

Annotation Guide for “Letter from Birmingham Jail”

Annotation Basics:

- Use a pen, pencil, post-it notes, or a highlighter.
- Summarize important ideas in your own words.
- Define words that are new to you.
- Mark sections that you find confusing with question marks.
- Write questions that you might have for later discussion in class.
- Comment on things that intrigue, impress, surprise, disturb, etc.
- Note how the author uses language.
- Identify and label figurative language.
- Feel free to doodle when a visual connection is appropriate.

Suggested methods for marking a text (these are optional):

- If you feel creative, or are just very organized, you can color code your annotations by using different color post-its, highlighters, or pens.
- Brackets: If several lines seem important, just draw a line down the margin and underline/highlight only the key phrases.
- Asterisks: Place an asterisk next to an important passage; use two if it is really important.
- Marginal Notes: Use the space in the margins to make comments, define words, ask questions, etc.
- Underline/highlight; Caution! Do not underline or highlight too much! You want to concentrate on the important elements, not entire pages (use brackets for that).
- Use circles, boxes, triangles, squiggly lines, stars, etc.