



MY NAME IS ASHER LEV



Annotating to Show Critical Reading: A Live Guide

Directions: One part of your assessment for this summer reading assignment will be a critical essay to be assigned in the opening weeks of school. In order to prepare, follow the reading guide for annotating the novel. Using a black Sharpie marker, begin by writing your name on both the cover and the long edge of your copy.

1. All your answers and highlights need to appear *in the book*, not on separate paper.
2. Your annotations must be made using the stated colors to facilitate a systematic and uniform evaluation.
3. A complete annotation is a product of two critical moves—a highlight and a corresponding margin note. Highlighting by itself is worthless and will be graded accordingly.

PRE-READING STAGE

To begin, study the front and back cover of your copy of the novel.

Read the Ending—Chapter 14

Next, turn to page 167 or approximately three pages from the very last page to find the paragraph beginning “**I came out of the Rebbe’s office and walked past Rav Dorochoff’s angry gaze...**” From this point, read to the end of the novel.

Asher, a brilliant young artist, has “crossed a boundary,” done something “wrong.”

Read the Beginning, the Exposition Part of Plot



Meet Asher, on the first page of the first chapter. Note here an important distinction: As Asher is the narrator, this is Asher’s story, not so much that of Chaim Potok, the author.

1. What, thus, is the **genre** of this novel? Provide an genre label beneath the title on the title page.
2. Given the genre of the novel, what do you gather is **Asher’s purpose**? Using a yellow highlighter, highlight the lines that you think reveal Asher’s purpose AND then label that highlight in the margin with a pen: “**Asher’s Purpose.**”
3. To understand the conflict of the novel and to learn about Asher’s family and two friends, read on to page 12 / “**A drawing is not foolishness, Papa**” and then continue on to page 29 / “**No one likes my drawings.**” These pauses in your exploration of the novel land you on the essential conflict of the novel.

Using a blue highlighter **highlight these lines** and then in the margin write “**Conflict.**” Then in the margin, include in your words what that conflict is, in your opinion. Consider the last chapter too!

4. Using a yellow highlighter, **highlight the name** or designation of the relative / friend being introduced **and** then in the margin write “**Enter (the person’s name/ designation).**”

Continue this use of the yellow highlighter each time a new character enters the story. (A major one has influence on Asher) For your corresponding margin note, think about how each character (or ancestor) influences Asher. Refer back to that character’s point of introduction to make your note as you grow to understand this influence in the progress of your reading.

Continue to page 2.

5. You will find it beneficial to explore the conflicts that Asher is experiencing from his early youth as a member of his religious and cultural tradition. **Click this link** to learn about [Potok the author](#) and the specific Jewish sect called The “[Hasidism](#).” Enjoy.

Chaim Potok - Jewish Virtual Library
<https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/chaim-potok>

Hasidism in New York City
https://www.google.com/search?q=hasidism+in+new+york&sxsrf=ALeKk01wmSxDWq6C3-a1NMESobWITH5OoA:1593275394702&source=lnms&tbm=isch&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjCn7ivtaLqAhXDZs0KHfHLBWMQ_AUoAXoECAsQAw&biw=1398&bih=622&safe=active&ssui=on

READING STAGE

Plot—The Rising Action



6. Asher’s story is set during the Cold War, which in the novel exists as a “**complication of the plot.**”

Click and skim read.

[Cold War - Wikipedia](#)
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cold_War

As you learn about the work of Asher’s father and the communistic oppression of Hasidic Jews inside the Soviet Union (and the conflict between Communist Jews and Hasidic Jews), think about how this information may parallel Asher’s conflict with his own community and the tension with which he lives. These notes can be complications of the plot conflict, so **highlight cold war references using blue—at least two.**

7. Having a quick “homemade” **chapter summary** is beneficial for reviewing the plot of your novel, especially when you have to write critically about it. In the space at the top each new chapter write a one or two sentence summary of the chapter. Begin your summary in this way:

In which I learn ...

8. Asher’s education begins with his Uncle Yitzchok who mentions the modern painter **Marc Chagall** (chapter one), “the greatest Jewish artist in the world.” This painter’s name will repeat in the novel as Asher learns about himself in relation to his faith and the larger traditions of art in history. **Click** these links to see and to enjoy **Chagall:**

The Jewish Virtual Library: <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/marc-chagall> and

Marc Chagall - Guggenheim: <https://www.guggenheim.org/artwork/artist/marc-chagall>

and **Marc Chagall | artnet:** www.artnet.com/artists/marc-chagall/

This link features Chagall’s sketches.

Each time that **Chagall and other influential artists** are brought into the story, highlight their names and the page numbers using a green highlighter. In this way you will better appreciate Asher’s Style of painting and his masterpiece (at the novel’s end) which grows out of his experiences and influences at the end of the novel. Include at least **one supporter** who is not an artist. (To make green, first highlight in yellow, and then go over the yellow in blue.)

Continue to page 3.

