

American Literature: College Preparatory and Honors

Required Reading: You have a choice of either *American Born Chinese*, *Pride of Baghdad*, or *Pulp*

American Born Chinese by Gene Luen Yang tells three apparently unrelated tales about fitting in that come together with an unexpected twist. This graphic novel will address the immigrants' perspective and look at the repercussions of stereotyping and discrimination.

Pride of Baghdad by Brian K. Vaughan (art by Niko Henrichon) tells the story of a pride of lions that escape a zoo in Baghdad due to the bombing of Iraq. This graphic novel raises questions about freedom and how it is possible to misinterpret one's "enemies."

Pulp by Ed Brubaker (art by Sean Phillips) tells the story of an aging outlaw turned pulp writer facing the changing world as it moves towards war. While American society grows more and more conflicted about the Nazis, he and the world he knew move towards being irrelevant.

Annotation Assignment:

In addition to reading, you must annotate your text (write directly in your book) and present your books for note-checks at the beginning of the year and for a grade. Every chapter should have a summary (see below) and a minimum of two additional notations per page (see below); however, you may find your reading more enjoyable and coherent if you just get into the habit of making these marks while you read rather than worrying about the assignment. If you do not have room to write in the margins you may include post-it notes for your margin notes.

Why annotate? Annotations should help you engage with the text. They will help you remember important details as you read and later when you prepare for an assessment.

Every reader develops his/her own unique style for annotation and feel free to explore with what works for you, but here are some notes and marks you may make:

1. Write a brief summary at the end of each chapter after you've read it explaining in a few phrases what occurred in the chapter. This will make finding an important scene for your paper much easier.
2. Circle words that are unfamiliar then write their definitions in the margin (after you have looked up their meanings).
3. Underline or bracket [] passages that are interesting to you or seem important. Then, in the margin write a brief note on why you think that passage is important.

Writing in the margin is always helpful. Think of it like you are having a conversation with the book you are reading. Here are some helpful things you can write in the margin:

1. Ask questions. If something confuses you or you feel like there is information about an event, character, scene, etc. that you should know more about, write your question in the margin.
2. Make predictions. Do you think you know what might happen? Does something seem like it may be important later? Do you think this scene might foreshadow something later? Write your prediction in the margin.
3. Clarify. If you figure something out or have an epiphany while reading but fear you may forget it later, write down a brief summary of the passage or your ideas in the margin.
4. Remember, it is helpful to underline a passage that relates to your note in the margin and to write your note close to the underlined portion.

General reminders: Use a pen, NOT a highlighter. Underlining passages is not enough; after underlining something, write a note in the margin explaining why you underlined it. This may be tedious at first, but once you get the hang of it, you will find annotation improves comprehension and memory as well as serving as an excellent study aid for quizzes, tests, and papers. Good luck!

A note on reading and cheating: As a general rule, it's okay to look up words, historical background of the setting, and the author's biographical information because those are facts. If you look up a literary work, you will find opinions. All literary analysis is based upon opinion. Your goal is to learn how to form and support your own opinions, not mimic someone else's. If you voice an opinion in a paper, in class discussion, or on a test/quiz that does not appear to be your own, it may be considered an Honor Code violation. This includes "refreshing" your memory using SparkNotes or other study guides. You will be instructed on how to best review for assessments. If you have any questions about this policy, please ask your instructor.