Annotating a text

Annotating means to label, underline, colour code and add notes about certain key aspects of a text. Look out for and annotate these features:

- words that have magical or supernatural connotations
- words associated with water
- words to show that this story is from another culture
- metaphor, personification and simile (imagery)
- clues about the bride’s character
- what the relatives think of the bride
- adjectives to describe the scene / setting
- verbs to show action
The story is by a writer from England / China / South Africa. It is about the changes in a modern / traditional society. The story gives snapshots / pictures / images from the preparations for a christening / wedding / birthday ceremony.

The wedding is between the groom, called Nelson / Kegoletile / MmaKhudu and the bride called Nelson / Neo / MmaKhudu. Neo is five / four / six months pregnant with her first / second / third child. As she is pregnant, the groom wanted a slow / quick ceremony and the relatives joke that this will be a modern / old fashioned / strange wedding.

A lot of the relatives are gossiping about the groom / bride / bride’s maid. Neo / Kegoletile / MmaKhudu is / isn’t well educated as she has ‘A’ Levels / GCSEs / ‘O’ Levels unlike the other girls. The relatives think that Neo is kind / conceited / rude and they don’t / do like her.

Neo / Kegoletile / MmaKhudu got Neo / Mathata / MmaKhudu pregnant two / three / four months after she finished her ‘O’ Levels. He also got another woman called Neo / Mathata / MmaKhudu pregnant too. While Neo was educated and could have a bad / good job like typist / book-keeper / secretary, Neo / Mathata / MmaKhudu was educated / uneducated. The only job she could hope for would be typist / housemaid / secretary.

It seemed that Kegoletile loved Neo / Mathata best but he asked Neo / Mathata to marry him. Although Kegoletile spent most time with Neo / Mathata and bought her food / shoes / dresses, he wanted to marry a wife who could earn lots of money.

Neo / Mathata made sure that Kegoletile would marry her by leaving / sulking / getting pregnant again. Neo / Kegoletile / MmaKhudu isn’t as confident as she made out. Her mother / aunt / uncle told her that she was polite / bad mannered / friendly and that Kegoletile would be worse / better off marrying Neo / Mathata / MmaKhudu instead. This worried Neo and she did try harder to be polite.

The story describes the many rituals that take place in the wedding ceremony. For example, the food eaten is cake / meat / rice / salad and the uncles / aunts / sisters sat in a long column in the yard all day. The groom / bride was formally handed over to the groom’s uncles / aunts / sisters at morning / noon / sunset. The uncles / aunts / sisters also tell Neo that the man / woman is owner of the house. The aunts also dance in the yard.

Instead of a wedding ring as a symbol of marriage, the bride / groom is told to sit on a mat and she is given a scarf / coat / shawl to wear around her shoulders and a hat / cap / kerchief to wear tied around her head. The aunt who told Neo off earlier tells her that she should be a bad / good wife. This is the last snapshot of the wedding ceremony.
Opening Worlds
OCR Anthology
‘Snapshots of a Wedding’ by Bessie Head

 TASK 1 – Teacher’s version

The story is by a writer from South Africa. It is about the changes in a traditional society. The story gives snapshots / pictures / images from the preparations for a wedding ceremony.

The wedding is between the groom, called Kegoletile and the bride called Neo. Neo is six months pregnant with her second child. As she is pregnant, the groom wanted a quick ceremony and the relatives joke that this will be a modern wedding.

A lot of the relatives are gossiping about the bride. Neo is well educated as she has ‘O’ Levels unlike the other girls. The relatives think that Neo is conceited and they don’t like her.

Kegoletile got Neo pregnant two months after she finished her ‘O’ Levels. He also got another woman called Mathata pregnant too. While Neo was educated and could have a good job like typist / book-keeper / secretary, Mathata was uneducated. The only job she could hope for would be housemaid.