9. **Asher's mother** is an important character. Using blue, here in the rising action of the story, highlight and make margin notes—for at least **two annotations**—of incidents when Asher is particularly affected by his mother. In the margin note, be clear as to the particular affect.
10. Asher begins with sketching; he is obsessed with lines and apparently is quite skillful in using them, — even as weapons. Asher is drawn to **Picasso**, another artist who should appear in green. Who is Picasso? Click here:
https://artsandculture.google.com/entity/pablo-picasso/m060_7?categoryId=artist

Here is a good example of Picasso's **command of line** using a single one to create a bird:



To see more of Picasso's sketches, click here:

[https://www.google.com/search?](https://www.google.com/search?q=Picasso+sketches&tbm=isch&ved=2ahUKEwjR_YeZuqLqAhUOVawKHUvtDS0Q2-cCegQIABAA&oeq=Picasso+sketches&gs_lcp=CgNpbWcQAzICCAAYAggAMgIIADICCAAYAggAMgIIADICCAAYAggAOgUIABCxAzoECAAQZ0HCAAQsQMQQ1CpElimQmCLSWgAcAB4AIABWgKIAaMTkgEIMC4xNC4xLjGYAQCGAQGgAQtnD3Mtd2l6LWltZw&sclient=img&ei=EXn3XpGxOY6qsQXL2rfQAg&bih=622&biw=1398&safe=active&ssui=on#imgrc=qwj_1tTx-th79M)

[g=Picasso+sketches&tbm=isch&ved=2ahUKEwjR_YeZuqLqAhUOVawKHUvtDS0Q2-cCegQIABAA&oeq=Picasso+sketches&gs_lcp=CgNpbWcQAzICCAAYAggAMgIIADICCAAYAggAMgIIADICCAAYAggAOgUIABCxAzoECAAQZ0HCAAQsQMQQ1CpElimQmCLSWgAcAB4AIABWgKIAaMTkgEIMC4xNC4xLjGYAQCGAQGgAQtnD3Mtd2l6LWltZw&sclient=img&ei=EXn3XpGxOY6qsQXL2rfQAg&bih=622&biw=1398&safe=active&ssui=on#imgrc=qwj_1tTx-th79M](https://www.google.com/search?q=Picasso+sketches&tbm=isch&ved=2ahUKEwjR_YeZuqLqAhUOVawKHUvtDS0Q2-cCegQIABAA&oeq=Picasso+sketches&gs_lcp=CgNpbWcQAzICCAAYAggAMgIIADICCAAYAggAMgIIADICCAAYAggAOgUIABCxAzoECAAQZ0HCAAQsQMQQ1CpElimQmCLSWgAcAB4AIABWgKIAaMTkgEIMC4xNC4xLjGYAQCGAQGgAQtnD3Mtd2l6LWltZw&sclient=img&ei=EXn3XpGxOY6qsQXL2rfQAg&bih=622&biw=1398&safe=active&ssui=on#imgrc=qwj_1tTx-th79M)

Question: How is the fictional Jacob Kahn similar to the real Picasso? Find a part of the plot or a character detail, highlight in green, and then label "**Picasso-Kahn**" in the margin followed by a brief explanation.

11. **Motif** & **Picasso's Guernica**, a huge painting, is another powerful influence on Asher and his masterpiece. **Why?** To answer this question (and to better appreciate his masterpiece) you will need to study this painting. **Click** and read **What Makes Guernica Picasso's Most Influential Painting - Artsy**
<https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-guernica-picassos-influential-painting>

Consider that the answer that you derive from the above link on *Guernica* is an element of a **Motif**, a literary element found especially in long works where it is used to unify the work.

A motif can be *almost anything*: an idea, an object, a concept, a character archetype, the weather, a color, or even a statement that is repeated throughout a literary work (beginning, middle, and end). Motifs are used to establish a theme or a certain mood; they have a symbolic meaning. We use a red /pink highlighter to note the author's use of motif and other literary elements and language.

In *My Name is Asher Lev*, Potok employs a motif of which **Asher's mother** is a major element. Some of your annotations on Asher's mother, thus, will need not only blue (see #9) but also red highlighting alongside.

Write out your answer on one of the blank pages at the end of the novel. Include page references to the appearances of the mother motif.

Continue to page 3.

12. **Michelangelo and Florence:** Click here to visit Florence:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SPeWoYWLVvE>

Michelangelo looms large as another powerful influence on Asher in chapter thirteen. In this chapter, via the imagery of Michelangelo's sculpture, you are provided another example of the **same motif** mentioned above: Asher narrates, "**I was only able to relate it to elements in my own lived past.**" To literally see this idea, click and read:

Images of Pieta by Michelangelo in the Duomo Museum

<https://www.bluffton.edu/homepages/facstaff/.../florence/.../pietamichelangelo.html>

Keeping the Artsy article on *Guernica* in mind and his means of relating the sculpture to his life, why do you think Asher is so moved as he gazes at Michelangelo's *Pieta*? Using a red highlighter, highlight the above quotation and **write the label Motif** at the top of the page. In the side margin, **write** a brief explanation of what you believe the motif to be as Asher responds deeply and emotionally to this sculpture.

