

Student Name _____

Student ID _____

EWRT Instructor _____

Date Completed _____



Active Reading: Mark Up Those Texts!

ACTIVE READING:

Who has a lot of reading from all their classes? Who reads something and then has NO idea what they just read?

Yes, we all face this, but active reading—being an engaged reader—can help. It may take a little more time but it's totally worth it!

ACTIVE READING: ANNOTATING A TEXT

In order to read effectively, you need to develop a strategy that will work for you. Annotating a reading passage--writing notes on the pages of the reading selection itself--is one strategy you can use to become actively involved with what you are reading.

Although annotating may seem to take more time, it will benefit you in several ways:

- When you return to a text (when studying for an exam or writing a paper), you won't have to reread the entire piece. Notes written within the text and in the margins can remind you of important ideas.
- When you write notes about reading selections, you develop active rather than passive reading strategies. In general, when you are involved with what you read, you will better understand, remember, and engage with texts. Isn't this what we want? (And you won't fall asleep!)

Even though each reader has a preferred method of annotating text, the following suggestions provide some guidelines for marking a passage or annotating a text. This strategy should not only be helpful for this class, but for other classes, especially those which require a lot reading.

1. **Write notes** in the margin or at the top or bottom of the page, i.e., key summary words or phrases.
2. **Circle or underline** key words or phrases or ones to come back to.
3. **Use stars or asterisks** in the margins to emphasize the most important ideas.

4. **Pose questions in the margins** to express your difference of opinion about the author's message, or **put a question mark** next to anything you don't understand (what teachers mean when they ask: "Are there any questions about the readings?").
5. **Use a personal symbol** (! or Yes!) next to anything that seems on target to you.
6. **Write notes on Post-It notes or in a notebook** and to remember important pages in a text. This is great for library books or those you don't want to write in (or ebooks).

Now, read this short story and see a tutor to annotate this short story in a tutor session.

"Eleven"
from *Woman Hollering Creek* (1991)
Sandra Cisneros

What they don't understand about birthdays and what they never tell you is that when you're eleven, you're also ten, and nine, and eight, and seven, and six, and five, and four, and three, and two, and one. And when you wake up on your eleventh birthday you expect to feel eleven, but you don't. You open your eyes and everything's just like yesterday, only it's today. And you don't feel eleven at all. You feel like you're still ten. And you are--underneath the year that makes you eleven.

Like some days you might say something stupid, and that's the part of you that's still ten. Or maybe some days you might need to sit on your mama's lap because you're scared, and that's the part of you that's five. And maybe one day when you're all grown up maybe you will need to cry like if you're three, and that's okay. That's what I tell Mama when she's sad and needs to cry. Maybe she's feeling three.

Because the way you grow old is kind of like an onion or like the rings inside a tree trunk or like my little wooden dolls that fit one inside the other, each year inside the next one. That's how being eleven years old is.

You don't feel eleven. Not right away. It takes a few days, weeks even, sometimes even months before you say Eleven when they ask you. And you don't feel smart eleven, not until you're almost twelve. That's the way it is. Only today I wish I didn't have only eleven years rattling inside me like pennies in a tin Band-Aid box. Today I wish I was one hundred and two instead of eleven because if I was one hundred and two I'd have known what to say when Mrs. Price put the red sweater on my desk. I would've known how to tell her it wasn't mine instead of just sitting there with that look on my face and nothing coming out of my mouth.

"Whose is this?" Mrs. Price says, and she holds the red sweater up in the air for all the class to see. "Whose? It's been sitting in the coatroom for a month."

"Not mine," says everybody. "Not mine."

"It has to belong to somebody," Mrs. Price keeps saying, but nobody can remember. It's an ugly sweater with red plastic buttons and a collar and sleeves all stretched out like you could use it for a jump rope. It's maybe a thousand years old and even if it belonged to me I wouldn't say so.

Maybe because I'm skinny, maybe because she doesn't like me, that stupid Sylvia Saldivar says, "I think it belongs to Rachel." An ugly sweater like that, all raggedy and old,

but Mrs. Price believes her. Mrs. Price takes the sweater and puts it right on my desk, but when I open my mouth nothing comes out.

"That's not, I don't, you're not...Not mine," I finally say in a little voice that was maybe me when I was four.

"Of course it's yours," Mrs. Price says. "I remember you wearing it once." Because she's old and the teacher, she's right and I'm not.

Not mine, not mine, not mine, but Mrs. Price is already turning to page thirty-two, and math problem number four. I don't know why but all of a sudden I'm feeling sick inside, like the part of me that's three wants come out of my eyes, only I squeeze them shut tight and bite down on my teeth really hard and try to remember today when I am eleven, eleven. Mama is making a cake for me tonight, and when Papa comes home everybody will sing Happy Birthday, Happy Birthday to you.

But when the sick feeling goes away and I open my eyes, the red sweater's still sitting there like a big red mountain. I move the red sweater to the corner of my desk with my ruler. I move my pencil and books and eraser as far from it as possible. I even move my chair a little to the right. Not mine, not mine, not mine.

In my head I'm thinking how long till lunchtime, how long till I can take the red sweater and throw it over the schoolyard fence, or leave it hanging on a parking meter, or bunch it up into a little ball and toss it in the alley. Except when math period ends Mrs. Price says loud and in front of everybody, "Now, Rachel, that's enough," because she sees I've shoved the red sweater to the tippy-tip corner of my desk and it's hanging all over the edge like a waterfall, but I don't care.

"Rachel," Mrs. Price says. She says it like she's getting mad. "You put that sweater on right now and no more nonsense."

"But it's not--"

"Now!" Mrs. Price says. This is when I wish I wasn't eleven, because all the years inside of me--ten, nine, eight, seven, six, five, four, three, two, one--are pushing at the back of my eyes when I put one arm through one sleeve of the sweater that smells like cottage cheese, and then the other arm through the other and stand there with my arms apart like if the sweater hurts me and it does, all itchy and full of germs that aren't even mine.

That's when everything I've been holding in since this morning, since when Mrs. Price put the sweater on my desk, finally lets go, and all of a sudden I'm crying in front of everybody. I wish I was invisible but I'm not. I'm eleven and it's my birthday today and I'm crying like I'm three in front of everybody. I put my head down on the desk and bury my stupid clown-sweater arms. My face all hot and spit coming out of me, until there aren't any more tears left in my eyes, and it's just my body shaking like when you have the hiccups, and my whole head hurts like when you drink milk too fast.

But the worst part is right before the bell rings for lunch. That stupid Phyllis Lopez, who is even dumber than Sylvia Saldivar, says she remembers the red sweater is hers! I take it off right away and give it to her, only Mrs. Price pretends like everything's okay.

Today I'm eleven. There's a cake Mama's making for tonight, and when Papa comes home from work we'll eat it. There'll be candles and presents and everybody will sing Happy Birthday, Happy Birthday to you, Rachel, only it's too late.

I'm eleven today. I'm eleven, ten, nine, eight, seven, six, five, four, three, two, and one, but I wish I was one hundred and two. I wish I was anything but eleven, because I

want today to be far away already, far away like a runaway balloon, like a tiny O in the sky, so tiny--tiny you have to close your eyes to see it.

Write a brief summary of what you would annotate and make a note of what you have questions about or what you would like to discuss with a tutor.