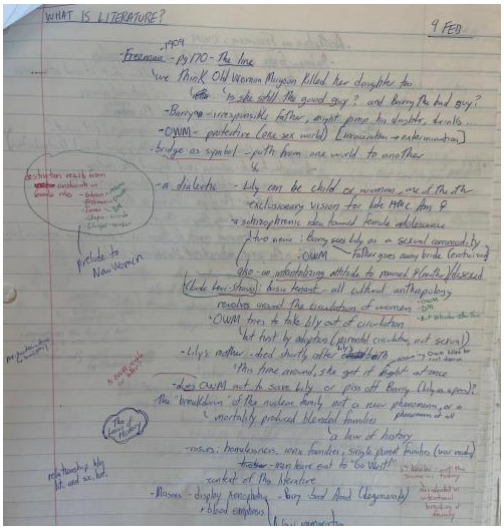
Advice on Taking Notes in Class

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• Start by recording the day's **date** and topic. This will help you stay organized.

• Pay special attention to the teacher's **thesis and/or opening question**. Mark or flag this so you can find it easily later. Not all teachers will give a clear thesis or question when they start to lecture. That means you will need to work a little harder to figure out the teacher's main point. When in doubt, it's ok to ask the teacher for helping figuring out the most important take-away from the lecture.

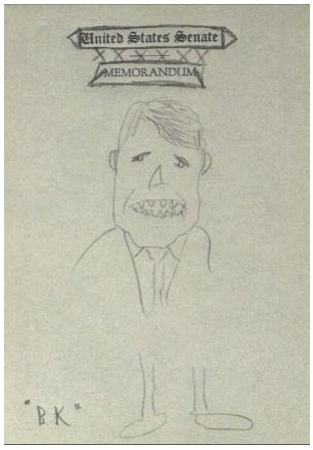
• Create **visual variety and clarity** in your notes. Find a way to visually highlight big ideas and generalizations, in contrast to smaller supporting examples. Create a system to mark these differences and use it consistently. The example on the right shows how to use a very wide left margin to highlight key ideas and add big-picture reflections.



• Don't try to write down every single detail. Focus on **big ideas** and on examples that illustrate those ideas.

• **Listen to you classmates and write down** their good ideas and examples. If your class has lots of discussion and activities, that means the big ideas will often come from your classmates, not just from the teacher. Students often assume they only need to take notes when the teacher talks. This assumption is wrong.

• Every line in your notes should contain **at least one verb**. Too often, student notes simply record nouns like "railroads" or "non-violence." But nouns alone do not convey big ideas. Verbs are critical. Write notes with verbs to show causality and relationships. Examples: "railroads led to…" and "non-violence differed from…")



• A little **doodling** is ok and might actually help prevent daydreaming, so long as you don't get carried away.

Note: Successful people often doodle. To the left is a doodle of Robert F. Kennedy drawn by Senator Lyndon B. Johnson in 1960. Doodling didn't stop Johnson from later becoming president.

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