13. While you are thinking about motif, consider another element of the larger motif at this point of the plot by referring immediately below the *Pieta* scene. Note the posture of **old man feeding the birds** in the square. Next, refer way back to **chapter six** and skim read through it. What **motif** do you recognize here? If you do not recognize the imagery, refer back to chapter thirteen later. Then, **label "Old Man"** and in the margin, **write** your brief explanation of the significance of this second element of the motif..

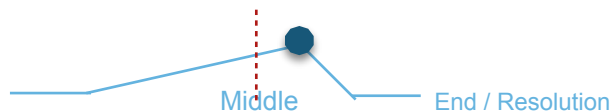
14. **Back to Plot—Rising Action Details**



You have identified the essential conflict of the in chapter one, the exposition part of plot. Now, using a blue highlighter, annotate at least **two other "complications of the plot"** which extend from the essential conflict and that **do not include Asher's mother**. In other words, identify scenes that show Asher's tensions as he grows as an artist and a person.

15. **Loving the Language:** Where have you been most noticeably impressed with Chair Potok's use of language? Select **three superlative examples** to annotate. Favorite description? Favorite Quotation? Favorite metaphor or personification or simile, etc. Note reason in margin.

Plot—The Climax?

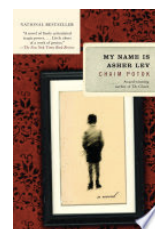


16. Using a blue highlighter, identify what you believe is the **climax of the novel**. As is our annotation method, label this in the margin and below the label write **your personal reaction to it** on the page. Next, using the space at the beginning of the chapter in which the climax occurs briefly **justify your choice as a culminating event of your other plot annotations**.

How do the elements of fiction—plot elements (conflict, complications, resolution), motifs all point to your choice?

End.

Note: Don't worry about having "the right answer;" instead, concentrate on thoughtful reading. Complete annotations will indeed show the desired level of reading.



Critical Reading-Writing
Evaluation of Text Annotations

MY NAME IS ASHERLEV

Scholar: _____ Period _____ August, 2020

ADHERENCE TO DIRECTIONS

_____ **2. pts.** Reader strictly complies with requirement for particular use of colors to facilitate evaluation.

Red / Pink for Annotating Language & Literary Elements

Green for Influential People & Art, and Artists

Yellow for Characters & Character Development

Blue for Plot Elements

from **PRE-READING STAGE**

_____ **5 pts.**

_____ 1. Genre Qualification?

_____ 2. Asher's Purpose ?

_____ 3. Lines showing Conflict? _____ Explanations of?

_____ 4. Characters' Points of Entry: For each character, the reader has made both a highlight at the point of entry ("Enter ____") AND a personal comment.

Aryeh, Rivka, Uncle Yitzchok, Mrs. Rackover, Reb. Krinsky, Rav Yosef Cutler (130), Rav Dorochoy (189), The Rebbe (191), Jacob (193), Anna (207), Tanya (252)

from **READING STAGE**

_____ **6 pts. 5. Complications of the Plot Conflict:** (Items 6.9. & 14)

_____ Cold War 2

_____ Asher's Mother 2 _____ Other 2

The reader has made both highlights *and* margin notes to show thinking about plot development.

____ **14 pts. 6.** For each chapter in each book, the reader has made a short chapter summary:

In which I learn...

Bk I: 1 (3-50) 2 (51-86) 3 (87-100) 4 (101-120) 5 (121-150)

Bk. II: 6 (153-186) 7 (187-197), 8 (198-223), 9 (224-247);

Bk. III: 10 (250- 266), 11 (267-290), 12 (291-307), 13 (308-332), 14 (333-369)

____ **4 pts. 7.** **Influential Artists & Supporters**

The reader has properly made annotations for an influence on Asher's development:

Chagall, Picasso, Michelangelo, One Other non-artist

____ **2 pt. 8.** **Picasso-Kahn Comparison** Annotation Shows reading & application of link.

____ **2 pt. 9.** **Motif & Picasso's *Guernica***
Annotation's Explanation shows application of information in link.

Potok's Use of Motif leading to the Presentation of Asher's Masterpieces, *The Brooklyn Crucifixions*

____ **3 pt. 10.** **Asher's Mother** in Motif—three examples

____ **1 pt. 11.** **The Old Man Element** in Motif

____ **1 pt. 11.** **Michelangelo's Pieta** in Motif

____ **2 pts. 12.** **Plot climax of the novel**

Reader has attempted both to identify and justify choice of novel's high point based on his demonstrated thinking of plot development in rising action and identification of central conflict in the novel's exposition.

____ **3 pts. 13.** **Loving the Author's Language** Three superlative examples have been annotated .

_____ / 45 Total Points

Comments: