

Annotating a Text

Skills for writing a Reading Response Essay

Careful and Critical Reading

- ▶ College writing requires you to become a **critical reader** - **questioning** and **conversing** with the text you read.
- ▶ When you read critically, you read with **open, curious mind** to understand both ***what*** is said and ***why***.
- ▶ And when you write critically, you **respond** to a text with **thoughtful questions** and **insights**, offering your **judgment** of how the parts of a text contribute to the overall effect.
- ▶ When you read actively, you pay **attention** to **details** you would miss if you skimmed a text.

Careful and Critical Reading

- ▶ To write an effective Reading Response Essay, you first need to read the article **carefully and critically**.
- ▶ While reading it, you pay **attention** to the **details** of the text, especially its **central idea** and **evidence**.
- ▶ You explore ideas by **asking questions** about the text.
- ▶ You need to pose questions that lead to an **interpretation** or a **judgement** of the text rather than to a summary.

Careful and Critical Reading

- ▶ First, you read to understand the main ideas.
- ▶ Then you pay attention to **your own reactions** by making note of what *interests, surprises, or puzzles* you.
- ▶ Active readers **preview** a text, **annotate** it, and then **converse** with it.

Annotating a Text

- ▶ Annotating is any action that deliberately interacts with a **text** to enhance the reader's understanding of, recall of, and reaction to the **text**.
- ▶ Sometimes called "close reading," **annotating** usually involves highlighting or underlining key pieces of **text** and making notes in the margins of the **text**.

Logic problem?
Why couldn't
customer
complain to
store manager?

Taylor wishes
for a time that
is long gone or
never was.

Author's
either/or
thinking isn't
working. Stores
like Home
Depot try to
encourage a
community feel.

more responsive to a customer's needs. (Ever try to complain about bad service or poor quality products to the president of Home Depot?)

Yet, if big boxes are so bad, why are they so successful? One glaring reason is that we've become a nation of hyper-consumers, and the big-box boys know this. Downtown shopping districts comprised of small businesses take some of the efficiency out of overconsumption. There's all that hassle of having to travel from store to store, and having to pull out your credit card so many times. Occasionally, we even find ourselves chatting with the shopkeeper, wandering into a coffee shop to visit with a friend or otherwise wasting precious time that could be spent on acquiring more stuff.

But let's face it — bustling, thriving city centers are fun. They breathe life into a community. They allow cities and towns to stand out from each other. They provide an atmosphere for people to interact with each other that just cannot be found at Target, or Wal-Mart or Home Depot.

Is it anti-American to be against having a retail giant set up shop in one's community? Some people would say so. On the other hand, if you board up Main Street, what's left of America?

Assumes
all small
businesses are
attentive.

True?

Community vs.
economy. What
about prices?

Emotional
appeal seems
too simplistic.

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- ▶ It helps you **capture** and **record** your **response** to a text.
- ▶ As you annotate, you take notes - jot down **questions** and **reactions** in the **margins** of the text or on electronic or paper sticky notes.
- ▶ You might **circle** or **underline** the author's main points.
- ▶ As you annotate and think about a text, you **are starting to write about** it.

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- ▶ **Responding with notes** helps you frame what you want to say about the author's ideas or questions you want to address in response to the text.
- ▶ On a **second or third reading**, you may notice ***contradictions*** - statements the author makes that, put side-by-side, just don't seem to make sense - or surprising ***insights*** that may lead to further investigation.
- ▶ **Each rereading** will raise **new questions** and lead to a better understanding of the text.

References

- ▶ 1. Hacker, D., & Sommers, N. (2016). *Rules for Writers with 2016 MLA Update* (Eighth ed.). Bedford/St. Martin's.
- ▶ 2. https://research.ewu.edu/writers_c_read_study_strategies#:~:text=Annotating%20is%20any%20action%20that,the%20margins%20of%20the%20text.