

Annotating the Text. Writing notes on the page (or on a copy if the material is not your own) is a useful way to trace the author's points, question them, and add your own comments as they pop up. The following passage is the introduction of "Sibling Rivalry, a History," by Peter Toohey. This article was published on the *Atlantic's* Web site (theatlantic.com) on November 30, 2014. Notice how one writer annotated the passage.

For a Critical Reading Checklist, see p. 27.

At its most benign, family jealousy between siblings reflects a competition for resources—coupled with the bonds of kinship, which are equally strong. St. Augustine, in his *Confessions*, described having "personally watched and studied a jealous baby. He could not yet speak and, pale with jealousy and bitterness, glared at his brother sharing his mother's milk. Who is unaware of this fact of experience?"

Key point — balance between competition and kinship

True! I've seen this look in my own children's faces.

Sounds almost like the description of a TV drama

Scary stuff. I wonder how extreme things can get with humans.

Never heard the term "siblicide" before!

Good quote from an authoritative source

Maybe sibling cooperation is also beneficial for survival?

Will the author explore that angle?

Biology helps drive behavior — in multiple species

This heady mix can lead to all sorts of jealous rivalry and inter-species warfare. It's evident in the animal kingdom, where actual family cannibalism also takes place. The animal behaviorist Scott Forbes makes some fascinating links between sibling rivalry in animals and humans. This is not sexual jealousy, but involves real birds and bees. Forbes describes how herpetologists, ornithologists, and mammalogists found that "infanticide—including siblicide—was a routine feature of family life in many species," most commonly seen in birds. Some birds lay two eggs "to insure against failure of the first egg to hatch. If both hatch, the second chick is redundant to the parents, and a potentially lethal competitor to the first-hatched progeny." The healthy older chick often kills the younger to eliminate the competition, and some parents actually encourage siblicide when the death of the nest-mate doesn't naturally occur.

After all, if resources are scarce, it's better that the strongest offspring survive and that their potential efforts go to ensuring that happens. (It's the old story of genetic replication again: Surviving offspring are more likely to have the strongest genes, and they are the ones that have the best chance of reproducing later and passing those genes on.) Forbes thinks that such extreme jealous reactions are not common in the human species, but "the more modest forms of sibling rivalry that are ubiquitous in species with extensive parental care—the scrambles for food and begging competitions—resemble more closely the dynamics that occur in human families."