Instructions for Annotations

Style guide for *Literature in Context*
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In creating an open digital anthology not only should the text be accessible and reliable, but also the annotations. How do we create accessible, reliable annotations that maintain a balance between too much information and too little information? Our annotations should not be interpretive but objective, providing information to increase the reader's understanding of the text. This document outlines a hierarchy of important aspects to annotate and sources from which to draw research for your annotations. It also offers a style guide in formatting and synthesizing the information.

Hierarchy of Annotations

1. Important contexts referenced or made visible in the text (an important context is discovered through research and reading more about your text)
2. Allusions

  a. Other texts
  b. People
  c. Historical events
3. Definitions
  a. Words in other languages
  b. Ancient words no longer commonly used
  c. Phrases or words that are jargon for the time period in question

If you have questions about whether an annotation should be included, simply include it. It is always easy to remove superfluous or extra information than it is to add more.

Finding Reliable Sources for Annotations

This is an open resource, so try to find research and support for your annotations that is accessible online and outside of your university's paywall. This might be public or digital public libraries, museums, authoritative online magazines or newspapers, or online encyclopedias. If you are working with academic sources in your university library or library databases, be aware that not all readers will have access. Include a stable URL to a JSTOR article, the page you cited on Google Books (or HathiTrust, or Internet Archive), and so on. The source should be open to find and view, but do not be overly concerned if the entire article is not available for public consumption. **The important thing is that the source is reliable.** Part of determining what a "reliable source" online is dependent on its citability. Discuss your sources with your instructor and your library representatives. Be sure to use attributive phrases so that readers know what you're working with and can find more information if necessary.

When in doubt, prefer these sources

- Journal articles published in open-access online journals
- Online articles published by clearly respected leaders in the discipline
- Materials from major libraries and online exhibits by libraries or other scholarly organizations like the British Library, Smithsonian Museums, the Lily Library (etc)
- Popular-scholarly materials from known and respected publication outlets like *Time Magazine, The Washington Post, The New Yorker*, *The Economist, The Atlantic* (etc)
- Published books from reliable sources available on Google Books (etc)
- Stable URLs for print journal articles that you have read and incorporate
- Materials that can be cited completely and certainly
- First editions or editions that are known (i.e., we can authoritatively date them)

Avoid the following kinds of sources

- Blog posts, unless they are themselves cited as authorities by other reliable sources (Why? These sites may not be there into the foreseeable future; they have not necessarily been through a peer review or editorial process; they may be easy to read, but they are probably not the best source you can find!)

- Material on faculty websites, like lecture notes and essays (Why? These sites may not be there into the foreseeable future; have not necessarily been through a peer review or editorial process; why not see if this author has published in a journal or written a book, or had a blog post included in a more stable forum?)
- Websites that contain anonymously-written essays (often, these are student "essay mills"), or listicles of any sort.

When in doubt, ask yourself: is this *really* the best source I can find? Really? Go and talk to your librarian or your professor, or look at some sample annotations.

The same is true for images and e-texts!

Images

Sample less-authoritative image

- https://basementgalaxy.files.wordpress.com/2014/09/band0115.jpg [look at the URL]

Sample more-authoritative images

- https://www.bl.uk/britishlibrary/~/media/bl/global/dl%20romantics%20and%20victorians/collection-items-more/c/o/l/coleridge-samuel_taylor-ancient-b20122-35.jpg [made available by the British Library in a relevant exhibit focused on a specific text: https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/the-ancient-mariner-illustrations-by-dore]
- https://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portrait/mw05761/Mary-Wollstonecraft-Shelley?LinkID=mp04087&search=sas&sText=mary+wollstonecraft&role=sit&rNo=1 [National Portrait Gallery, London; they allow you to down load high-resolution images and a license for non-commercial use, such as ours]
- https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Rime_of_the_Ancient_Mariner-Albatross-Dore.jpg [source is the University of Adelaide; details provided in wikimedia commons; BUT--THIS LINK TO SOURCE AT UNIVERSITY OF ADELAIDE DOESN'T WORK. NEED TO VERIFY.]

E-texts

Sample less-authoritative etext

- http://www.gutenberg.org/files/151/151-h/151-h.htm [no edition information]

Sample slightly more-authoritative etext

- https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/43997/the-rime-of-the-ancient-mariner-text-of-1834 [tells us the edition; poetry foundation is the publisher of *Poetry* journal; but, no sense of original publication]

Sample more-authoritative etext

- http://ec2-52-90-79-236.compute-1.amazonaws.com/editions/LB/html/Lb98-b.html [a clearly-sourced digital edition of the first Bristol edition, digitally prepared and published by Cambridge Press]
- https://quod.lib.umich.edu/a/amverse/BAP5379.0001.001?view=toc [a clearly-sourced and edited SGML edition created by a well-known digital project hub]

Research

Sample less-authoritative research

- https://www.bartleby.com/essay/Comparison-Frankenstein-The-Rime-of-the-Ancient-P38GU9ZTC [we don't know who wrote this essay--it is likely a student]

