The Thompson TDA Model

Purposeful Annotations for Text Dependent Analysis (TDA)

During close reading we ask students to annotate text using different strategies and techniques. Preparing students for annotating with a purpose requires instruction and modeling. The purpose of this resource is to provide educators with information necessary for understanding annotations and strategies for guiding students to **purposefully annotate** in preparation for analyzing text, whether during collaborative discussions or when writing in response to a TDA prompt.

The essential idea of annotating text is to help the reader **during** and **after** reading. There are four main annotating concepts explored in this resource: 1) why use annotations, 2) what should be annotated, 3) how to annotate, and 4) how to use the annotations.

Why Use Annotations

> *Why is marking a book indispensable to reading it? First, it keeps you awake—not merely conscious, but wide awake. Second, reading, if active, is thinking, and thinking tends to express itself in words, spoken or written. Third, writing your reactions down help you remember the thoughts of the author.*
> *Adler & Van Doren (1972, p. 49)*

Annotating is a writing-to-learn strategy during the reading process (Porter-O'Donnell, 2004). Annotating text increases active engagement with the text, teaches reading as a process, makes thinking visible, and acts as a bookmark for future reference.

Teaching students to annotate during the close reading of texts allows students to interact with the text. Annotations promote reading with a purpose to gain a deeper understanding of what is read. Outcomes from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) suggest that many students can sound out words and comprehend at a literal level but cannot synthesize, analyze, integrate new ideas with what they know, or perform countless other reading tasks that are integral to reading to learn (Griggs, Daane, & Campbell, 2003).

Many students read without pausing to consider ideas, concepts, or connections. Slowing down the reading process and annotating provides students with an opportunity to consider what is read in order to react, identify the author's use of techniques, recognize misunderstandings, make connections to other ideas or concepts, and to judge the importance of what has been read. In other words, annotating text allows students to become more actively involved in their reading and consequently impacts comprehension. Through the annotation process students deepen their understanding, move beyond literal comprehension to the underlying inferential analysis, and unlock the deeper meaning of the text.

Purposeful annotations encourage students to move beyond a basic understanding of the text, allowing them to process what they are reading *as they are reading*, which improves comprehension. The use of annotations strengthens ownership of the information as the text shifts from a lecture to a conversation between the reader and the author (Fisher & Frey, 2014). However, annotations should not be random or based on what students find interesting. Students should have a purpose for annotating based on a learning target and a reason to return to their annotations.

Instructing students to annotate well allows them to return to their annotations to help summarize a text, locate important pieces of information, and ultimately prepare for discussions and writing in response to a text dependent analysis prompt. Annotating while reading allows students to reference their previous work and have a clear jumping-off point for future work.

What Should Be Annotated

Annotations should be purposeful rather than just for the sake of annotating. Annotations should allow students to think deeply about the text, the author's craft, the meaning of an argument, or the character interactions. Prior to asking students to annotate text, the teacher should determine the focus of annotating which is ultimately derived from the text dependent analysis prompt. The prompt is created based on the reading elements that stand out from the selected text. Communicating the focus or learning target to students is essential so that they are purposefully considering what they are reading.

However, it is also important to realize that reading is an interactive process. Students need the opportunity to find connections between their experiences and the text they are reading. Encouraging this dialogue or interaction with the author allows students to make sense of their reactions, the ideas or concepts, or ways to make sense of conflicting views (Probst, 1988). Additionally, students can annotate by making predictions, asking questions, stating opinions, identifying unknown vocabulary, and marking areas of confusion.

Determining the focus for annotations first requires the teacher to read and annotate the text, and write the text dependent analysis prompt. The prompt is based on the reading elements that stand out in the text; therefore, some possible purposes for annotations may include:

- character traits/motivations;
- character flashbacks or aha moments;
- evidence to support the author's message, theme, or purpose;
- main idea and supporting details;

- techniques used by the author;
- specific word choice, including figurative language; and
- patterns and repetitions.

How To Annotate

Prior to having students annotate text, the teacher should consider the difference between using marks and marginal notes.

Marks

Annotating marks help students make meaning of surface level information. These annotating marks may include the use of symbols such as circling key or unknown words, placing a box around a setting or a character's thoughts, or underlining a key phrase or sentence.

