

Living Styleguide for Annotating Literature

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This living styleguide serves the standardisation of the annotating process and represents the underlying guideline of our best-practice model of annotation. It is continuously updated according to evolving academic standards.

Last Revision: 9 March 2020

1. Our Aim: We wish to provide readers with reliable, academic, and extensive information that does not delimit but encourage interpretation on the basis of textual evidence.

2. The Annotating Process

1. **Read the primary text** and search for words/passages that are in need of annotation
2. Look up what other annotators write about this passage in **already existing editions** of the text
3. Ask yourself: **What do readers have to know** in order to understand, interpret, and enjoy the text?
4. Conduct **research**
5. Write and upload your **first draft**. Please stick to the guidelines for **naming files**:
 - a. Inventory: [name of the text]_yyyy_mm_dd
 - b. Prose: [name of the annotation]_[chapter]_yyyy_mm_dd
 - c. Short poetry: [name of the annotation]_[name of the poem]_yyyy_mm_dd
 - d. Long poetry: [name of the annotation]_[book/canto]_yyyy_mm_dd
 - e. Drama: [name of the annotation]_[act]_yyyy_mm_dd
 - f. Example (for *The Chimes*): goblins_ch2_2016_05_12
6. **Peer-review** the first draft at the meeting
 - a. Content
 - b. Style
 - c. Grammar
 - d. MLA (make sure that you use the 8th edition of the *MLA Handbook*)
 - e. Suggestions for further research
7. **Revise** your annotation
8. Peer-review and **revision**, peer-review and revision and so on
9. Hand in your annotation to **Leonie Kirchhoff and Miriam Lahrso**
10. **Revise** them again based on their feedback.
11. **Hand in** your finished annotation to **Prof. Dr. Matthias Bauer and Prof. Dr. Angelika Zirker**
12. **Last revision**
13. Your annotation will be **uploaded** onto our website.

3. Levels of Annotation

Not all readers need/want the same amount of information. Thus, we have established a level system, which means readers may choose how much they want to read/ where to start reading in accordance with their demands and interests.

Each annotation can have three levels; but not every annotation needs to have three levels. The minimum is one. Always start with level one. There cannot be a level two without there being a level one, and there cannot be a level three without there being a level two.

Level 1: On Level 1, we concisely answer the main question(s) that we assume readers to have when being confronted with the passage/word we are annotating. After having read L1, readers should have the feeling that their most pressing questions have been answered and that they understand the basic meaning of the text so that they can go on reading the primary text. If they wish for more extensive background information on the item discussed on L1, they can move on to L2 and L3. The category “Interpretation” can never be on L1.

Level 2: further information, based on information presented on level 1

Level 3: more advanced information, based on information presented on levels 1 and 2

4. Categories of Annotation

Readers should not only be able to choose *how much* information they wish to receive but also *what kind* of information they wish to be provided with. On our website, it is possible to filter annotations by category.

Each level is subdivided into one or several categories. There are eight different categories of annotation:

Category	What belongs here	What does NOT belong here
<p>Language</p> <p>This category explains the meaning of words and phrases.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ambiguous words/phrases • Ambiguity is a special case, as it may belong to both language and interpretation. We suggest: mention the phrasing/word choice etc. that triggers ambiguity in “Language” and further analyse the irony in “Interpretation”. • Archaic/obsolete words • Words mainly used in literature, not in ordinary discourse • Slang • Professional jargon • Dialect • Idiomatic expressions • Neologisms • Words whose meaning has changed over time (e.g. “gay”) • Words whose connotations have changed over time (e.g. “make love”) • Words that may not be known to advanced learners of the language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poetic devices • Narrative style (e.g. mood, voice, etc.) • Words that do not require annotation; i.e. words usually known to B2 speakers (Abitur level)
<p>Form</p> <p>This category draws attention to the literariness of a text.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meter and rhyme scheme • Poetic and rhetoric devices (including metaphors) • Narrative structure • Iconicity • Conventions a text would usually follow (e.g. blank verse in epics, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpretation/effects the form possibly has on the reader • Explanation of why a certain form was chosen • Explanation of why a text adheres to formal conventions or not

