

AP English Literature & Composition – ECE Seminar in Freshman English
Summer Reading 2015

“Your vision will become clear only when you can look into your own heart. Who looks outside, dreams; who looks inside, awakes.”

I. READ in the following order and annotate:
“Annotating a Literary Text” handout
How to Read Literature Like a Professor – Thomas C. Foster (either edition)
The Road - Cormac McCarthy
Animal Farm - George Orwell
They Say, I Say: The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing - Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein (buy used, any edition; former students say they downloaded a free pdf of the book – this is the required UConn text)

II. POEMS – Five annotated poems by established poets plus your own original, annotated poem – This assignment will be handed in the first day of class.

Suggested annotation topics:

Who is the speaker, how do you know?

What is the subject of the poem, how do you know?

What is the speaker’s attitude toward the subject, how do you know?

What is the most striking feature of the poem?

What is your reaction to the poem?

I am not looking for poems from student publications, internet bulletin boards, etc. The following websites are excellent resources:

Poets.Org - <http://www.poets.org/>

Bartleby.com <http://www.bartelby.com/verse/>

Poet's Corner <http://www.theotherpages.org/poems/>

Representative Poetry Online -

<http://eir.library.utoronto.ca/rpo/display/index.cfm>

Favorite Poem Project <http://www.favoritepoem.org/>

Poetry Daily <http://www.poems.com/archive.htm>

Poetry 180 <http://www.loc.gov/poetry/180/>

The Writer's Almanac <http://www.writersalmanac.org/>

<<http://eserver.org/books/poe/marginalia.html>>

In getting my books, I have been always solicitous of an ample margin; this not so much through any love of the thing in itself, however agreeable, as for the facility it affords me of pencilling suggested thoughts, agreements, and differences of opinion, or brief critical comments in general. Where what I have to note is too much to be included within the narrow limits of a margin, I commit it to a slip of paper, and deposit it between the leaves; taking care to secure it by an imperceptible portion of gum tragacanth paste. All this may be whim; it may be not only a very hackneyed, but a very idle practice;—yet I persist in it still; and it affords me pleasure; which is profit, in despite of Mr. Bentham, with Mr. Mill on his back.

This making of notes, however, is by no means the making of mere memorandum—a custom which has its disadvantages, beyond doubt "*Ce que je mets sur papier,*" says Bernadine de St. Pierre, "*je remets de ma memoire et par consequence je l'oublie;*"—and, in fact, if you wish to forget anything upon the spot, make a note that this thing is to be remembered.

But the purely marginal jottings, done with no eye to the Memorandum Book, have a distinct complexion, and not only a distinct purpose, but none at all; this it is which imparts to them a value. They have a rank somewhat above the chance and desultory comments of literary chit-chat—for these latter are not unfrequently "talk for talk's sake," hurried out of the mouth; while the marginalia are deliberately pencilled, because the mind of the reader wishes to unburthen itself of a thought;—however flippant—however silly—however trivial—still a thought indeed, not merely a thing that might have been a thought in time, and under more favorable circumstances. In the marginalia, too, we talk only to ourselves; we therefore talk freshly—boldly—originally—with abandonnement—without conceit—. . .

As we can see from this, Edgar Allen Poe was a writer of marginalia. He was not alone. Once when I was in the Lilly Library at Indiana University, I examined Sylvia Plath's copy of James Joyce's *Portrait of an Artist* and what fascinated me were the passages which she had annotated and underscored. Writers would logically be among the first to interact with texts as Poe describes above.

These pages are about the process of annotating literary texts. The explanations assume you are looking for strategies for reading which are somewhere between reading extensively and expansively purely for pleasure or escape, and reading intensely and attentively for analysis and study. Academic work with literature usually implies the latter form of reading, since you are interested in not only enjoyment but appreciation of what makes the literature a work of art or an art that works!

One of the primary techniques or strategies for focusing your engagement with the work is the practice of marking the text. This consists of three main techniques: underlining, annotating in the margins, and representing the work in some graphic or visual form. As experienced readers and students of texts, most of us have used these techniques in order to read and remember expository prose (i.e. essays or textbooks or reports. While the activity for literary works can be similar, sometimes focusing, for example, on remembering material for a test (sorry, EAP!), most of the time it is freer and more oriented to a reader's response or a readers effort to pin down formal features of the text.

I know of no research that establishes the demographics of who does this, when or how often or to what kinds of works. However, I can tell from my own experience that it is a common act for students of literature at all levels and just about mandatory for anyone who will discuss a text in a classroom in any thorough manner.

What are the various things that a reader does or looks for in marking or responds to? We can start with Edgar Allen Poe's list from the above excerpt:

[we] write thoughts, agreements, differences of opinion, brief critical comments in general

[notes have] a distinct purpose . . . none at all

we want to unburthen [ourselves] of a thought—

however flippant—

however silly—

however trivial

[we] talk only to ourselves; we therefore talk freshly—boldly- originally—with abandonnement—

without conceit—

We can add simply that we also ask ourselves what text strategies of the work can we appreciate? We can note...

gaps

repetitions

startling images

plot twists

characterizations

complexities of point of view

flashbacks

multiple meanings

confusions

thwarted expectations

surprises

juxtapositions

rhythms

word play of all sorts

allusions to other works and contexts

and so on.

There is, of course, no exhaustive catalog of the things one can do as one reads with active attention, not only to what you are reading but your own meta-cognitive activity of reading.

Many would advise the reader to read the work first without worrying about marking or annotating at all. However, my experience is that once a certain kind of attention is invited by the work itself, I can no longer read without a pencil in hand. I say, to each her own choices. I can say that the second and third readings will differ and other things will spring out of the work to be marked or annotated.

If you plan to write about a piece of literature, especially a short story or poem, make several copies of it at a copier because you may want to use the strategy of annotating and marking for different aspects or features of the text. For example, you may want to read closely for characters and characterization. You may want to read a poem for prosody, scanning and marking rhyme schemes. Various readings can be refined and require their own notes.

Visit <http://www.cod.edu/people/faculty/fitchf/readlit/wcw1.htm> for a link to the underlined and annotated version of the short story "The Use of Force." The marks are themselves annotated as the reader elaborates on the purpose of the annotation. Click on them as well.

- [Annotated Version of The Use of Force](#)

"Annotating a Literary Text." *Annotating a Literary Text*. N.p., n.d. Web. 9 May 2014.

<http://www.cod.edu/people/faculty/fitchf/readlit/annotating.htm>>.