

# Text Annotation Strategies

To help you better understand why it is that LA teachers want you to annotate when you read, I copied this great explanation from the Writers' Center at Eastern Washington University's webpage (<https://research.ewu.edu/c.php?g=82207>):

## **What is Annotating?**

*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. This page will introduce you to several effective strategies for annotating a text that will help you get the most out of your reading.*

## **Why Annotate?**

*By annotating a text, you will ensure that you understand what is happening in a text after you've read it. As you annotate, you should note the author's main points, shifts in the message or perspective of the text, key areas of focus, and your own thoughts as you read. However, annotating isn't just for people who feel challenged when reading academic texts. Even if you regularly understand and remember what you read, annotating will help you summarize a text, highlight important pieces of information, and ultimately prepare yourself for discussion and writing prompts that your instructor may give you. Annotating means you are doing the hard work while you read, allowing you to reference your previous work and have a clear jumping-off point for future work.*

**Preview** - Look at the title or pictures, read the chapter titles, skim through the pages. This one usually occurs at the beginning of a book or short story, but it could happen with chapters that have titles or pictures. What do you think the story/chapter will be about *and why do you think this?* That is *critical*. What makes you think this way?

**Visualize** - Create pictures in your head based on the words the author uses. These passages have strong sensory details (sights, smells, tastes, feelings, sounds). Write down a section of the passage that painted an image in your head. *Why did you copy down this passage?*

**Connect** - Are the characters having the same thoughts or experiences that you have had? Does the story remind you of an event or person you've heard or read about? How did you feel during that time? Do you think the character feels the same thing? These should be deeper than surface connections like *I had a green sweater once, too*. The connection should stir an emotion or help you understand the character's feelings better.

**Question** - Ask questions when they occur to you as you read. Why is the character doing that? Why did this event happen? What is likely to happen next? Good readers constantly ask questions as they move through a book.

**Predict** - What might happen next? Why do you think that? What *evidence* can you supply to *justify* your prediction?

**Evaluate** - Make a *value judgment* about what is happening in the book. Did you agree or disagree with a character's actions? Why or why not? How would *you* have handled the situation?

**Dialogue** – Copy down a line or two of dialogue and tell me how it 1) propels the action, 2) reveals aspects of a character, or 3) provokes a decision that character makes.

**Words** – Look for words that have an impact on the *meaning, mood, or tone* of a passage.

**C & C – Compare and Contrast.** Compare the text you're reading to another one that you have read. How do the different structures of the texts contribute to their meaning and style?

**POV – Point of View** – How does the author's choice of viewpoint and character perspectives create effects like humor or suspense in the reader?

**TtF - Text to Film** – If you've seen the movie for the book you're reading, analyze how the two pieces are the same, how they are different, and a little bit about why the moviemakers made the plot and casting choices they did.

**Summarize** - At the end of a chapter or section, create a one- or two-sentence summary. What was the main idea in this chapter? (This one is only used at the end of a chapter.)

**Annotation procedure:**

1. Choose a strategy - write it in the text box.
2. Write the page number.
3. Supply **evidence** from the book.
4. **Elaborate** on that evidence – give your thoughts.

**Examples of annotations from the book *Dune* by Frank Herbert:**

**Preview - cover of book**

The title *Dune* suggests sand – a dry, desolate setting. This edition also has the words “Science Fiction’s Supreme Masterpiece” written across the top. What makes this a supreme masterpiece? It draws me in and makes me want to read.

**Visualize - page 3**

*The old woman was a witch shadow – hair like matted spiderwebs, hooded ‘round darkness of features, eyes like glittering jewels.* The simile of hair compared to matted spiderwebs really creates an image in my mind. The glittering eyes are an awesome contrast to the darkness of her features.

**Connect - page 4**

*Within the shadows of his bed, Paul held his eyes open to mere slits.* Paul Atreides is faking sleep so that he can eavesdrop on his mother and the witch-like lady. I did this when I was little so that I could hear what my mom and dad were talking about, usually when they were fighting. In this case, Paul learns unsettling information about his trip to a new planet that will be his home – Arrakis.

**Question - page 4**

The old woman says that Paul will meet a *gom jabbar* tomorrow. Like Paul, we wonder what that is. The old woman says that Paul will “need all of his faculties” for the meeting. Is it going to be a test of some kind that Paul has to pass? *Why* does he have to go to this meeting?

**Predict - page 4**

*He always remembered the dreams that were predictions.* Frank Herbert does a *great* job of dropping these hints without giving us any explanations. With a witch discussing a meeting, Paul moving to a new planet as part of a royal family, and his ability to dream about the future, I think Paul is going to become a leader and a target. He is important.

### **Evaluate - page 9**

Although Paul is young, the Reverend Mother Helen Mohiam has to test him. She has to see if he has the temperament to be a leader. The test requires Paul to endure pain and to even know that the pain will be administered to him. It seems mean, but the Reverend Mother was right to test Paul in this way. She had to see what he could endure to make sure he was ready for the challenges ahead.

### **Dialogue - page 4**

*"A popular man arouses the jealousy of the powerful," Hawat had said.* This quote is awesome because it reveals the jealous, petty nature of some powerful men. Powerful men want to be popular *and* powerful. It also could provoke a powerful man to act out against a popular one to seek revenge.

### **Words - page 3**

*Paul felt that he had been infected with terrible purpose. He did not know yet what the terrible purpose was.* The repetition of the term "terrible purpose" creates a mood that makes the reader feel dread and fear for Paul. He's only fifteen years old. To know that he has a "terrible purpose" ahead of him makes us worry for his future.

### **Compare and Contrast - page 12**

When I read about Paul Atreides and the fact that he had a "terrible purpose" ahead of him, I instantly thought of Katniss Everdeen in *The Hunger Games*. Although we don't know what Paul's future holds, we get the sense that both characters are in harm's way and could face pain and suffering. Katniss is different since she volunteered for her duty while Paul was born into his.

### **Point of View - page 12**

In the opening chapter, Frank Herbert uses a third-person omniscient viewpoint which allows us to get inside all of the characters' heads. It creates wonderful suspense. Jessica is nervous for her son's test. The Reverend Mother is excited that Paul might be "the one", but she doesn't want *him* to know that. And Paul is both afraid and angry about the test he has to endure. It's great storytelling.

### **Text to Film – entire book**

The 1984 movie *Dune* was *awful* compared to the book. The book depends on the thoughts of all of the characters, but the moviemakers removed all of those scenes because it is too difficult to get inside a character's head. If readers don't have access to Paul Atreides' thoughts and fears about what is happening to him and his family, what is left on the screen is a disjointed collection of images that make very little sense even to people who have read the books. It's a rotten piece of "art".

### **Summarize - page 12**

This chapter focused on Paul's meeting with the Reverend Mother to see if he was worthy of further training. It also introduced us to Paul, his mother, and their upcoming move to the desert planet of Arrakis, or Dune.