How to Annotate

Annotation is taking reading notes directly on the text itself, so that the notes and the book are in one place. Annotate any text on which you will be tested or on which you will write an essay.

1. Use a pencil or a pencil plus highlighter (unless you’re using a library book or a friend’s book, in which case use sticky notes).

2. For a nonfiction text, underline or highlight main points and key IDs. For a work of fiction, underline or highlight characterization, conflict development or resolution, and key images or passages that contribute to theme, such as references to the title of the book.

3. Write notes in the margins to identify what you’re highlighting, to ask questions, and to make observations. For example,

IAGO: O, villainous! I have looked upon the world for four times seven years, and since I could distinguish betwixt a benefit and an injury, I never found man than knew how to love himself. Ere I would say I would drown myself for the love of a guinea hen, I would change my humanity for a baboon.

RODERIGO: What should I do? I confess it is my shame to be so fond, but it is not in my virtue to amend it.

4. Inside the front and back covers of the book, keep a list of important information with page references. For example,

Animal Imagery
Iago: p.13, 15, 51, 55
Othello: p.39


Adapted by Dr. Dallett from “Note-Taking vs. Annotation” by Nick Otten