

Things Fall Apart, PART ONE Annotation Task

Think of literary annotations as “showing your work” while you read just as you might show your work in a math problem. You are showing what you are thinking while you read and analyze; thinking is a word-based activity, not just a nebulous puff of energy. If you can’t articulate your thoughts, then you must question if you really know what you’re thinking.

What you’ll gain from authentically annotating is a deeper initial reading and an understanding of the text that lasts. You can deliberately engage the author in conversation and questions — much like having the narrator or author there with you in the room. When you come back to the novel, that initial interchange is recorded for you, making an excellent and entirely personal study tool.



Two key components of all legitimate annotation are:

- *strategically circling, underlining, starring, or minimally highlighting specific elements of the text*
- *writing notes in the margins to make interpretive connections between elements of the text or to respond to or summarize the text’s meaning*

Select a specific chapter from Ch. 1-13 of Things Fall Apart; annotate it (in your own book or on a clean copy of the chapter) with the following goals in mind:

- Make an *inference* based on a character's behavior(s).
- Identify a scene in which Achebe builds tension in the plot.
- In a margin, record a theme claim that is supported by the events in the chapter.
- Identify a word you were able to determine the meaning of based on context clues.
- Select a specific (short) paragraph; paraphrase it (with your own words and phrasing).
- Choose one paragraph, and (in the margin) explain its purpose in the narrative.
- On the final page, objectively summarize the chapter in a *single sentence*.
- Identify a choice that Achebe makes which explores a thematic motif of the novel.
- Look for *elements of the plot* which parallel other elements from earlier in the story.
- Look for a pair of paragraphs that have an interesting *relationship*; describe it.
- Consider how Achebe *develops* a thematic motif of the novel in the chapter.
- Identify a specific cultural attitude that is revealed in this chapter.