Riverside Community College  
Directed Learning Activity  
Reading Strategy-Annotation

1. Read the explanation of annotation as a reading strategy.

2. After you read, answer the following questions:
   1. What is annotation?
   2. Why is annotation a better method than highlighting?
   3. Why is it important to evaluate your purpose for reading?
   4. How can annotation improve your reading?

3. Using the guidelines outlined in this activity, annotate “Effects of the Automobile” written by James M. Henslin from the college textbook, Sociology: A Down-to-Earth Approach (Allyn and Bacon).

4. After you read and make your notations, ask an instructor or paraprofessional for the answers that accompany this activity. Check your answers to the questions above. Then, compare your annotations to the sample provided with this packet.

5. Annotate a reading assignment for one of your classes. Review your work with an instructor or paraprofessional in the Reading Lab.

Instructor/Tutor Signature

Date
Annotation is a systematic approach to reading that involves writing symbols on a text while reading. This method requires the reader to more actively participate in the process of making meaning from the reading and to interact with the text more deeply. As a result, the reader will gain a fuller and richer understanding of what is read.

Annotation helps readers to understand more of what is read and to remember the information for a longer period of time. Annotation is a strategy you will learn that will help you to greatly improve your reading for pleasure, for school and for your career.

Up until now, you may have been using a method called highlighting. When you read a textbook, you highlight important ideas with a highlighter pen. The disadvantage to this method is that when you look back over the pages, they all look the same; they are all marked with the same yellow ink and you ultimately need to re-read your highlighted ideas. Students also tend to highlight too many ideas, so it is more difficult to distinguish between the main ideas and supporting details. In contrast, when you annotate a text, you make marks that have very specific meanings to you. Each mark is very deliberate and represents an important aspect of the reading.

At first, this process will seem a bit tedious and difficult. After a little practice, though, it becomes second nature. Follow these guidelines easy steps to become a more active reader who will understand more of what you read:

1. **Evaluate your purpose for reading.** Is this textbook material that will be on a test? Or, is this an essay that will be discussed in class?
2. **Always read with a pencil in hand.** Use a pencil so you can easily erase the marks if you intend to sell your books back to the bookstore.
3. **Read with the intent of locating important ideas.** Use the guidelines on the next page so you know what you are looking for as you read.
4. **Review your marks.** After you read, review your notations and make sure they are clear. Clarify if necessary.
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What do I annotate?
Depending on what you are reading, you will be annotating different information. Evaluate what you should be looking for before you begin to read.

*Essays/Articles in a Reading or English Course:* Main ideas, major supporting details, unfamiliar words, items in a list, important ideas, and concepts you do not understand.

*Literature:* Unfamiliar words, figurative language, morals/themes, symbolism, tone, point of view, important events, and your reactions to the text.

*Textbooks for Content-Area Courses:* Terms, definitions, examples, lists, questions about confusing concepts, and important information that may appear on a test.

How do I annotate?
Use a consistent system of annotation so that you understand what each mark means. Use the following guidelines:

1. Place parentheses around (Main Ideas). Identify the thesis statement and topic sentences, and label them in the margin THESIS and TS.
2. Circle transitions that signal **major supporting details.** Mark the ideas that support the main ideas.
3. Underline **unfamiliar words.** Look up the words in a dictionary and write the definition in the margin.
4. Number **items in a list 1,2,3,4.** Do this in the margin so you can clearly see the patterns of organization.
5. Write a few key words in the margin to summarize each paragraph.

Other Marks
6. !!! **Important information !!!** These are ideas that you like, want to remember, or think may appear on a test.
7. **Questions??** Write questions in the margin when something is unclear and ask them in class. Be sure to get answers to things you do not understand.
8. **Reactions to the text in the margin.** These may be short responses to things in the text. Writing comments will help to keep your brain more alert and engaged in what you are reading.
9. **Elements of literature.** For novels, poetry, plays, and short stories, identify metaphors, similes, symbolism, tone, themes, and label them in the margin.
10. **Important terms and definitions.** In content-area textbooks, identify those concepts and definitions that may appear on tests and label them in the margin.
“Effects of the Automobile” by James M. Henslin

Adapted from Sociology: A Down-to-Earth Approach (Allyn and Bacon)

If we try to pick the single item that has had the greatest impact of social life in the twentieth century, among the many candidates the automobile stands out. Let us look at some of the ways in which it changed U.S. society.

