

## Advice for English 11 Summer Reading Notes

You may wish to purchase your own copies of the books to write in them, or you may choose to use sticky-notes or a journal to keep up with important passages and ideas. Just remember, no matter what method you choose, your summer reading success depends upon following two simple steps.

### Step 1: Pay attention! Identify important passages while you read.

*Students often ask, "What should I be looking for?" Here are seven answers to this frequent question.*

#### • **Character descriptions**

Readers can tell a lot about a person based upon his speech, thoughts, actions, looks, or his effect on others. Chances are the author wants us to feel a certain way about a character based upon his or her description. Note direct and indirect character descriptions while reading.

#### • **"Oh my gosh" moments**

Feeling angered, frustrated, or just plain shocked about something you read? Authors often convey important ideas by shocking readers. Mark shocking passages; they often reveal key concepts.

#### • **Symbols**

Symbols are objects that represent abstract ideas. For example, a flying bird may represent freedom, while a caged bird could symbolize bondage or oppression. Symbols often highlight recurring ideas or themes in literature. So, be sure to highlight descriptions of objects that stand out in some way.

#### • **Confusing events or dialogue**

Not sure what the author is saying or what the reason is behind a particular action or event? Flag passages that feel confusing, and write down your questions while you read. Sometimes the author confuses the reader on purpose, revealing the answers to questions elsewhere in the book. Other times questions lead to thematic interpretations. Got questions? Don't be afraid to ask!

### Step 2: Record your thoughts.

Put on your thinking cap, and pick a method for keeping track of your brilliant ideas. Record your thoughts...

**On sticky notes:** As you mark passages, write down what you are thinking about them on each sticky note. You can even color-code sticky notes by category (see above).

**In a journal:** In a composition book, create a "T" chart. In the left column record important passages and citations; on the right, record your thoughts about what you read. Color-code entries by category (see above).

#### • **Setting descriptions**

Authors often have a reason for including longwinded setting details. Sometimes the setting is symbolic; other times it establishes mood. Mark setting particulars, even if you think they're boring. They may be important.

#### • **Thematic passages**

Are two characters having a philosophical conversation? Is the narrator sharing his opinion with no one in particular? Is one character giving advice to another? We can usually identify thematic passages in texts because they often stand apart from the book's actual narrative or plotline. Mark thematic passages, even if they don't make sense at first.

#### • **Problems or conflicts**

Is a character facing a tough decision? Having relationship problems? Feeling at odds with society? Facing a double standard? Clashing with another character? Mark the conflict!

**In the margin:** If the book is yours, use a pen or pencil to comment on passages you highlight while reading. If space is limited, you may choose to use a combination of margin and sticky note annotations.