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deviations from known conventions (e.g. when the <i>volta</i> of a sonnet is located after the second line) • Unusual use of capitalization or other punctuation (e.g. the use of dashes in Emily Dickinson's poetry) • Irony is a special case, as it may belong to both form and interpretation. We suggest: mention the phrasing/word choice etc. that triggers irony in "Form" and further analyse the irony in "Interpretation". 	
<p>Intratextuality</p> <p>This category analyses the relation of a word/passage to the rest of the primary text.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recurring features within the same text (e.g. themes, motifs, repetitions, foreshadowing, etc.) • Comparing passages within the same text 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anything that surpasses the boundaries of the text • Interpretation (e.g. what effect a certain motif has)
<p>Intertextuality</p> <p>This category identifies and analyses a text's references to other texts and works of art.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct, identifiable references to other works within the text (this also includes pictures, paintings, music, etc.) (i.e. word-for-word quotes) • Exact sources of references (e.g. work, author, page, line number) • General information about the source work (brief description of the work, e.g. brief plot summary, main themes. If available and relevant: 'your' author's opinion of this work) • If there is a direct relation between this text and your text: say what this relation consists of. If not: 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remember to put discussions and assumptions in the interpretation category! • Remember to differentiate between context and intertext: If a work inscribes itself in a artistic tradition without referring to a specific piece of art → context • In the "interpretation" category: Relate your text to the source text (are there similarities, does your text comment on the other, is the reference ironical, etc.) • In the "interpretation" category: How does the reference affect our understanding of the text? Does it add another layer of meaning?

	<p>discuss the relationship of both texts in the “interpretation” category (see right side)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the author often refer to a certain text/author? 	
<p>Context</p> <p>This category provides readers with the contextual background knowledge that is needed in order to understand the text.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural, historical, biographical, political, religious, philosophical, scientific, etc. context • e.g. allusions to historical personages/events; philosophical and theological backgrounds that have to be known in order to understand the text; knowledge / world view at time in which the text was written 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anything that is an identifiable reference to another work of art • Be careful not to blur the lines between context or intertextuality and interpretation! • Be careful not to equalize the fictional world and reality (an event described in the text might not have an equivalent in the real world) • Be careful not to presume the existence of the rules of the real world within the fictional text, e.g. fiction transforms reality)
<p>Interpretation</p> <p>This category discusses the findings of all other categories and draws conclusions from them concerning the meaning of a word/passage/text. It also discusses different scholarly approaches to the text.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion and assessment of findings of all other categories • Scholarly approaches and secondary literature (that will then also have to be contextualized and, possibly, discussed) • Conclusions about the world view of the speaker • What effects might features of the text have on the fictional/assumed reader on the basis of our findings in the text? • For irony: see “Form” • Interpretation can never be on L1! 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speculations that can in no way be linked to the primary text.
<p>Textual Variants</p> <p>This category identifies differences between</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do the different versions of your text differ from each other? • e.g. does a character have a different name in various versions; is 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussions about <i>why</i> something was changed in the text → interpretation (the only exception is when the author discusses the change)

different versions of the primary text.	the order of chapters/scenes different, is a word spelled differently, etc.	him/herself e.g. in a letter to the publisher) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussions about how a change in the text affects our interpretation/understanding of the text → interpretation
<p>Questions</p> <p>This category documents the problems we have when annotating. It encourages readers to contact us when they have an answer to our question.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This category is supposed to document questions that arose during our research and to promote interaction between us and the readers track record of conducted research that has not led to any results regarding our questions When we are unable to disambiguate meanings / questions in the text (e.g. due to lack of historical context, etc.) When we are unable to identify the source of a quote When we are unable to identify an allusion 	

Notes:

(1) There can be no mixed categories (e.g. writing a part of an annotation that both analyses the form of a passage and interprets this form). In such a case, you have to write two different sections so the categories are clearly separate. The annotation would then include a “Form” part and an “Interpretation” part.

(2) You can also create links to other categories/levels/annotations.

(3) Categories do not require an element of the same category on a previous level. For example: there can be a L2 Intratext without a L1 Intratext.