For a week my grandparents forbade me to visit the beach. I knew that the oil was still thick and that the white sand would never be quite as pure. We had numerous wildlife representatives visit our beach and collect water samples and gather up dead fish and birds. They would often stop and look in on my bird, but they never tried to take him away. I fed him sardines and tuna fish. He ate greedily and slowly became stronger. Sadly, I realized that my new friend would need to leave me.

A few kids in my neighborhood stopped by to see the bird. Grandma encouraged them to stay for tea, and I was surprised at how much fun we had. The more time I spent with the neighborhood kids, the more I looked forward to the opening of school. The water was regaining its purity and soon it would be safe to let my bird go. He would once again be searching the sea for a school of minnows instead of splashing about in our tub. Still, I did not like to think about losing him.

There is no one particular coding system; rather students should understand that the coding system relates to surface meaning such as vocabulary, and the *who, what, when, where,* and *why* of the text.

Marginal Notes

Marginal notes may begin with a symbol such as an asterisk, but should be followed with a comment in the margin (Porter-O'Donnell, 2004). These notes provide students with documentation of their thinking after the reading process is complete. Without these written notes, students forget why they made the asterisk and consequently it is of little value to the student during discussions or when writing. An additional consideration is moving beyond the use of a highlighter. Often students highlight so much of the page that there is more text in color than not. In addition, once the highlighting has been done, it cannot be removed even if the student no longer determines the text to be useful for their purpose. Annotating with a pencil allows students to erase when needed and to fluidly move from simply making a mark to writing a comment.

While it is ideal to have students annotate directly onto a text, it is not always feasible to do so, nor is it always possible to make copies of the texts that students are reading. Several strategies can be employed for overcoming these obstacles.

1. **Sticky arrows and post-it notes.** Readers can place the sticky arrows on the page where they would write a symbol and then record their comment on a post-it note. The post-it note can either be placed directly on the text below the arrow or can be placed in a journal.

2. **Interactive journal.** This journal could be structured with two columns and labeled as noted below:

Information	Interpretation

The information column includes the surface level information or a quote, phrase, or word with a page number. The interpretation column is used for the comments, including reactions, questions, or interpretations of the section of the text.

Annotating text can generally be classified into the following categories: language, questions, predictions, opinions, author's craft, author's message, connections, reflections, and arguments (Lapp, Moss, Grant, & Johnson, 2015). These categories will help students make sense of the type of information they are noticing in the text. They are also beneficial when considering close reading questions leading to analysis[1].

There are different techniques to use when teaching students to annotate. Questioning the author and creative annotations are techniques which help students move beyond superficial comprehension.

1. **Questioning the author (Beck, et al., 1996)**
   a. Prior to introducing this strategy, the teacher should select a passage or text that students will find interesting and will create a good discussion. Decide on stopping points for posing higher order questions and prepare the close reading questions that students should explore for gaining deeper meaning of the text.

   b. Introduce the strategy by explaining that *good readers ask authors questions throughout the reading process.*

   c. Model the strategy using an interactive read aloud with the selected passage or text. As the teacher reads the text aloud, she models self-questioning or thinking aloud about what she is wondering. The teacher pauses as students record their own thinking on the text, a post-it note, or in a journal, as previously described. The teacher's role is to facilitate a discussion among the students rather than guiding them to an answer.

   d. Ask students to generate questions for the author and discuss *how the author's use of techniques, development of a character, or the author's message helps clarify the meaning of the text.* If students need more practice, questions can be provided to help them begin the

