

Guidelines for Annotating Texts

There is not one “right” way to annotate as you read, but there are some general principles for good annotating that you should keep in mind. You should write marginal notes in the text that consist of questions and comments, essentially your dialogue with the text itself.

Review this guide frequently as you are completing your assigned reading. Close reading takes more time than quick, superficial reading, but doing so will save you time and anxiety later as you prepare to discuss and write about the literature.

1. **Always read with a pen or pencil in hand.** Doing so helps you to focus and to stay alert.
2. **Create** your own code/symbols and be **consistent** with your system.
 - a) **Abbreviate** as you take notes using things such as brackets, stars, exclamation points
 - b) Keep a **list of characters** and their **key traits**. A good place for this is the inside cover of the book. You can add brief notes to your lists as you read.
 - c) Look for **patterns** as you read. What ideas do you see repeated? What **connections** can you draw between different characters and different events?
 - d) Mark themes, tone, allusions, motifs, key scenes, epiphanies, diction, syntax, imagery, literary devices, plot, setting, characterization, and point of view.
 - e) **Underline** – CAUTION: Use this method sparingly. Underline only a few words. Never underline an entire passage.
 - f) At the end of each chapter, **bullet-point the key events** as a summary or write a short summary.
3. *Have a conversation with the text. Talk back to it.*
 - a) Always **take your time** as you begin a new text. Ask yourself many questions as you begin: Who is telling the story? What is the setting? What details does the author provide about characters when they are first introduced?
 - b) Try to make a **quick note on the top of each page** indicating the most important point there.
 - c) **Ask questions** (essential to active reading). **Use question marks**. Be alert to what puzzles you. Good readers do not zip along without stopping to monitor their comprehension. They stop to think and to note what they don’t understand. You should also write down questions you would like to discuss.
 - d) Your annotations **must** include comments. I want to see evidence of thinking.
4. Of course, you should always pay attention to **vocabulary**. A strong vocabulary comes from *reading*, not from memorizing lists. Your text includes many words that will be new to you. Circle or star these words. Try to determine meaning from the context. If you are really puzzled by a word, look it up.

Yes, annotating does slow down your reading, but that’s the point.



Mossflower

Mossflower lay deep in the grip of midwinter beneath a sky of leaden gray that showed tinges of scarlet and orange on the horizon. A cold mantle of snow draped the landscape, covering the flatlands to the west. Snow was everywhere, filling ditches, drifting high against hedgerows, making paths invisible, smoothing the contours of earth in its white embrace. The gaunt, leafless ceiling of Mossflower Wood was penetrated by constant snowfall, which carpeted the sprawling woodland floor, building canopies on evergreen shrubs and bushes. Winter had muted the earth; the muffled stillness was broken only by a traveler's paws.

(5)

A sturdily built young mouse with quick dark eyes was moving confidently across the snowbound country. Looking back, he could see his tracks disappearing northward into the distance. Farther south the flatlands rolled off endlessly, flanked to the west by the faint shape of distant hills, while to the east stood the long ragged fringe marking the marches of Mossflower. His nose twitched at the elusive smell of burning wood and turf from some hearthfire. Cold wind soughed* from the treetops, causing whorls of snow to dance in icy spirals. The traveler gathered his ragged cloak tighter, adjusted an old rusting sword that was slung across his back, and trudged steadily forward, away from the wilderness, to where other creatures lived.

(10)

(15)

It was a forbidding place made mean by poverty. Here and there he saw signs of habitation. The dwellings, ravaged and demolished, made pitiful shapes under snowdrifts. Rearing high against the forest, a curious building dominated the ruined settlement. A fortress, crumbling, dark and brooding, it was a symbol of fear to the woodland creatures of Mossflower.

(20)

This was how Martin the Warrior first came to Kotir, place of the wildcats.

*a soft low murmuring, sighing, or rustling sound.



Character

Young mouse / Martin the Warrior

- quick
- confident
- steady

infr = awful warrior

= Setting is important

= Winter is the main setting element.

= Winter is holding tight
= Winter is the oppressor

Martin is alone Mossflower

personification - winter is holding tight

Mossflower lay deep in the grip of midwinter beneath a sky of leaden gray that showed tinges of scarlet and orange on the horizon. A cold mantle of snow draped the landscape, covering the flatlands to the west. Snow was everywhere, filling ^{troughs} ditches, drifting high against hedgerows, making paths invisible, smoothing the contours of earth in its white

Personification

(5) embrace The gaunt, leafless ceiling of Mossflower Wood was penetrated by constant snowfall, which carpeted the sprawling woodland floor, building canopies on evergreen shrubs and bushes. Winter had muted the earth; the muffled stillness was broken only by a traveler's paws.

R = Repeat snow

R = Repeat idea
(10) Military terms

Personification sound
= winter is forcing the earth to be silent
= winter is strong, oppressive

A sturdily built young mouse with quick dark eyes was moving confidently across the snowbound country. Looking back, he could see his tracks disappearing northward into the distance. Farther south the flatlands rolled off endlessly, flanked to the west by the faint shape of distant hills, while to the east stood the long ragged fringe marking the marches of Mossflower. His nose twitched at the elusive smell of burning wood and turf from some hearthfire. Cold wind soughed* from the treetops, causing whorls of snow to

- what does the military have to do with this?
- foreshadowing?

= only comments

(15) dance in icy spirals. The traveler gathered his ragged cloak tighter, adjusted an old rusting sword that was slung across his back, and trudged steadily forward, away from the wilderness, to where other creatures lived.

R = army trudges when they march in snow

It was a forbidding place made mean by poverty. Here and there he saw signs of habitation. The dwellings, ravaged and demolished, made pitiful shapes under snowdrifts. Rearing high against the forest, a curious building dominated the ruined settlement. A fortress, crumbling, dark and brooding, it was a symbol of fear to the woodland creatures of Mossflower.

- where is everyone?
- who lives in the fortress?

= when winter goes away so should the poverty

This was how Martin the Warrior first came to Kotir, place of the wildcats.

POV = This is Martin's impression of the place

Soughed * a soft low murmuring, sighing, or rustling sound.

Brooding * heavy and unwelcoming

- Martin the Warrior comes to Kotir
- Martin assesses his surroundings

Dialectical Journals

Journal Focus: Setting creates tone

<u>Context</u>	<u>Evidence / Device</u>	<u>Commentary</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Martin the warrior comes to Kotir 	<p>→ "The traveler [Martin] gathered his ragged cloak tighter, adjusted an old rusting sword..."</p>	<p>→ This shows that Martin is a lot like the setting, ragged cloak, and so he is more likely to sympathize with the creatures being oppressed by winter. As a warrior, his might foreshadow that he will help them fight.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Martin assesses his surroundings 	<p>→ "grip of midwinter"</p> <p>"Winter had matted the earth"</p> <p>"dwellings razed and demolished"</p>	<p>→ The setting is described as aggressive and seems to be helping whatever is "razing" and "demolishing" the dwellings.</p>

carrying an "old rusting sword"

Answer: In MossHovel, Brian Jacques uses setting to create a "forbidding" and unwelcoming tone.