5. Things to Keep in Mind When Writing and Revising an Annotation

While writing an annotation, ask yourself:

- Where exactly in the text is my annotation anchored (i.e. what part of the text do users have to click on in order to get to my annotation?) Annotations can be anchored in words, phrases, sentences, and passages.
- Is what I am writing relevant for the understanding of the text? Always annotate a word/phrase in a specific context, i.e. do not tell your readers all the possible meanings that a word can have but only which meanings a word can have in the context in which it appears.
- Do I refer back to the text? (i.e. not what a word *can* mean, but what it means in *this* specific context)
- Do I not mix categories?
- Do I mark interpretation as interpretation?
- Is this the right level for what I am writing? i.e. is the information I am providing somehow linked to the one I have already provided on a preceding level?
- Do I use reliable information, and do I cite all the materials I used?
- Do I adhere to MLA 8? Your annotations do not count as finished (and you will not receive any ECTS) until your in-text citations and your bibliography adhere to this citation guideline.
 - Always put your Works Cited below each separate section of your annotation (i.e. after each category, e.g. L1 – Context).
 - When omitting words/passages from quotes: Do not write “xyz . . . xyz” but “xyz [...] xyz”
- Do I only cite and quote scholarly sources (not Wikipedia, not Hausarbeiten.de, not Grin.de, not Shmoop.com or any similar sites)?
 - Good starting points for research: GoogleScholar, JSTOR, University Library Catalogue, MLA Bibliography, Web of Science
 - A good starting point for your research is the **bibliography** of your peer group
 - Depending on the category of your annotation (see Chapter 4 of this Styleguide), there are some **general starting points** for research:
 - **Language:** *Oxford English Dictionary*
 - **Form:** Books/articles that deal with your author’s style (e.g. was he/she fond of neologisms, elaborate metaphors, dialect words, personifications etc.?)
 - **Intratext:** read the primary text again, this time with special attention to the topic of your annotation
 - **Intertext:** Find out what your author read. Also: use *The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*. In general, the Bible and Shakespeare are good ‘main suspects’.
 - **Context:** History books concerned with the times of your author, newspapers from the times of your author, philosophical, political, and theological texts important in the times of your author. Find out about your author’s opinions concerning politics, religion etc. It is often best to use a healthy mix of contemporary sources and modern scholarship.
 - **Interpretation:** Scholarly articles about your topic.
 - **Textual Variants:** Use a critical edition of your text.

6. Common Issues and Problems

- If you encounter problems (e.g. sources that contradict each other), address this problem in the annotation.
- If you get the impression that something was not *meant* to be understood (by contemporary readers) provide all the relevant information nonetheless and make the readers of your annotation aware of the fact that original readers would not have known this/ that this word or passage was most likely not meant to be understood.
- If you want to write an interpretation of a passage that relies on the explanation of several separate words, you should do the following: (1) annotate each relevant word separately, which contain hyperlinks to (2) an annotation for the whole passage that shows the connection of these words (→ intratext L1) and provides an interpretation of the whole passage on L2.

7. This Is What a Draft of Your Annotation Should Look Like

[Your Name]

[Date]

Annotation 1

[Quote the lines/passage surrounding the word/phrase you are annotating and mark the word/phrase you are annotating.]

Level 1

[Category]

[Annotation]

[Works Cited for this part of the annotation]

Example

Max Mustermann

17 February 2020

Annotation 1

Annotated Passage: *Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Proin commodo enim magna, vitae placerat ipsum dictum nec. Nulla ultricies molestie venenatis. **Cras porta eget augue vel luctus.** Integer convallis justo vehicula dictum tempus. Aliquam at diam lectus. Nullam eleifend purus eget risus congue pulvinar.* (Source Text 123)

Level 1

Language

Donec scelerisque id arcu sit amet malesuada. Maecenas eu nibh auctor, dictum ipsum nec, rhoncus ipsum. Pellentesque ultrices nisl eros, at hendrerit ipsum interdum sit amet. Morbi ullamcorper ac arcu sed accumsan. Aenean risus lectus, suscipit eu velit consectetur, porttitor bibendum mauris. „Donec at feugiat erat“ (Quoted Source 123)

Works Cited

Quoted Source [please use MLA 8]

Level 2

Form

„Aenean lacus nunc, aliquet quis elit in, congue semper ex“ (Quoted Source 456) Integer placerat lorem non diam egestas, eget posuere purus posuere. Sed et urna quis metus imperdiet placerat.

Works Cited

Quoted Source [please use MLA 8]
