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Annotations: The Key to Comprehension

In the past, I have constantly been told to annotate my books by english teachers but have never been given a reason to do so. This year, I realized the importance of annotations and learned to utilize annotations to improve my comprehension when reading and aid me in my essay writing. At the start of the year, I had two major problems, one regarding my reading and the other regarding my writing, the former was my lack of comprehension and the latter my lack of an argument. Unbeknownst to me, both of these issues were ramifications of an underlying problem, my lack of annotations.

Initially, I believed that annotating books was a chore; however, I soon realized the importance of annotations after my essay on *The Odyssey*. Without proper annotations, I was unable to understand the opaque language of Homer and could not synthesize a succinct analysis of the epic. The result was a cacophony of quotes haphazardly inserted into redundant and superficial analysis. A notable instance of my lack of comprehension was when I wrote:“Telemachus ‘lacks neither courage nor sense’’”(Growth 2). Instead of analyzing the rich language in “courage” and “sense”, I merely summarized the quote: “Athena tells him that he already inherently has courage”(2). I attribute my largely superficial analysis to my lack of annotations because without them, I lacked the tools to comprehend the profound language of the quote. After realizing the importance of annotations, I radically changed my approach to understanding a work*.* The quality of my analysis of *Their Eyes Were Watching God* differed greatly from my essay on *The Odyssey*. While reading *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, I annotated the novel by jotting down key ideas and deeper meanings in certain passages. When formulating my argument, I found the following annotation: “Janie reflects on her past with the fishing net at the horizon“(193). After reviewing this annotation, I drew a connection between the horizon here, at the end of the novel, and the horizon referenced at the start of the novel. Highlighting the parallel between these two scenes, I was able to explain that “the horizon [represented] the place where dreams are achieved” (Varying Perspectives 2). Leveraging annotations, I could comprehend the text and was successful in integrating it into my essay. Not only did annotations make the process of finding quotes to bolster an argument easier, they also made the writing exercise more interesting as they allowed for critical thinking and logical reasoning.

All in all, annotations played a large role in improving my essay writing and reading comprehension. Though I initially thought annotations were a pointless and unproductive, after doing them for one year, I understand the importance of taking notes in my books.

Work Cited

Deep, Harsh. *“*Varying Perspectives: Differing Worldviews of Characters in Zora Neale Hurston’s *Their Eyes Are Watching God* ” March 2019, San Jose, The Harker School.

Deep, Harsh. *“*Growth: An Analysis of Telemachus in Homer’s ” March 2019, San Jose, The Harker School.