

Hypothesis: Public Annotation



EMORY
UNIVERSITY

What Is Hypothesis? How does it Work?

- <https://web.hypothes.is/>
- A free browser plug-in that allows for public or private group annotations.
- The extension can be activated/deactivated on the fly.
- You can create direct links to specific annotations.
- For private groups, all participants need to sign up for a free account and then receive an invitation.

What You Can Annotate in Hypothesis

- Your own Canvas pages
- Web sites
- Web- hosted PDFs
 - Publicly hosted
 - Firewalled possible, but can get tricky

What You Cannot Annotate in Hypothesis

- Local files (e.g., PDFs or docs that are simply uploaded to Canvas)

Uses

- Syllabus Q&A
- Embedding prompts
- Close reading
- Annotation
- Discussion

Values

- Places class discussion directly in the text
- Publicly annotating can encourage readers to slow down and observe, read carefully
- It's not quite annotation; it's not quite a discussion board

Obstacles

- Visually overwhelming
- Can "prime" the reader to think or respond in a certain way
 - **Solution:** Visually mute highlights and annotations on first read
- Can encourage self-censorship

- **Workaround:** Discuss as a class the odd genre space it occupies
- **Workaround:** Discuss best strategies for use
 - Read “dry” first
 - Privately annotate
 - Publicly annotate
- Students may get anxious about “how much is enough?”
 - **Solution:** Establish clear guidelines for participation
- Currently not LMS integrated (No notifications)



Cobi

“I think reflective writing as a public act is important as it forces the writer to explain their thought processes as though to an outsider. Only by doing this can the writer examine their mind without skimming over the parts that they take for granted and would not otherwise think about/mention. Annotation as a collaborative act allows for people to view the text from multiple perspectives, and reflect even upon the reflections of others to delve deeper than they would on their own.”

Srinjayi

“I have always believed that the pages of a book and space between adjoining words serve as the best confidantes of our thoughts, beliefs, and opinions - with absolutely no chance of being divulged. Although making annotating a collaborative act helps broaden our spectrum and gain multiple perspectives, it instinctually makes the reader *contemplate* whether certain comments would be appropriate and it arouses a sense of self-consciousness. This takes away from the pure and unfiltered nature of annotating which has often paved the way for phenomenal literary ideas and made writers better thinkers. One might also feel swayed by the opinion of others which leads to loss of autonomous thought process. Thus though the positive outcome of gaining inspiration from the public act of collaborating is wonderful, the negative aspect of it making people overthink before commenting makes the enlightening process of annotating futile at times.”

Nguissaly (responding to Srinjayi)

“I completely agree with your response [...] I believe that ability to interact with each other and ‘gain multiple perspectives’ as you say is highly valuable and allows each individual to expand the scope and complexity of

their thoughts and ideas. Additionally you bring up a very legitimate point that some individuals may feel apprehension in divulging their thoughts, leading them [to filter and potentially omit annotations](#) that may have otherwise been valuable. Conversely, I'm curious if that same [self-consciousness could lead to more reflective and better developed annotations](#).

I wonder if there is a way to quantify the pros and cons of public annotation, and if there is, which one outweighs the other.

(P.S. The opening sentence of your question three response is quite poetic and beautiful. I enjoyed reading it.)”

James

“Positive: I think there are many positive outcomes for public annotation. For example, everyone can notice whether someone annotated or not, so students must annotate at least once or twice. In addition, public annotation gives us a chance to exchange ideas. There could be some points in the text that others noticed but I didn't. By checking other students' annotations, I can acquire many new ideas and have a better understanding of the text. Students can also [post their questions](#), and others who know the answer could just reply them.

Negative: However, there are also some negative outcomes about public annotation. Since everyone could see the annotations, students may wonder if their [annotations sound too stupid](#) or if there is any mistakes and be afraid to post them. Also, if a student start to annotate later than others do, it is possible that the points the student wants to annotate have already been annotated by others.”