[1] See TDA Series: Close Reading Questions
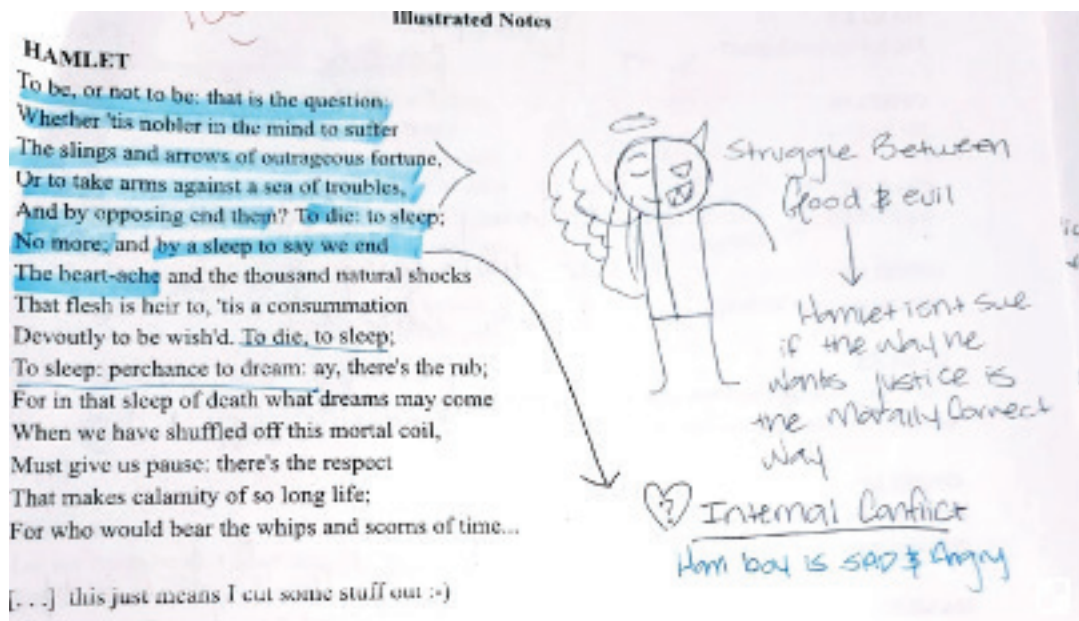
self-questioning process. Possible questions can include:
- *What is the author trying to tell us when the character does/says…?*
- *How has the author let us know that something has changed?*
- *Why did the author tell us this now?*
- *Why do you think the author chose to use this simile? What is the author trying to tell us?*

    e. Students can also work in pairs or table teams to write questions for the author of the same text or another text that students are reading together.

2. Creative annotations (Gehr, L., 2019)
a. Illustrated annotations –
Students create illustrations to represent concepts and elements of literature. Prior to reading the text, the students create a visual representation or symbol for the concept or element of focus for the learning target. When the students annotate the text, they use their illustration to indicate the author's use of the element. For example, students learning about different foreshadowing techniques would create a visual for each type (object, innocuous statement, symbolism). As they read the text the student captures its use and writes their interpretation of its use. The process of creating an illustration helps students synthesize information and increases student engagement and creativity. For example:

Courtesy of Lauren Gehr

(Retrieved from: https://www.edutopia.org/article/more-highlighting-creative-annotations)

b. Collaborative annotations –

This strategy allows multiple students to annotate on a shared text. Students annotate the same text and analyze each person's annotations to find inspiration, discover similarities, or ask questions. Students are instructed to write two comments and pose one question per page of text. The next set of students does the same, but they could comment on the text or a previous annotation from another student. Each class or group is able to view and analyze the annotations of their peers from previous classes or different group. At the end, students have a collection of annotations that show several different interpretations of a text. This strategy encourages students to closely read a text, think critically, and gain a deeper and more meaningful understanding of the text. Students also collaborate and communicate about a text with their peers by commenting and questioning the marks of others.

How To Use The Annotations

Annotations allow students' thinking about the text to be made visible. Purposeful annotations help students keep track of key ideas, formulate thoughts and questions during and after reading, make inferences and draw conclusions about the text, as well as interpretations on a deeper level. Annotating text provides the reader with references about the text during discussions and when constructing text dependent analysis responses without rereading the text in its entirety. The annotations should support the purpose for reading and the expectations of responding to a text dependent analysis prompt. The purpose for reading should align with the purposeful annotations, and ultimately the expectations for the final writing (Stuart, D., 2014). Consider the following example of purposeful annotations leading to a response of the text dependent analysis prompt:

> *Authors choose words and language carefully to communicate a message. Write an essay analyzing how Sandra Cisneros uses imagery to reveal a theme. Use evidence from the text to support your response.*

Credit: Mrs Cierski, Sayville Schools

The student has identified key vocabulary and figurative language (*skinny trees, skinny necks, pointy elbows*) and has included comments interpreting their meaning (*isolated, doesn't fit in, misunderstood*) in preparation for writing their response. This student has woven together the use of marks, margin notes, and questioning the author to purposefully annotate the text based on the prompt.

For more information on the different aspects of text dependent analysis, refer to the series of Text Dependent Analysis Resources by Dr. Jeri Thompson, Center for Assessment.

Thompson, J. (2020). Text Dependent Analysis Resource: Purposeful Annotations for Text Dependent Analysis (TDA). www.nciea.org, http://www.education.pa.gov, and http://pdesas.org.

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