It seemed that Kegoletile loved Mathata best but he asked Neo to marry him. Although Kegoletile spent most time with Mathata and bought her food / shoes / dresses, he wanted to marry a wife who could earn lots of money.

Neo made sure that Kegoletile would marry her by getting pregnant again. Neo isn’t as confident as she made out. Her aunt told her that she was bad mannered and that Kegoletile would be better off marrying Mathata instead. This worried Neo and she did try harder to be polite.

The story describes the many rituals that take place in the wedding ceremony. For example, the food eaten is meat / rice / salad and the aunts sat in a long column in the yard all day. The bride was formally handed over to the groom’s aunts at sunset. The aunts also tell Neo that the man is owner of the house. The aunts also dance in the yard.

Instead of a wedding ring as a symbol of marriage, the bride is told to sit on a mat and she is given a shawl to wear around her shoulders and a kerchief to wear tied around her head. The aunt who told Neo off earlier tells her that she should be a good wife. This is the last snapshot of the wedding ceremony.
Mind Map

Decide which statements are true and write them on your paper. Next add quotations from the story that prove they are true and then add notes about what the quotations infer / mean / suggest etc.

- The story gives snapshots or pictures of the preparation for a wedding ceremony and the actual day itself.
- The story is set in Britain in the 21st century.
- The bride and groom eat cake and exchange rings.
- The story uses flashbacks and describes events from before the wedding day.
- Neo gets pregnant to trap Kegoletile into marrying her.
- Women have to let the men be the masters in marriage.
- All the family gets involved with the wedding preparations and ceremony, particularly the aunts.
- Neo’s education has made her arrogant and unpopular.
- Neo isn’t as confident as she appears.
- The relatives all like Neo.
- Kegoletile is popular and has a generous nature.
- Mathata is the total opposite of Neo.
- Kegoletile marries for money, not love.
- Education and making money are becoming more important than working on the land in this society.
- Kegoletile loves Mathata deep down.
- Neo is an unusual woman in this African society.
- It seems acceptable that a man can sleep around.
Questions

Use full sentences and quotation where possible. The answers will provide revision notes for you.

1. What time of day did weddings always start? (line 1)
2. What were the men taking to the bride’s house? (line 9)
3. Why were the men taking this object? (line 15)
4. Why is this going to be a “modern wedding”? (lines 23 – 29)
5. How does the writer suggest that the bride isn’t a likeable character? (lines 35 – 47)
6. According to Neo’s relatives, why does Neo think she’s better than anyone else? (lines 38 – 45 and 48 – 50)
7. What is the attitude of Neo’s relatives towards Neo? (lines 33 – 50)
8. What happened two months after Neo completed her ‘O’ Levels? (line 53 – 54)
9. Who was Mathata? (lines 55 – 56)
10. What are the differences between Mathata and Neo? Use quotations as evidence. (lines 56 – 60)
11. What did Kegoletile arrange with the two women? (lines 60 – 66)
12. According to Neo’s relatives, why did Kegoletile choose Neo to marry? (lines 70 – 71)
13. How does Kegoletile treat Mathata? (lines 75 – 81)
14. What do you think Kegoletile’s “secret conflict” was? (lines 68 – 69)
15. What are the attitudes towards marriage shown in lines 86 – 90?
16. Why would Mathata make a good wife? (lines 82 – 84)
17. Describe how the aunt frightens Neo. (lines 100 – 110)
18. How does Neo make sure Kegoletile will marry her? (lines 115 – 116)
19. What advice does the aunts give to Neo? (lines 150 – 152)
20. What do you think being a “good wife” means in this culture and society?
The story describes different images or “snapshots” of a wedding ceremony and the preparation for it. It’s the equivalent of a wedding album in words!

Look back over the story and choose FOUR episodes / snapshots of the ceremony and / or the preparation. Sketch what is being described exactly and annotate your sketches with exact quotations from the story.

Such episodes could include:

- the ox being herded into the bride’s yard
- the aunts gracefully dancing in the yard
- people coming to the yard balancing wedding presents on their heads
- trays of tea, dry white bread, plates of meat, rice and salad being served up to the aunts

Look for others too!

