

Summer Reading for Honors 10 American Literature - 2022/2023

Sophomores enrolled in Honors 10 American Literature must read and annotate Thomas Mullen's *The Last Town on Earth* before the first day of class in August. Please be prepared to take a short response test over the book, engage in several days of discussion, and compose an argumentative essay during the first few weeks of school. Annotations may be checked and graded within the first few weeks and can be used on the first day exam. Questions or concerns can be emailed to brett_thompson@amherstk12.org.

Annotating Text

Reading and constructing meaning from a text is a complex and active process. As *active readers*, students should have questions in mind while reading a text. As students read, the goal should be to find the answers to these questions. Students should also have a pen/pencil in hand so that they can *annotate* their texts. As the word suggests, annotation is simply *taking notes* in a book. Unlike *highlighting* alone, which is a passive activity, the process of annotating text helps students to stay focused and involved with the text. The process of taking notes while reading will help students to concentrate better and retain more. It will also help students to monitor and improve comprehension. In theory, annotating text should improve the depth of understanding for each student, leading to better discussion, writing, and test scores.

Suggestions for annotating text include the following:

- Labeling and interpreting literary devices (metaphor, simile, imagery, personification, symbolism, alliteration, etc.)
- Labeling and explaining the writer's rhetorical devices and elements of style (tone, diction, syntax, narrative pace, use of figurative language, etc.)
- Labeling main ideas and supportive details/evidence that lead readers to conclusions about text
- Writing questions that the reader poses (this would be helpful during class discussions)
- Making connections to other texts or experiences (again...this would be helpful during class discussions)
- Summarizing what is read
- Identifying themes

How to mark a text:

- Underline sections that seem important
- Draw a line down the margin and highlight key phrases in the passage
- Use an asterisk next to key passages
- Make marginal notes to respond to ideas in the text and refer to them in writing and discussion
- If using a book from the library or borrowed from another student, post-it notes may be the best tool to annotate text. Post-it notes can be color-coded to help students stay organized (for example, inspiring quotes can be blue, historical background can be yellow, etc.).

Questions (and Answers) students may have about annotating:

1. Do I have to buy the books?

Buying the book is optional. However, when it comes to annotating, it is easier to highlight and write in the margins; otherwise students will have to annotate on post-it notes which they will have to remove upon returning it to the library. Digital texts are fine, but annotations would need to be made on a separate notebook (which is an acceptable way to annotate).

2. How much do I have to annotate?

The amount of annotation is not as important as the quality. However, students should avoid enormous gaps throughout the book that may indicate skipping of pages. Every chapter should have some annotation. On the other hand, students should not annotate excessively to the point of slowing reading down. Annotation is meant to help, not hinder, comprehension.

3. Will I be graded on the annotation?

Sort of. I know that is a wishy-washy answer, so let me explain. If class discussions go well and most (if not all) students do well on the first few assignments, there will be no need for me to grade them. If I feel that some students failed to read the book, I may conduct a surprise annotation inspection.

4. How will it be assessed?

When assessing annotation, I will grade students on the way they incorporate key points into discussion. It may be helpful to have a “cheatsheet” available for the first few days as a guide to important quotations, questions, and passages.

5. Why would you make your students read a book over the summer?

The Last Town on Earth is a multi-layered book filled with interesting characters, creative plot twists, and moral dilemmas. The book typically leads to great discussions, solid essays, and engaging projects. Reading over the summer will keep your mind fresh in the summer. And as a bonus...most students have really enjoyed the book in the past.

Book summary:

When people in town fall victim to the Spanish Flu, themes of morality, friendship, and survival all come to the forefront as the citizens of Commonwealth try to stay united amidst a global pandemic. Sound familiar? We can definitely make some connections between this novel and what has transpired the past few years in modern society.

Note: Please accept my invitation to my summer Honors 10 American Literature Google Classroom. If you don't see an invitation, the code is qsn6eeu.

I look forward to seeing you in the fall! Have a great summer!

Mr. Thompson