During our brief meetings last week, I heard from you about strikingly similar approaches to reading; you've clearly had some excellent teachers in the past. Some of you seemed more convinced by the utility of annotating than others, but most of you know that annotating is being good to your future self in that you'll be prepared to find passages that support the ideas you have in class and those that will develop into your essays. Textual manipulation of some sort, in combination with a quick note in the margin, not only helps you to retain details important to the plot but also makes you feel more invested in the project.

I saw annotations of all sorts. I saw sticky notes large and small, color coding, highlighting, scribbling, indiscriminate annotating with hurried scribbles, honest annotating with complete thoughts of your own in the margins, both random and thoughtful underlining, boxing, bracketing, dog-earing, all-capsing, sketching, arrowing, drawing lines, and traditional note taking on a separate sheet of paper. I even saw this, an excerpt from an impressive, if overwhelming, 13-page document from one of your more driven peers.

In conversation you told me that you mark a passage under the following circumstances:

> when there's a word you do not understand
> when there's a passage with provocative language
> when you see a word that has been repeated earlier in the text
> when a character's physical appearance or personality is overtly being described by the narrator
> when a new character is introduced
> when you **anticipate** one of the novel's major themes is being developed
> when your **intuition** tells you a moment is foreboding
> when you "**have a feeling** something is important"
> when you have an emotional reaction to something the narrator or a character says or does

The first anxiety you all expressed is that annotating relies so heavily on anticipation, instinct, and intuition, so you don't really know for sure what to mark up. I don't think it's bad to rely on intuition at all. You need to trust your instincts and mark up what your strong reader's mind is telling you; you know more about how story works than you think.

Truth be told I don't think there is a path to perfect annotation. All of those things listed above have their benefits. You need to do what works best for you. I do think there is such a thing as annotating too much, however, especially with a novel of the length of *C&P*. It's simple not sustainable. And I also think there's something akin to not annotating enough. Under annotating might make you ill-prepared for class and for writing your essays. Over annotating might detract from your enjoyment of the novel and might overwhelm you later on.

So what *do* you do?

1) *Read with a focus.* This is where I come in, at least at the beginning of the year. Over the summer, for instance, you were given **one task** to do as you read. During every session of reading it should have been your one goal to find passages that develop your one reaction to Raskolnikov. You'll need to do that in the future: Have one thing in mind as you read. This week I'll be introducing you to a number of different focuses you might have as you continue reading the novel. The key is to choose one that interests **you**. That interest will drive **your** reading, thinking, and writing. So **your** essay topic when, we come to finish the novel, derives from that focused reading.

2) *Create a network.* You want to link your thoughts about the text in an intuitive way. I always suggest to my students that whenever they see a quotation that develops the focus of the reading they should refer to the previous note in some way. They might write, "From longing for isolation to seeking companionship, pg 34". This efficiently and thoughtfully marks the change in Raskolnikov that informs your one reaction to him at two moments. Include the page number for quick reference back and forth. Page 34 saw Raskolnikov saw him longing for isolation; your current page sees him seeking companionship. This begins your network of annotations.