Sample authoritative research

- https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/an-introduction-to-the-rime-of-the-ancient-mariner [British Library is a major research and collection source; Perry is a respected scholar]
- https://books.google.com/books?id=br2oDQAAQBAJ&dq=rime+of+the+ancient+mariner+shelley+frankenstein&source=gbs_navlinks_s [this is a scholarly, edited book of collected essays available partially via google books]
- https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/lyrical-ballads-1798-edition [the BL is a major research library]
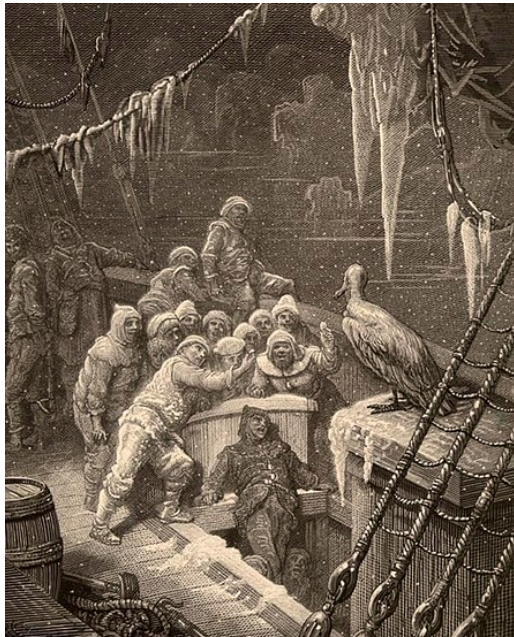
Style Guide

Annotations should not be too long or wordy, but they should not be too brief, either. They need to be precise and accurate, and they need to be well-written. They should help readers understand an allusion or a context, and map out a way for the reader to find more reliable information on their own. You must strike a balance between a description that is too wordy and a description that does not give any information. Keep in mind that attention spans of the forthcoming generations are depleting, so make your point quickly and succinctly. Always attribute your research and add a link to your reference. You can include an additional reference for more information if necessary. Most people reading these footnotes/annotations will be skimming to get the gist to further their understanding of

the text at large. Be sure your sentences of explanation are clear, grammatically correct, and suitable for an "encyclopedia" in tone and style. For reference please take a look at the Wikipedia guidelines for writing, especially sections 2 and 3, "Information Style and Tone" and "Provide Context for the Reader."

- Annotations should ideally be 3 sentences, and can be no longer than 4.
  - The first sentence should state clearly what is being referenced.
  - The second should give a succinct explanation for why it is important, drawing on your research.
  - The third should alert the reader where to find more information, which should be hyperlinked within the annotation.
- Include a picture, a video, an audio file, and so on, if it makes sense. Again, use reliable and free sources.
  - If you use a picture add a succinct explanatory parenthetical "(xxx pictured here)" which is hyperlinked to the original image at a reliable source to alert the reader.

Sample Annotation Content

In Shelley's *Frankenstein,* there is an allusion to Coleridge's "Rime of the Ancient Mariner." The text of *Frankenstein* reads: "My heart palpitated in the sickness of fear; and I hurried on with irregular steps, not daring to look about me:— Like one who, on a lonely road, Doth walk in fear and dread, And, having once turned round, walks on, And turns no more his head; Because he knows a frightful fiend Doth close behind him tread." We want to annotate it the highlighted section, because students will be unlikely to understand the reference. The annotation would be linked from the direct quote itself in *Frankenstein* and contain the image and text below. Note the hyperlinks and information for further reading. These links inform the content of the annotation.

Victor Frankenstein here quotes Samuel Taylor Coleridge's 1798 poem, "Rime of the Ancient Mariner" (1876 illustration by Gustave Doré pictured). Coleridge's most famous poem is a tale narrated by an ancient sailor returned from a long, ambitious journey during which, having shot and killed an albatross, all other members of the crew die and the mariner is cursed. Shelley was familiar with Coleridge's Romantic poem and invokes it to compare her characters. To learn more about Coleridge's poem, published as the opening poem in *Lyrical Ballads,* read Seamus Perry's introduction at the British Library.

Sample Annotation XML

….My heart palpitated in the sickness of fear; and I hurried on with irregular steps, not daring to look about me:— <ref target="a001" corresp="n001"> Like one who, on a lonely road, Doth walk in fear and dread, And, having once turned round, walks on, And turns no more his head; Because he knows a frightful fiend Doth close behind him tread.</ref>.</head>

[The <note> can appear anywhere in the body of the TEI. It is helpful to put it as close to the <ref> as possible, in case the numbering needs to be changed.]

<note xml:id="n001" target="a001" type="editorial" resp="editors.xml#TH">
  <p><graphic url="notes/Rime_of_the_Ancient_Mariner-Albatross-Dore.jpg"/>Victor Frankenstein here quotes Samuel Taylor Coleridge's poem, "<ref target="https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/43997/the-rime-of-the-ancient-mariner-text-of-1834">Rime of the Ancient Mariner</ref>." Coleridge's most famous poem is a tale narrated by a sailor returned from a long, ambitious journey during which, having shot and killed an albatross, all other members of the crew die and the mariner is cursed. Shelley was familiar with Coleridge's Romantic poem and invokes it to help us understand Victor Frankenstein. To learn more about Coleridge's poem, first <ref target="http://ec2-52-90-79-236.compute-1.amazonaws.com/editions/LB/html/Lb98-b.html">published in 1789 as the opening poem in <hi rend="italic">Lyrical Ballads</hi></ref>, read <ref target="https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/an-introduction-to-the-rime-of-the-ancient-mariner">Seamus Perry's introduction at the British Library</ref>. The image included in this annotation, <ref target="https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Rime_of_the_Ancient_Mariner-Albatross-Dore.jpg"/>via Wikimedia Commons</ref>, shows an 1879 illustration by Gustave Doré of the mariners' first sight of the albatross.
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