

Annotating: Reading and Marking a Text



Definition: Annotate – v. To make or furnish critical or explanatory notes or comment
 [Source: Merriam-Webster Online]

Source: “How To Mark a Book” by Mortimer J. Adler <http://radicalacademy.com/adlermarkabook.htm>

What is reading?

- A conversation/dialogue between reader and author

Why is marking up a book indispensable to reading?

- Keeps you awake
- Active reading is thinking--thinking tends to express itself in words, spoken or written
- Writing helps to remember the thoughts the reader had or the thoughts the author expressed
- Marking a book is literally an expression of differences, or agreements of opinion, with the author

Why is writing necessary?

- The physical act of writing brings words and sentences more sharply before your mind and preserves them better in your memory.
- Your marks and notes become an integral part of the book

Adler’s Devices for Marking a Book Intelligently and Fruitfully

Devise	Explanation
<i>Underlining (or highlighting)</i>	<i>Major points, important or forceful statements</i>
<i>Vertical lines at the margin</i>	<i>To emphasize a statement already underlined</i>
<i>Star or asterisk</i>	<i>To be used sparingly, to emphasize the ten or twenty most important statements in the book</i> <i>[You may want to fold the bottom corner of each page on which you use such marks.]</i>
<i>Numbers in the margin</i>	<i>To indicate the sequence of points the author makes in developing a single argument</i>
<i>Numbers of other pages in the margin</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To indicate where else in the book the author made points relevant to the point marked • To tie up the ideas in a book, which, though they may be separated by many pages, belong together
<i>Circling (or highlighting)</i>	<i>Key words or phrases</i>
<i>Writing in the margin, or at the top or bottom of the page</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To record questions and answers • To reduce a complicated discussion to a simple statement (summarize) • To record the sequence of major points

Suggested Prompts to Use When Questioning the Text:

Who What When Where Why How