

Develop independent reading strategies: annotating

4C – Develop independent reading strategies: annotating

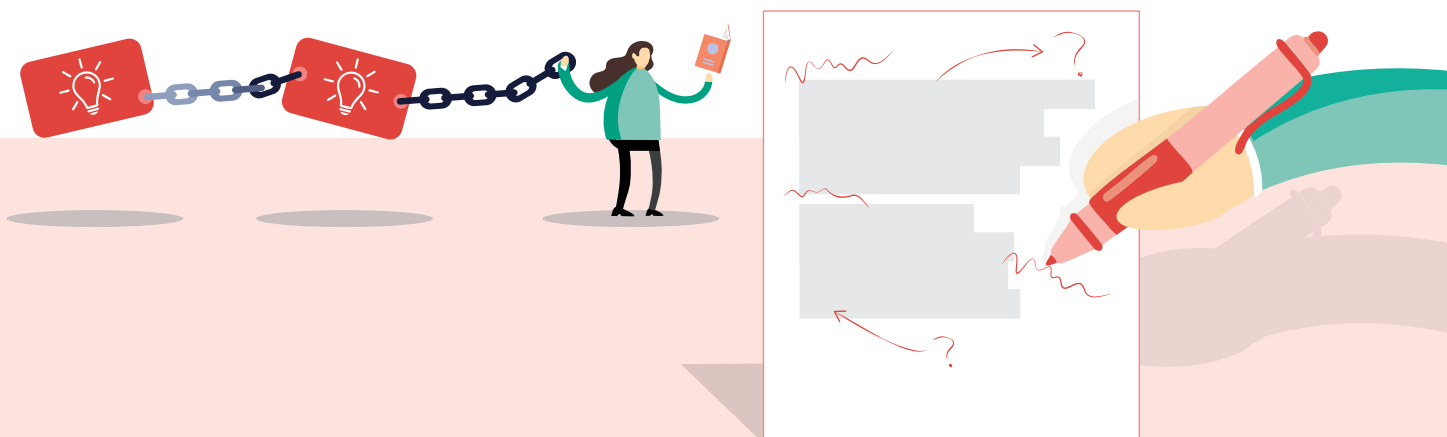
Annotation as a reading tool

Annotating is a beneficial and widely used reading strategy across disciplines. It incorporates the Big Five strategies of *Questioning, Clarifying and Summarising*, serving as a way to monitor comprehension.

A reader might note a simple '?' if they are unsure of the meaning of something, or how it fits into an argument – such uncertainty when reading is something we as teachers should be modelling.

If we ask questions, we then want to seek clarification, and reading further on, we might make a link between our question and the answer, or evidence, we have subsequently found.

Of course, we also do this unconsciously as expert readers, but modelling this through annotations will help pupils envisage strategies, and enables us as teachers to check understanding of process as well.



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Metacognitive talk during annotation

When modelling annotations with pupils, just like with all modelling, we should use metacognitive talk.

The following phrases and sentences are useful suggestions to share with pupils whilst modelling this strategy:

- *'So when I read for information, I want to physically engage with the text in order to help focus my attention and get a better understanding of it.'* eg noting thoughts against headings, writing headings for paragraphs, reconfiguring worded problems in Maths in a different order
- *'I always look at the title first and consider possible content of the text, or what I already know, making notes around it.'* eg noting connotations such as 'sacrifice' or 'honour' of the title of the poem Kamikaze; noting that 'cardio' refers to the heart in the article title 'cardiovascular system'
- *'I will then underline words and phrases that seem important, making links to what I already know.'* eg character names, vivid images or turning points in a story; key terminology and processes in a science text; dates, figures and details linked to causation in a historical interpretation
- *'This then helps me to question what is most important in the paragraph, considering a main idea or two.'* eg How does this character feel here? What is this part telling me about the function of the veins?
- *'This then helps me summarise the paragraph (a brief comment on the main ideas about something), and note down a 2-3 word annotation.'* eg Alice tired but happy; veins carry deoxygenated blood to heart

Such metacognitive talk, or 'think aloud', should be carefully considered, structured, and made as part of a shared discussion, for teachers to have a consistent approach.

For example, 'I'm not sure about this paragraph, it is quite dense. I think it is about ... but I'm unclear. I'm going to re-read it to see if I can clarify my question

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Encouraging pupil independence

At some point, we need to transition from the 'I' to the 'WE' phase, to the 'YOU'.

One approach would be to model clearly the 'I' for the first third of a text, then collaborate through questioning the next third with 'WE' before pupils completing the 'YOU' phase in the final third, having a go independently.

The level of support can be varied, as teachers can underline words/phrases for pupils, reading the entire text and using *Check Link Connect* questioning to establish some comprehension of the

entire text. This then acts as a support in the 'WE' and 'YOU' phases.

The transition towards independence should also be done over a series of lessons, sequences, and across the year/s. It is important not to forget cycling back to the 'I' phase to re-model and clarify instructions and expectations of annotations. This is an example from two Year 7 pupils who had experienced repeated exposure to annotations in all three phases since. They read the paragraphs in class and the teacher underlined words and phrases to support them as well as using questioning to check comprehension. Then were given a minute or so to annotate.

Example: Student A

What
a
sonnet
is - where
was it from
and what
was it
for?

The History of the Sonnet

- 1 The sonnet - a 14-line poem with a variable rhyme scheme - originated in the small, sunlit courts of
- 2 Sicily, a large island near Italy. It lingered there for 200 years before it made the journey into English
- 3 poetry.
- 4 The development of the form began with Francesco Petrarch, who lived in Tuscany and was born in
- 5 1304, published his Canzoniere, a sequence of 366 poems, 317 of which were sonnets to an idealised
- 6 lover, called Laura. With their wit, their longing, and their ability to make a narrative out of several
- 7 short poems, *Canzoniere* became a European best seller.
- 8 It was the Italian originators who developed one of the features of the sonnet that survives to the

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Example: Student B

The History of the Sonnet

- 1 The sonnet - a 14-line poem with a variable rhyme scheme - originated in the small, sunlit courts of
- 2 Sicily, a large island near Italy. It lingered there for 200 years before it made the journey into English
- 3 poetry.
- 4 The development of the form began with Francesco Petrarch, who lived in Tuscany and was born in
- 5 1304, published his *Canzoniere*, a sequence of 366 poems, 317 of which were sonnets to an idealised
- 6 lover, called Laura. With their wit, their longing, and their ability to make a narrative out of several
- 7 short poems, *Canzoniere* became a European best seller.
- 8 It was the Italian originators who developed one of the features of the sonnet that survives to the

The sonnets had originated in an island near Italy.

This man was the 1st to have written a sonnet. They had eventually become a best seller (a majority of his poems)

NAME OF PETRARCH'S 366 POEMS.

Note that both pupils appear to demonstrate a level of comprehension of what they have read. However, their focus differs greatly:

- Student A has literally described what the paragraph is describing
- Student B is extracting key information and assimilating into a summary.

Even though the class was well practised in the 'process' of annotating, the teacher in this instance neglected to clarify what the focus of the annotation was – what was it they wanted pupils to summarise. There are other differences in other pupils. This is where modelling an annotation of just the first paragraph would have given pupils a reminder of the purpose and the expectation of the annotation is, and what we mean by summary.