
 these things/memories have lasted thru time. But will they in their own "3 years" vanish from existence
 --Richard Eberhart

short amt. of time to us - long amt. compared to life of groundhog?

Perhaps we do not know the majority about these people/places. Like the groundhog we only see the bones, the minimum.

Who is Montaigne?
 Who is St. Theresa?
 any special significance?
 why did poet choose these people?

English Department
Annotation Rubric

- 5 The text is extensively highlighted or underlined with many margin notes in addition to the shorthand notations. The annotations demonstrate that the student has carefully read and considered the text's meaning. The margin notes serve as an abbreviated outline of what the text says and what the reader thinks about it.
- 4 The text is extensively highlighted or underlined with fewer margin notes compared to the most carefully considered readings. In addition the shorthand notations are present. The annotations which are there demonstrate that the student has carefully read and considered the text's meaning.
- 3 The text is less extensively highlighted or underlined with some margin notes and shorthand markings. The annotations demonstrate a less thorough reading of the work than the top two ratings.
- 2 The text is highlighted or underlined and the student uses shorthand markings. There are virtually no margin notes; consequently, it is impossible to determine how thorough the reading of the text has been.
- 1 Only shorthand margin notations are used or part of the text is unmarked or there are so few notations overall that the text may not have been read completely.
- 0 The text is unmarked.