

**British Literature**  
**Summer Reading Assignment 2017**

This summer you will be reading and annotating Jhumpa Lahiri's *Interpreter of Maladies*. This book is a collection of short stories that are thematically linked and chart the experiences of several Indian and Indian-American characters. We see identity conflicts, struggles for a sense of belonging, stories of love and acceptance and crossing boundaries – generational, cultural, and physical.

In order to gain a greater understanding of and appreciation for the text, you will be annotating as you read. Annotating texts allows for a more personal interaction with what you are reading; it allows you to enter into a dialogue with the text. It also serves as a reminder of what you might want to say in class discussions or use in an analytical essay. And, yes, it slows you down. That's the point. You must slow down to engage in meaningful conversation with the text.

You will be receiving a grade in the fall for the quality of your annotations, and you will also be using your annotated book to write an in-class essay in the first week of school.

While purchasing a copy of the book so that you can write directly in it is recommended, you may instead use a borrowed copy, in which case you may choose to use sticky notes or keep a reading journal (be sure to indicate page numbers with your notes). Be aware that you will need this book in your possession for the first week or so of school.

Below are a few guidelines/tips for effective annotating.

Annotate: *verb* – to add critical or explanatory notes to a written work [Latin *nota* for mark]

Note: this means that annotating is **not** simply underlining and highlighting lines or passages, though this may be part of the process; it is also **not** simply making note of plot points. Annotating requires a greater level of complex thought and engagement.

What to annotate:

- Observations about what is being said
- What you are reminded of
- Questions you have
- Ideas that occur to you
- Things you agree or disagree with
- Themes that are being developed
- Evidence of character development
- The tone the author is using
- Any literary devices you notice (i.e. figurative language, symbols, imagery, etc.)
- Connections you see to history, contemporary ideas or beliefs, social/political context
- Anything else that “speaks” to you
- **Connections between and among the various stories (esp. thematic connections)**

General types of annotations:

- Questions and answers
- Summary of main ideas
- Character descriptions
- Possible test questions/essay topics
- **Patterns and motifs**
- Personal connections to the text
- Explanations / clarification of the text, including vocabulary
- **Marking important passages**

Effective annotations use a combination of all of the above approaches.

How to annotate:

- Make *brief* comments in the margins or between lines
- Circle or box words or phrases
- Indicate and define new vocabulary
- Use abbreviations and symbols *that you understand*
- Write questions in the margins
- Underline or highlight passages connected to your commentary (use this sparingly and always add a comment next to what you underline)
- Make note of thematic ideas (as they come up) in the margins or at the top of a page

Again, effective annotations use a combination of all of the above methods. Remember that annotating is not the same as explicating. When you explicate you analyze every single detail of the entire text; this is not realistic for reading/studying longer prose. Yes, you should have some sort of annotations on every page, but you do not need to fill in every available blank space on every single page.

Finally, remember that, ultimately, your annotations are for YOU. They are to help you gain meaning from a text and to help you later on when you need to discuss or write about the text.