

## Discussion Guidelines

1. Read the assignment before class.
2. Pay attention not only to what the words say, but what the author means.
3. If you don't know a word, look it up. Even if you do know the *formal* definition of a word, you may still need to look it up and think about its more *nuanced* meaning within the context of the material. There is often a difference between formal meaning of a word (*denotation*) and its implied meaning within a certain context (*connotation*).
4. Annotate as you read. Think about the literary devices the author employs—imagery, symbolism, motif, irony, foreshadowing, etc. Mark comments and questions on your “annotative bookmark” (or in the margins, if allowed). Keep tabs on the plot, character, and narrative development. What is the tone, point-of-view, tense, structure? Consider why and how the author is doing something. Always ask, *Why?*
5. Use related articles, book reviews, movies, etc. (*secondary sources*) outside the text you're reading (the *primary source*). Comments about the material from other scholars or other writers can only enhance your understanding of the text.
6. Use your notes. They will help to organize your thoughts and generate ideas.
7. Bring all your materials to class.
8. Offer opinions supported by *evidence* from the text. Use the text as proof, referring to pages or lines to help others follow what you are asserting.
9. Find comparisons between the current text and others we've read in the past (this is called *intertextuality*). This kind of analogous conversation helps drive home many points and leads to a clearer understanding.
10. Ask questions.
11. Finally . . . Focus. **Do Not** speak over another student. **Do Not** dominate the conversation. **Do Not** talk just to talk or to clown around. If you open your mouth, it should be to say something relevant to the discussion. Those who do otherwise can have a seat outside in the hall where they won't be a distraction to the rest of us. **I am very serious about this point.**

Treat class time as an opportunity for lively discussion and an even exchange of ideas, not a comedy routine or a chance to belittle others. Raise your hand and contribute with sincerity, graciousness, humility, and maturity.