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 #1-5 from the guidelines outlined on the previous page, annotate the essay “Sport: Illustrating the Three Perspectives” from the college textbook, Sociology: A Brief Introduction (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

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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.

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“Sports: Illustrating the Three Perspectives” by Alex Thio

Adapted from Sociology: A Brief Introduction (Allyn and Bacon)

The influence of sports reaches far and wide. Sports are particularly popular in the leisure-oriented American society. Most of us have had some experience with athletics as participants or spectators. Schools, from elementary to college, provide many sports opportunities. Many newspapers carry more news about sports than about politics, the economy, crime, or practically any other event. Radio and television newscasts rarely go on the air without a sports report. Football, basketball, baseball, and other games are often broadcast in their entirety, preempting regular programming. Sports exert so much influence on our lives that our everyday speech is full of sports imagery: “struck out,” “touch base,” “ballpark figure,” “game plan,” “teamwork,” “cheap shot,” “go all the way,” and so on.

What, then, is the nature of this powerful aspect of our lives? From the three sociological perspectives, we can see that sports are beneficial to society in some ways, harmful in other ways, and like any other social interaction, governed by individuals’ definitions of each other's action.

SPORTS AS BENEFICIAL TO SOCIETY

According to the functionalist perspective, sports contribute to the welfare of society by performing at least three major functions.

First, sports are conducive to success in other areas of life. Being competitive, sports inspire athletes to do their utmost to win, thereby helping them to develop such qualities as skill and ability, diligence and self-discipline, mental alertness and physical fitness. These qualities can ensure success in the larger society. By watching athletes perform, spectators also learn the importance of hard work, playing by the rules, and working as a team player, characteristics that help ensure success in a career and other aspects of life.

Second, sports enhance health and happiness. Participants can enjoy a healthy, long life. The health benefit is more than physical; it is also psychological. Runners and joggers, for example, often find that their activity releases tension and anger as well as relieves anxiety and depression. Moreover, many people derive much pleasure from looking on their participation as a form of beauty, and artistic expression, or way of having a good time with friends. Similarly, sports improve the quality of life for the spectators. Fans can escape humdrum daily routines or find pleasure in filling their leisure time, as many American do when watching baseball, long known as the national pastime. They can savor the aesthetic pleasure of watching the excellence, beauty, and creativity in an athlete's performance. The fans can therefore attain greater happiness, life satisfaction, or psychological well-being.

Third, sports contribute to social order, and stability by serving as an integrating force for society as a whole. Sports are, in effect, a social mechanism for uniting potentially disunited members of society. Through their common interest in a famous athlete or team, people of
diverse racial social and cultural backgrounds can feel a sense of homogeneity, community of
intimacy that they can acquire in no other way. Athletes, too, can identify with their fans, their
community, and their country.

SPORTS AS HARMFUL TO SOCIETY

According to the conflict perspective, sports harm society by serving the interests of the
relatively powerful over those of the powerless in at least two ways.

First, sports tend to act as an opiate, numbing the masses’ sense of dissatisfaction with
capitalist society. Involvement in sports as spectators tend to distract low-paid or unemployed
workers from their tedious and dehumanizing jobs or frustrating joblessness. To divert their
citizens’ attention from their miserable lives, governments of many poor countries also seize any
opportunity that arises to whip up the masses into a frenzy of patriotic support for their teams.
Such a nationalistic frenzy can be carried to extremes, as it was in 1969 when Honduras and El
Salvador went to war against each other after a World Cup soccer match. All this serves to
maintain the capitalist system by which the rich and powerful exploit the masses.

Second, sports reinforce social, gender, and racial inequalities in society. With regard to
social inequality, the overemphasis on competition and winning has caused the loss of something
all participants can enjoy equally—namely, the original elements of play and fun in sporting
activities. This has turned many people into “couch potatoes,” who spend more time watching
than playing sports. Sports, then have become big business, with powerful owners of
professional teams exploiting the public and government. Aside from making enormous sums of
money from the fans team owners receive many tax breaks while enjoying the enviable position
of being the only self-regulated (in effect, unregulated) monopoly in the nation.

