The following is a portion of a blog post that can be found at this link:
http://www.grandviewcetl.org/tools-for-teaching-social-annotation/

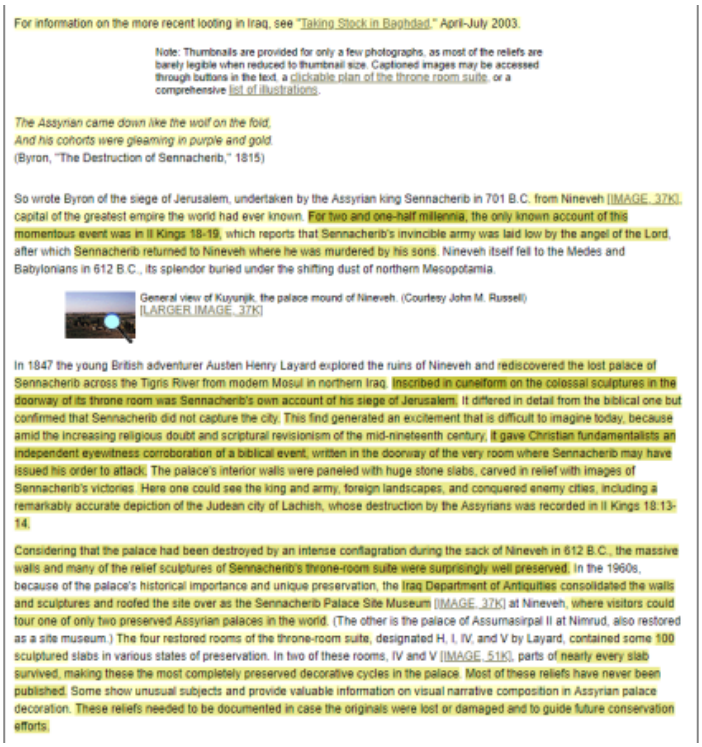
Tools for Teaching: Social Annotation

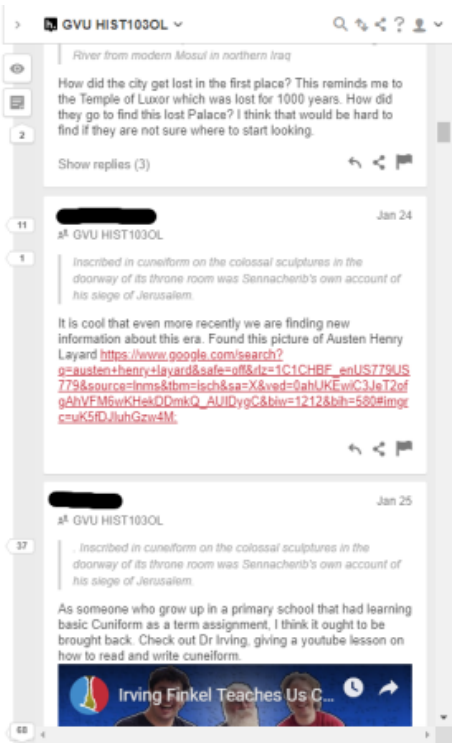
By Kevin Gannon | September 3, 2019

This week's Tools for Teaching entry is actually about several different tools, but one particular technique they can be used for: social annotation. Social annotation takes the usually-solitary act of reading and allows students to do it in community with one another. By using digital tools to highlight, comment, or otherwise annotate a text, students "do the reading," but do so in conversation with their peers. The results can be powerful: studies have found social annotation practices increased reading comprehension and motivation to do reading assignments, for example. More recent research, which has been written up preliminarily, has also found social annotation tools and practices help build not only better learning, but an increased sense of belonging and community as well.

So what does social annotation look like? The two easiest and most useful tools are Google Docs and Hypothesis. As long as students have common access to the same document or text, they can enter their annotations so that they'll be visible to the community. In Google Docs, that could involve sharing a link to a document (make sure the sharing sessions are set to those with the link "can edit") and having students go in and mark up the text. The comments feature in Google Docs is intuitive and easy to use (and very similar to MS Word). Moreover, since the document is in the cloud, there's no need to worry about saving different versions: Google Docs save automatically, and you can even use the "revision history" tool to peel back layers of annotation to find a particular student or annotation time if you wish.

Hypothesis is a web annotation tool that works with the Google Chrome browser to make an "overlay" on any webpage to enable annotation. Once an account is created and the browser extension is installed (a process which takes less than five minutes), the annotation tools are available with the click of a button in Chrome. The webpage with the annotations overlay enabled has a special Hypothesis web URL, and once you share that with students, they simply click that link to get to the page where they'll be reading and annotating. Here's what it looks like when students are doing annotations together (click the image to enlarge):





Notice how students can not only insert comments, but include links and images (including embedded video) in those comments as well. They can also reply to one another, so that a particular individual comment might generate its own conversation thread.

Social annotation can be a powerful tool indeed, but it's also something that has to be intentional and incentivized in a course. It's also most effective when the instructor is alongside students, participating in the annotations and conversations. There are a number of educators using social annotation tools with their students, and their perspectives are an excellent place to begin thinking about how you might incorporate them into your own teaching, if appropriate.

For an excellent overview of social annotation and a brief discussion of a few tools, check out this post from Edutopia.

This session outline and blog post from the Centre for Teaching and Learning at Western University in Ontario provides a useful overview and a set of resources as well.