♥♥♥♥♥♥♥♥♥♥♥♥♥♥♥

If you were Kegoletile, which woman would you marry?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Neo</th>
<th>Bridegroom: Kegoletile</th>
<th>Mathata</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Relationships: Speaking and Listening Assignment

In pairs, discuss the following statements about marriage and relationships and put them in rank order with number 1 the statement you MOST agree with and number 15 the one you LEAST agree with.

- Children are important for marriage.
- A man should be the head of the household.
- Getting married young is best.
- Men should be allowed to sleep around but women must be faithful.
- A wife should let the man think he is in charge.
- You don’t need to be well educated or qualified to be a wife.
- You should always marry for love.
- It is important to marry a rich person.
- It shouldn’t matter how rich a person is, if you love them that is what is important.
- A woman’s wedding day is the best day of her life.
- It is OK for a woman to get pregnant so a man will marry her.
- Marriage is a two way partnership.
- Families are an important part to wedding days.
- If a man gets a woman pregnant he must marry her.
- A man should buy a woman presents if he loves her.
Opening Worlds – OCR Anthology

‘Snapshots of a Wedding’ by Bessie Head

Traditions

What happens at a modern wedding?

Did any of these activities happen in the wedding in the story?

Before the Wedding

- The bridegroom prepares his yard for a future married life.
- Talk and gossip.
- Stay awake all night preparing diphiri.
- Bridegroom provides food for the feast.

The Wedding Day

- Bring an ox to the bride’s yard at dawn.
- Slaughter and cook the ox for the wedding feast.
- Women ululate, dance, bend over and shake their buttocks in the air.
- Traditional wedding breakfast: pounded meat and samp.
- Guests bring gifts balanced on their heads.
- The bride’s maternal aunts sit on the ground and are treated like queens.
- The Bride’s aunts wait all day to formally hand over the bride to the groom’s maternal aunts.
- The groom’s aunts arrive at sunset and sit opposite the bride’s aunts.
- Bride’s aunts and groom’s aunts exchange formalities.
- Groom’s aunts ululate and dance.
- Bride and groom join in the dancing and the aunt’s lead them to the groom’s yard for another feast.
- At the groom’s yard, an old woman chops the ground with a hoe.
- Another old woman leads the bride to a decorated courtyard where she sits on a traditional animal-skin Tswana mat.
- A shawl and kerchief are placed in front of her.
- The shawl is wrapped around her and the kerchief is tied around her head to show that she is a married woman.

In your own words, explain how similar / different this wedding is compared to one you have witnessed or attended.
TASK 2

Decide who the following quotations refer to. Then list them under one of the following names: Neo, Kegoletile, Mathata.

“…would never be the kind of wife who went to the lands to plough.”

“She already had a well paid job in an office as a secretary.”

“The shawl was ceremonially wrapped around her shoulders, the kerchief tied around her head – the symbols that she was now a married woman.”

“She developed an anxiety to greet people and also an anxiety about securing Kegoletile as a husband.”

“…though uneducated, still treats people with respect.”

“…her so-called educated status.”

“…an impossible girl with haughty, arrogant ways.”

“She walked around with her nose in the air.”

“…completely uneducated”

“…the only work she would ever do was that of a housemaid.”

“…silly girl”

“Girls like her offered no resistance to the approaches of men; when they lost them they just let things ride.”

“He was rich in cattle”

“She was a very pretty girl.”

“…black eyes like stars”

“She was always smiling and happy; immediately and always her own natural self.”

“…nice young man”

“…he had about him an engaging humility and eagerness to help and please that had him loved and respected by all who knew him.”

“…had provided all the food for the wedding feast”

“…he spent most of his free time in the yard of Mathata.”

“She became pregnant six months before the marriage could take place.”

“I manage quite well with the R10.00 you give every month for the child.”