

Social Annotation as Formative Assessment

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A project

- Colleagues in LCS at EdUHK took part in a teaching development grant project in 2018-19.
- The results are already published:

Clapp, J., DeCoursey, M., Lee, S. W. S., & Li, K. (2020). “Something fruitful for all of us”: Social annotation as a signature pedagogy for literature education. *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education*.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1474022220915128>

Social Annotation

- An era of “social annotation” has begun in which it is increasingly possible to “annotate everything.”
- We decided to investigate the power of the new social annotation for literature education.
- We decided to do this because we felt that that literary study already centrally involves annotation.
- This allows a formative assessment strategy that is naturally integrated with existing practices and values.

Example: Hypothes.is

- Hypothes.is has emerged as the dominant web annotation project. It allows the annotation of any webpage.
- Vannevar Bush, “As We Might Think,” *Atlantic Monthly* (1945)
- <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1945/07/as-we-may-think/303881/>
- <https://web.hypothes.is>

Basics, Interpreting, Applying

TYPES OF ANNOTATIONS

Annotation types: Basics

- Identifying literary features
- Defining words
- Clarifying allusions
- Summarizing plot points

Annotation types: Interpreting

- Analyzing narrative point of view
- Understanding the development of theme
- Connecting specific details to general properties

Annotation types: Applying

- Expressing personal responses
- Exploring cross-cultural issues
- Making comparisons to contemporary society

Example: Hansberry

In this example from my 20c literature course, students discuss why Lorraine Hansberry mocked critics who described the ending of *A Raisin in the Sun* (1959) as a “happy ending.”

- https://docs.google.com/document/d/1pcX1SuS1zHWi6YmZj3_ipOc7AJSLaDEgSG81yTw4fU/edit?usp=sharing

Implementation Options

When, How, Who, How Much

Synchronous versus Asynchronous

WHEN?

Synchronous (in-class) Annotation

- Students examine a document and annotate it together at the same time
- Often making use of the projector
- Advantage: many reports of strong student engagement
- Advantage: easy to offer instant feedback

Asynchronous (out-of-class)

Annotation

- Students examine a document and annotate on their own time, before or after class.
- Advantage: can increase students' individual engagement with a text
- Advantage: instructor can gauge students' understanding or focus and pitch face-to-face interactions as appropriate

Prompted versus Unprompted

HOW?

Prompted Annotation

- Students annotate a text with some particular topic, question, or purpose in mind, as set by the instructor
- Advantage: stronger students model answers for weaker ones
- Advantage: students may be requested both to annotate and respond to other's annotations

Unprompted Annotation

- Students are requested to annotate a text in ways that seem meaningful or valuable to them.
- Advantage: instructor gains a strong sense of what students find interesting or puzzling
- Advantage: models a practice of critical reading in keeping with the original idea of annotation

Anonymous versus Authored

WHO?

Anonymous Annotation

- Students annotate a text without the annotation tool recording their identity
- Advantage: open and frank responses
- Disadvantage: no possibility of marking

Authored Annotation

- Students annotate a text using an annotation tool that identifies their authorship
- Advantage: student annotations may be assessed
- Disadvantage: students may model responses on their perception of instructor's expectations

Marked versus Unmarked

HOW MUCH?

Marked Annotation

- Student receive class credit and assessment for participating in annotation
- Marks may be on the basis of quality or sheer participation
- Advantage: strongly motivating to students
- Disadvantage: somewhat to very time-consuming

Unmarked Annotation

- Students are given the opportunity to voluntarily add annotations to a text
- Advantage: annotation is dominated by strong and voluble students, just like class discussion or other voluntary activities
- Disadvantage: some or even many students will not participate substantially

Example: VideoAnt

- Annotating *The Great Gatsby* (2013) dir Baz Luhrmann
- <https://ant.umn.edu/meejpuhqne/annotate>

Example: Google Docs

Annotating *The Great Gatsby* (1925) by Scott Fitzgerald

- [*n.b.* will be out of copyright at the end of 2020!]
- https://docs.google.com/document/d/1HeFHRQUMeWq_Lhc4LfnMR6s-Oc7eaNUQAbV2f3v4wwM/edit?usp=sharing