The automobile gradually pushed aside the old technology, a replacement that began in earnest when Henry Ford began to mass produce the Model T in 1908. People immediately found automobiles attractive. They considered them cleaner, safer, more reliable, and more economical than horses. Cars also offered the appealing prospect of lower taxes, for no longer would the public have to pay to clean up the tons of horse manure that accumulated in the city streets each day. Humorous as it sounds now, it was even thought that automobiles would eliminate the cities’ parking problems, for an automobile took up only half as much space as a horse and buggy.

The automobile also replaced a second technology. The United States had developed a vast system of urban transit, with electric streetcar lines radiating outward from the center of our cities. As the automobile became affordable and more dependable, Americans demonstrated a clear preference for the greater convenience of private transportation. Instead of walking to a streetcar and then having to wait in the cold and rain, people were able to travel directly from home on their own schedule.

The decline in the use of streetcars actually changed the shape of U.S. cities. Before the automobile, U.S. cities were web-shaped, for residences and businesses were located along the streetcar lines. When freed by automobiles from having to live so close to the tracks, people filled the area between the “webs.”

The automobile also stimulated mass suburbanization. Already in the 1920s U.S. residents had begun to leave the city, for they found that they could commute to work in the city from outlying areas where they benefited from more room and few taxes. Their departure significantly reduced the cities’ tax base, thus contributing to many of the problems that U.S. cities experience today.

The automobile had a profound impact on farm life and villages. Prior to the 1920s, most farmers were isolated from the city. Because using horses for a trip to town was slow and cumbersome, they made such trips infrequently. By the 1920s, however, the popularity and low price of the Model T made the “Saturday trip to town” a standard event. There, farmers would market products, shop, and visit with friends. As a consequence, farm life was altered; for example, mail-order catalogues stopped being the primary source of shopping, and access to better medical care and education improved. Farmers were also able to travel to bigger towns,
where they found a greater variety of goods. As farmers began to use the nearby villages only for immediate needs, these flourishing centers of social and commercial life dried up.

The automobile’s effects on commercial architecture are clear—from the huge parking lots that decorate malls like necklaces to the drive-up windows of banks and restaurants. But the automobile also fundamentally altered the architecture of U.S. homes. Before the car, each home had a stable in the back where the family kept its buggy and horses. The stable was the logical place to shelter the family’s car, and it required no change in architecture. The change occurred in three steps. First, new homes were built with a detached garage located like the stable, at the back of the home. Second, as the automobile became a more essential part of the U.S. family, the garage was incorporated into the home by moving it from the backyard to the side of the house, and connecting it by a breezeway. In the final step the breezeway was removed, and the garage integrated into the home so that Americans could enter automobiles without even going outside.

By the 1920s, the automobile was used extensively for dating. This removed children from the watchful eye of parents and undermined parental authority. The police began to receive complaints about “night riders” who parked their cars along country lanes, “doused their lights, and indulged in orgies.” Automobiles became so popular for courtship that by the 1960s about 40 percent of marriage proposals took place in them.

In 1925 Jewett introduced cars with a foldout bed, as did Nash in 1937. The Nash version became known as “the young man’s model.” Since the 1970s mobile lovemaking has declined, partly because urban sprawl (itself due to the automobile) left fewer safe trysting spots, and partly because changed sexual norms made beds more accessible.

The automobile may also lie at the heart of the changed role of women in U.S. society. Because automobiles required skill rather than strength, women were able to drive as well as men. This new mobility freed women physically from the narrow confines of the home. As James Flink, [a historian] observed, the automobile changed women “from producers of food and clothing into consumers of national-brand canned goods, prepared foods, and ready-made clothes. The automobile permitted shopping at self-serve supermarkets outside the neighborhood and in combination with the electric refrigerator made buying food a weekly rather that a daily activity.” When women began to do the shopping, they gained greater control over the family budget, and as their horizons extended beyond the confines of the home, they also gained different views of life.

With changes this extensive, it would not be inaccurate to say that the automobile also shifted basic values and changed the way we look at life. No longer isolated, women, teenagers, and farmers began to see the world differently. So did husbands and wives, whose marital relationship had also been altered. The automobile even transformed views of courtship, sexuality, and gender relations.

No one attributes such fundamental changes solely to the automobile, of course, for many historical events, as well as other technological changes, occurred during this same period, each making its own contribution to social change. Even this brief overview of social effects of the automobile, however, illustrates that technology is not merely an isolated tool but exerts a profound influence on social life.