**Annotating a Text**

Annotation is a key component of close reading. Since we will annotate texts all year, you need to develop a system

that works for you (within the following guidelines). Many of you may already have a system, but remember, effective annotating is both economical and consistent. The techniques are almost limitless. Use any **combination** of the following:

· Make brief comments in the margins. Use any white space available - inside cover, random blank pages, etc.

· Make brief comments between or within lines of the text. Do not be afraid to mark within the text itself.

· Circle or put boxes, triangles, or clouds around certain words or phrases.

· Use abbreviations or symbols - brackets, stars, exclamation points, question marks, numbers, etc.

· Connect words, phrases, ideas, circles, boxes, etc. with lines or arrows.

· \*Underline – CAUTION: Use this method sparingly. Underline only a few words. **Always combine** with another method such as a comment. Never underline an entire passage. Doing so takes too much time and loses effectiveness. If you wish to mark an entire paragraph or passage, draw a line down the margin or use brackets.

· \*Highlight – See *underline*. You cannot write with a highlighter anyway.

· Create your own code.

**Close Reading (reading closely will ensure that what you annotate is actually valuable to you!)**

What should you annotate? Again, the possibilities are limitless. Remember, your goal is to understand the text and to be able to interact with it.

· Have a conversation with the text. Talk back to it.

· **Ask questions (essential to active reading).**

· Comment on the actions or development of a character. Does the character change? Why? How? The result?

· Comment on something that intrigues, impresses, amuses, shocks, puzzles, disturbs, repulses, or aggravates you, etc.

· Comment on lines/quotes you think are especially significant, powerful, or meaningful.

· Express agreement or disagreement.

· Summarize key events. Make predictions.

· Connect ideas to each other or to other texts.

· Note if you experience an epiphany.

· Note anything you would like to discuss or do not understand.

· Note how the author uses language. Note the significance if you can.

o effects of word choice (diction) or sentence structure or type (syntax)

o point of view / effect of POV/ reliability of narrator

o repetition of words, phrases, actions, events (i.e. patterns or motifs)

o narrative pace/time/sequence of events

o irony/imagery/foreshadowing/symbolism/metaphors/tone

o contrasts/contradictions/juxtapositions/shifts/themes

o allusions/setting/historical period

The most common complaint about annotating is that it slows down your reading. Yes, it does. That’s the point. If annotating as you read annoys you, read a chapter, then go back and annotate. Reading a text a second time is preferable anyway.

Approach everything we read with an open mind. There is always something in a text, whether it’s the theme, characters, or its purpose for being written, that can connect to your life and the world around you.