

"Annolighting" A Text

Use this Strategy:

Before Reading
During Reading
After Reading

Targeted Reading Skills:

- Formulate questions in response to text
- Analyze and interpret elements of poetry or prose
- Draw conclusions and make inferences based on explicit (literal) and implicit (figurative) meaning

What is it?

We have all had the experience of suggesting that students highlight the text that they are reading, only to watch them indiscriminately highlight nearly every word on the page. It is clear that learning how to highlight a text as a part of a reading strategy requires some instruction, including some modeling and guided practice. If done well, highlighting can become a very effective reading tool; if done poorly, it is most likely a waste of a student's time, energy and ink. "Annolighting" a text combines effective highlighting with marginal annotations that help to explain the highlighted words and phrases.

The following lists provide a simple set of goals and guidelines that students could use to increase the effectiveness of their annolighting and, as a result, improve their comprehension and understanding of a text.

Purposes/Goals of Annolighting

- Capture main ideas / key concepts / details of a reading
- Target, reduce and distill the needed information from a text
- Cut down on study and review time when you return to the material increasing your effective and efficient use of time and effort
- Strengthen your reading comprehension

What does it look like?

1. Choose a focus or framework for your highlighting. Ask yourself: What is the purpose or intended goal of this particular reading? (e.g. Main ideas only? Supportive details for an interpretive claim you are making? Definitions and examples of key vocabulary? Culling examples of the

writer's craft? etc.) After you determine the focus, highlight only the targeted information.

2. If possible, do not highlight on a first reading of a text. Rather, divide a page into manageable chunks and read a section once. Then skim the section again and highlight on the second reading. If you try to highlight on the first reading, you may not have a clear sense of the key ideas/concepts or important/relevant details.

3. *Eliminate every single unnecessary word* in a sentence by using a "telegraphic" approach to highlighting. "Telegraphic highlighting" should still allow you to make sense of a sentence or section when you reread it. It may sound picky to take 6—20 words out of each sentence, but the longer the reading, the more it will cut down on unnecessary information as well as re-read time when you return to your highlighted text for review. *Rarely* should you highlight entire sentences unless it is absolutely necessary based on your targeted focus. (See illustration of "telegraphic highlighting" below.)

4. You may want to use multiple colors in your highlighting process. For instance, choose one color for main ideas and another color for supportive detail that may help in sorting the information when you study the material or collect information for a paper, exhibition or project. You may want to use a color to indicate facts or concepts on which you would like clarification or pose as questions.

Below is an excerpt of a reading titled, *Shakespeare's Hamlet and the Nature of Tragedy*. Students were asked to identify the basic elements of tragedy in regard to the hero or protagonist. Note the "telegraphic approach" to the highlighting; when the highlights are read, they should make sense to the reader. Notes on the right side represent possible summary annotations.

Highlighted Text	Reader Annotations
<p>"Towards the end of the sixteenth century, a new tragic pattern began to emerge, very much richer and deeper than the old one, sounding intimately the depths of the human mind and spirit, the moral possibilities of human behavior, and displaying the extent to which men's destinies are interrelated one</p>	<p>The hero/protagonist:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Admirable • High society • Actions affect many • Makes choices that involve him/her in a

<p>with another.</p> <p>According to this scheme, an ideal tragedy would concern the career of a hero, a man great and admirable in both his powers and opportunities. He should be a person high enough placed in society that his actions affect the well being of many people. The plot should show him engaged in important or urgent affairs and should involve his immediate community in a threat to its security that will be removed only at the end of the action through his death. The hero's action will involve him in choices of some importance which, however virtuous or vicious in themselves, begin the spinning of a web of circumstances unforeseen by the hero which cannot then be halted and which brings about his downfall. This hostile destiny may be the result of mere circumstance or ill luck, of the activities of the hero's enemies, of some flaw or failing in his own character, of the operation of some supernatural agency that works against him. When it is too late to escape from the web, the hero-victim comes to realize everything that has happened to him, and in the despair or agony of that realization, is finally destroyed."</p>	<p>web of circumstances</p> <p>Caused by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mere circumstance • Ill luck • Enemies • Character flaw • Supernatural agency <p>Results:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Realizes too late • Creates despair • Destruction or death
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How could I use, adapt or differentiate it?

- Sometimes, I would ask students to take home a copied reading and highlight only the first few pages. The next day in class, in partners or small groups, they would briefly show what they highlighted. More often than not, they would highlight far too much without any frame of reference. I would then go over the *Guidelines for Effective Annolighting* and give them some time for guided practice in class. For homework, they would complete the annolighting on the rest of the reading.
- As suggested earlier, you may want them to practice differentiating between main ideas/key concepts and specific details by having them use two different colors in the annolighting process.