

WRITING AN ANNOTATION

What is an Annotation?

An annotation is a critical examination, or commentary of a book, article, or other publication. It includes important aspects of content not evident in the title. It enables the researcher to establish the relevance of the subject matter and to decide whether or not to read the full material.

Characteristics of Well-Written Annotations

The conventional rules of effective writing should be followed in writing annotations as well. This means that it should be brief and clear. Every sentence should convey a maximum amount of information in a minimum number of words. There must be a clear organization and the content must be devoid of irrelevant ideas.

A Step-by-Step Guide to Annotating

- Familiarize yourself with the contents of the book or article. Examining the table of contents, the foreword and the introduction can be helpful.
- Read as much of the book or article as is necessary to understand its content.
- Outline or make notes of the information you think you should include.
- Write a paragraph that reflects the spirit of the book or article without emphasis on any of the points.

THE CONTENT OF AN ANNOTATION

An annotation is usually one to three paragraphs, with a total of 150-200 words in length. The following points provide guidance for what should be included in an annotation:

- The credentials, authority and qualifications of the author, unless extremely well-known
- The scope and main purpose of the text, i.e. a brief description of the article or book, stating the writer's main objective or key idea, in one to three sentences
- Major standpoint, bias, or perspective of the author in relation to the topic or theme. These may be evident in the writing style, organization or interpretations
- Relationship of work to other works in the field, i.e. how it compares to similar studies
- Audience that the material is intended for, determined from language, writing style and subject matter
- Findings, results, conclusions, given in the form of a summarizing comment, possibly with projections for the future

A list of some verbs for referring to texts and ideas in annotations:

| | | | | | |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|------------|-------------|-----------|
| account for | clarify | describe | exemplify | indicate | question |
| analyze | compare | depict | exhibit | investigate | recognize |
| argue | conclude | determine | explain | judge | reflect |
| assess | criticize | distinguish | frame | justify | refer to |
| assert | defend | evaluate | identify | narrate | report |
| assume | define | emphasize | illustrate | persuade | review |
| claim | demonstrate | examine | imply | propose | suggest |

The evidence indicates that The article assesses the effect of

The author identifies three reasons for The article questions the view that

Sample Annotations:

Medeiros, J.A. (2003). Haole in Hawai'i: The Caucasian as minority experience. *Journal of Race Studies* 34(5) 233-67.

Medeiros, an anthropologist at the University of Hawai'i, and specialist in the field of minority studies, reports on a 5 year study of attitudes towards haoles by non-Caucasians. Data was gathered qualitatively through surveys and interviews on all islands. She argues that the "haole experience" is similar to that of a minority in the United States. Contrary to the argument in Burke's 1998 article, Medeiros disagrees that haoles experience true discrimination. Medeiros' thorough analysis of her data and systematic analysis reveal a blend of negative and positive attitudes towards haoles. This research will be invaluable as I attempt to describe in my final project, the multiple ways of interpreting the haole experience in Hawaii.

John Z. Schmidt, a Russian history professor at Interstate University, based his research on recently discovered documents. He reveals that a few Germans played a key role in the events leading up to the revolution. They provided money, arms, and leadership that helped the revolution get started. Schmidt's conclusions are dramatically different from those in Mark Johnson's *Why the Red Revolution?* However, Schmidt's case is somewhat weakened by an anti-German bias, which was mentioned by two reviewers. Schmidt addresses himself to the scholar. The style is heavy and argumentative, with many footnotes. However, the concluding chapters will be clear to any informed

layperson. This detailed account provides much new information not available elsewhere.