Annotation Guide:

As a literature and creative writing major in college, reading difficult texts quickly became normal for me. However, I would often find myself reading through pages only to realize I had no idea what I had read. Other times, I would sit in class and listen to the professor decode a poem – but when I went home and tried to write my essay on it, I had forgotten key things she had said. This is where annotating came to save my life. I soon realized that in order to survive in college, I would need to start writing notes in the margins of all of my texts. From my non-fiction texts books to my poetry anthologies, annotating became second nature. Here are some tricks that helped me.

1. **Underline and Circle…with a purpose!**
   Underlining a ton of things may look impressive, but truly it is no more than a big waste of time. Only underline or circle IMPORTANT things – things that contribute to the bigger meaning of the work, or things that stand out to you. Below is a list of suggestions to look for when annotating.

Fiction	Non-Fiction	Poetry	All
• Theme • Symbols • Figurative Language • Character Development/Traits • Conflicts • Climax • Setting • Tone words • Mood words • Allusions	• Author's Purpose • Argument claims • Supporting facts • Summarizing facts • Definitions • Umbrella terms • Traits/Steps/Parts of bigger ideas	• Theme • Figurative Language • Symbols • Word Choice • Tone words • Mood words • Repetition • Allusions	• New Vocab

2. **Write in the margin**
   Just because you underline something doesn't mean you have magically deciphered the author's meaning of it. If you underline a new vocabulary word, write it's meaning in the margin next to it! Think you've figured out the theme? Jot it down in the margin. Try not to summarize, but instead focus on analytical reading. In other words, instead of thinking "*what* happened" or "*what* does that mean" think "*why* did that happen?" or "*why* did the author write that?" That being said, summaries <u>can</u> be important and helpful for confusing texts. In that case, limit your summaries to a few words.

3. **Use Power Verbs**
   To make sure you are thinking analytically, try to use "power verbs" with your annotations. This means starting your notes with verbs such as describes, argues, compares, causes, proves, predicts, justifies etc. For example, say you are reading <u>Boy</u> where Dahl gets hit with the cane. Instead of writing "hurts Dahl" (this is an observation) write: "causes Dahl to hate adults" (this is an analysis).

4. **Be Organized**
   For some people, color-coding is best. Others like to use left margin for question, right margin for observations. Still others like to use symbols to annotate clearly. Find a method that works for you and stick with it.

Remember, the point of annotating is NOT to give you more work, nor to prevent you from connecting to a text. Think of it as a tool to help you decode literature, not a task that simply must get done.