It is true that over the last two decades, sports participation among women has risen sharply,
thanks to the women’s liberation movement and the 1972 law that prohibits sex discrimination in
school sports. Nevertheless, in most colleges and universities, more funds continue to be spent
on men’s sports especially football and basketball, than on women’s athletic programs. Because
of gender bias, men are even more likely than women to get top management and coaching jobs
in women's programs. The sports arena is still considered a "man's world" in which women's
leadership skills are devalued. Even the skills of super women athletes are discounted by the
media which often describe female athletes a “pretty,” “slim,” “attractive,” “gracious,” and
“lovely,” as opposed to male athletes who are “brilliant,” "cool," "courageous," "great," and
“tough.”

On the surface, the large number of remarkably successful African American athletes in
basketball and football today may cast doubt on the existence of racial inequality in sports. But,
African Americans do suffer from racism in some ways as indicated by the virtual absence of
blacks in top positions as owners, managers, and coaches of professional teams.

Far more significantly, however, sports may help perpetuate the relatively high rate of
poverty among African Americans. Traditionally, severe, widespread job discrimination has
caused many poor African American youths to work extremely hard to develop athletic skills in
order to make it in college and professional sports, which explains why most of the best athletes
in the country are African American. Today, the enormous attention given by the white
dominated media to African American superstars further encourages many poor African
American youths to give their all to athletics. But this intense concentration on sports has
diverted attention from academic work. This is tragic because, given the same hard work; it is
far easier to become a professional in business, government, education, or any other field. The chances of becoming a professional athlete are extremely small.

SPORTS AS SYMBOLIC INTERACTION

While the functionalist and conflict perspectives focus on the larger societal issues of sports that affect most people, symbolic interactionism hones in on the smaller, immediate issue of how athletes—or other individuals involved in a sport, such as coaches and fans—behave. According to this third perspective, if we define a situation as real, it is real in its consequences. Thus, if athletes define a game as one that they will win, they will likely win it. This may explain why Tiger Woods is currently the world’s greatest golfer. After watching many golfers being interviewed on TV, hockey legend Wayne Gretzky had this observation: “Most golfers can’t believe they won. Tiger sounds like he expected to win or can’t believe he didn’t.” Let’s take a close look at how definition influences performance.

Great coaches know that they can get their athletes to perform well by drumming certain ideas into their heads. Foremost is the idea that the players are winners, so that they will think only of winning and never about the possibility of losing. Chances are high that they indeed will win because the image of themselves as winners will force them to concentrate only on to he moves that ensure winning. This basically is the technique Jack Nicklaus, perhaps the greater golfer of the past several decades, used to enhance his performance. Before every shot, he formed a mental picture in which he saw three things: (1) the target area the ball would land in, (2) the flight path of the ball to the target area, and (3) himself using the appropriate wing for that particular shot. In short, if athletes define themselves as winners, they are more likely to win. By the same token, if athletes define themselves as losers, they will very likely lose.

Whatever the content of self-definition, it does not necessarily come from within the person. It is more likely to originate from social interaction. Children under age 10, for example, often evaluate how good or bad they are at a sport based on what their significant others (parents, teachers, or coaches) say to them. Thus, children describe themselves in ways such as “I know I am a good runner because my mom says I am” and “I don’t think that I’m a very good soccer player because my coach is always yelling at me.”

Indeed, how others see us when they interact with us can help how we define ourselves. But just as we often define our self-definition from our social environment, others also develop their image of us from their environment. In interacting with an African American athlete, for example, a coach tends to stereotype the athlete as naturally gifted in sports. This stereotype, part of the popular belief about African Americans in U.S. society, has a significant impact on the coach’s interaction with the African American athlete. Most commonly, the coach will impose a higher standard of performance on an African American athlete than on a white athlete. And the African American athlete will be forced to work harder to achieve that high standard, which may partly explain why African American athletes usually outshine their white peers on the same team. Similarly, gender bias in the larger society had often led parents and teachers to discourage young women from playing basketball, soccer, and other so-called male sports, defining women who want to compete in these games as unfeminine. As a result, many women have responded by avoiding these sports and choosing the so-called female sport, such as aerobic dancing, swimming, gymnastics, and tennis. The popular definition of some sports as masculine and others as feminine can also influence the spectators. Masculine sports, for example, are more likely to cause fan violence than are feminine sports, such as gymnastics and swimming.

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