

## AP English literature: summer reading and annotating

Dear students,

We are pleased and excited that you have registered for AP English literature and composition. You have chosen a challenging but rewarding path. This is a class for students with intellectual curiosity and a strong work ethic. Enjoy your summer reading!

Sincerely,

Mrs. Coker and Mrs. Crewdson

### General notes on annotation

- As with all work you do for this class, your summer reading annotations and notes must be your own. We enforce the English Department's plagiarism policies.
- Although we will not grade your annotations of *David Copperfield*, you SHOULD annotate the novel. You will be allowed to use your annotated copy as you write an in-class essay on the novel early in the first marking period.
- Don't forget to read and annotate Heaney's introduction to *Beowulf* as well as the poem itself.
- If you are unable to buy a personal copy of a text to annotate, you may take notes instead.
- Some students have a Bible but do not want to write in it. If this is the case, either copy the pages to annotate, download the relevant pages to annotate, or take notes.
- On the second day of class, please bring your annotated copies of *The Stranger*, *Beowulf*, and the Bible readings. Annotations for each of the three will be graded according to this rubric:
  - 18-20 thoughtful and thorough annotation, including comments in margins and occasional vocabulary words
  - 16-17 thoughtful annotation but lacking the depth or detail of "A" work
  - 14-15 annotation present but lacking the depth or detail of "A" or "B" work
  - 0 missing in action or not student's own work

### What is the point of annotation?

- Annotation encourages you to read actively and thoughtfully.
- Annotation provides you with a useful overview to consult before discussions or writing assignments.

*Every text is a lazy machine asking the reader to do some of its work.*

----- novelist Umberto Eco

## Ideas for annotating literature

- Use a pen so you can make circles, brackets, and notes. If you like highlighters, use one for key passages, but don't get carried away and don't only highlight.
- Look for patterns and label them (motifs, diction, symbols, images, behavior, whatever).
- Mark passages that seem to jump out at you because they suggest an important idea or theme—or for any other reason (an arresting figure of speech or image, an intriguing sentence pattern, a striking example of foreshadowing, a key moment in the plot, a bit of dialogue that reveals character, clues about the setting, etc.).
- Mark things that puzzle, intrigue, please or displease you. Ask questions, make comments—talk back to the text.
- At the ends of chapters or sections, write a bulleted list of key plot events. This not only forces you to think about what happened, see it whole, and identify patterns—but you create a convenient record of the whole work.
- Circle words you want to learn or words that jump out at you for some reason. If you don't want to stop reading, guess, then look the word up and jot down a relevant meaning later. You need not write out a full dictionary definition; it is often helpful to put the relevant meaning in your own words. If SAT prep has dampened your enthusiasm, rediscover the joy of adding to your “word hoard,” as the Beowulf poet calls it.
- The Harvard College Library has posted an excellent guide to annotation, “Interrogating Texts: Six Reading Habits to Develop in Your First Year at Harvard.”  
([http://hcl.harvard.edu/research/guides/lamont\\_handouts/interrogatingtexts.html](http://hcl.harvard.edu/research/guides/lamont_handouts/interrogatingtexts.html))

## Some background for the Bible passages

- Genesis (from the Greek word for *origin*) is the first book of the Old Testament. The first 11 chapters deal with the early days of the creation of the world, while the rest of this book tells of the patriarchs of Israel: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph.
- Psalms, the nineteenth book, contains some of the Bible's most beautiful poetry, including 150 hymns, or songs to God. Many of them are ascribed to David, who was called “the sweet psalmist of Israel” (Samuel 23:1).
- Luke, one of the four New Testament gospels, contains many stories and parables about Jesus and provides a source of many biblical allusions in Western literature.