

Active Reading & Skimming

Reading with a purpose
(i.e. all college reading)

Your professors...

- Have a specific purpose in mind w/ a reading
- Assign more reading than you could possibly accomplish if read in a “traditional” fashion
- Don't want you to read for “pleasure”
- Only care about the parts they “care” about



First...why read?

- 1. To connect central themes to themes of the course.
- 2. To discern background or social significance.
- 3. To connect to current issues.
- 4. To raise points for discussion.
- 5. To gain insight into a universal issues or themes?

Critical Reading: Reading with a designed purpose

CLASS: How do we discern the important questions when reading?

1. They are explicit.
2. They are implied by purpose of the instructor, course or other workload.
3. They are going to be asked on a test.

Active Reading = Purpose Driven

1. Pre-reading (or, establishing CONTEXT: establishing the link between you and the reading)
 - A. Survey the entire reading...look closely at the cover, the quotations, the summaries, the pictures, the chapter titles.
 - B. Let's look at *Unbowed* what are the things you should notice.
 - C. the front cover, the photo, the blow-up quotation from Bill Clinton, the mention of the author's credentials, the reviews and the reviewers on the back cover, the Biblical quotation from Ezekiel that starts the memoir.
 - D. How does this provide a sense of what this book will be about?

1. Establishing purpose (why are you reading?)

A. Must ask yourself two key questions each time you read:

a) Why am I reading this?

b) What am I hoping to get out of it?

2. Experienced skipping

A. Learn to identify when an author is going off on a tangent...in other words, he/she is describing things that aren't very necessary to your established purpose.

For example...

(from *Unbowed*)

“Occasionally, you would see white women around Nyeri, the wives of British administrators. They did social work and turned voluntary positions into occupations. They established many charities that cared for orphaned children, especially during the Mau Mau resistance of the 1950s, an insurgence of Kenyan rebels that lasted until 1962. Some of these colonial wives in Nairobi also set up the Kenyan branches of well-known organizations such as the Red Cross, the Business and Professional Women’s Assoc...”

Things to Remember

- AR is a skill, not a magic wand
- Only practice makes perfect
- No style is OUR style, mine is not yours, etc.
- You must adapt style to each class. How would a reading of *Huck Finn* be different for Classical Lit 401 and Sociology 101?

Misconceptions

- Skimming is not the following:
 1. Reading fast or speed-reading
 2. Reading in a hurry or sloppily
 3. Reading just the headings and chapter titles



1. Using Signposts – phrases that provide clues that answers to your stated questions are coming

- A. "I will argue that"
- B. "To understand this properly, you will need to consider..."
- C. "My departure from traditional psychological theory rests most dominantly in the fact that..."
- D. "It can be argued that the Early 18th Century was important to art because..."



1. (ACADEMIC TEXTS ONLY) Skip around...

- A. Read first and last paragraphs of the chapter to get a total gist of the main ideas.
- B. Read only bold or highlighted portions
- C. Read only visual aides such as charts or graphs
- D. ALWAYS begin at the outer portions and work your way into the middle because the middle is where the EXAMPLES ARE!
- E. Avoid paragraphs with hypothetical embellishments, additional examples, deep musings or obvious tangents.

1. FOR FICTION or NARRATIVE NON-FICTION it's a bit harder

- A. Best advice is to find a system and follow it
- B. If you have a good handle on what's expected... try this:
 1. Read the first two paragraphs of each section break.
 2. Always refer to given resources to check for key events or transgressions
 3. After the initial paragraphs, read the first and last lines of each paragraph in an attempt to establish connection to given resources

FOR FICTION or NARRATIVE NON-FICTION it's a bit harder

C. Don't fear becoming absorbed or interested in the narrative, break your system once you get rolling

D. ACTIVELY READ

E. Use 3rd party sources as resource

NOT substitutes...

Use Google and library resources



Guiding your guided reading

- “engaged” in reading, an active participant
- Connection between reader & author
- Questioning = Comprehension
 - Question the Author
 - Question the Teacher
 - Question Yourself

And Now...



The Thanksgiving Analogy

Marking a book: Why?

1. Expresses your need from the text (reading should be a parasitic relationship)
2. preserves freshness...

How to do it

1. Horizontal Underlining & Highlighting

Major Points

Pts. Well made

DON'T

OVERHIGH-LIGHT



2. Vertical lines & Arrows

Reinforcement of
ideas

Mark additional
comments

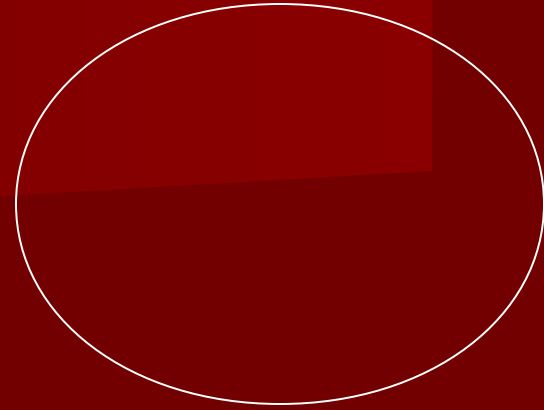
3. Write in the margin

Respond

Questions

Connections to
lecture

4. Circles for keywords,
vocab, phrases for
straight memorization



5. Creases or flags for
important pages...not
highlighter

Or...try a color system
or number system

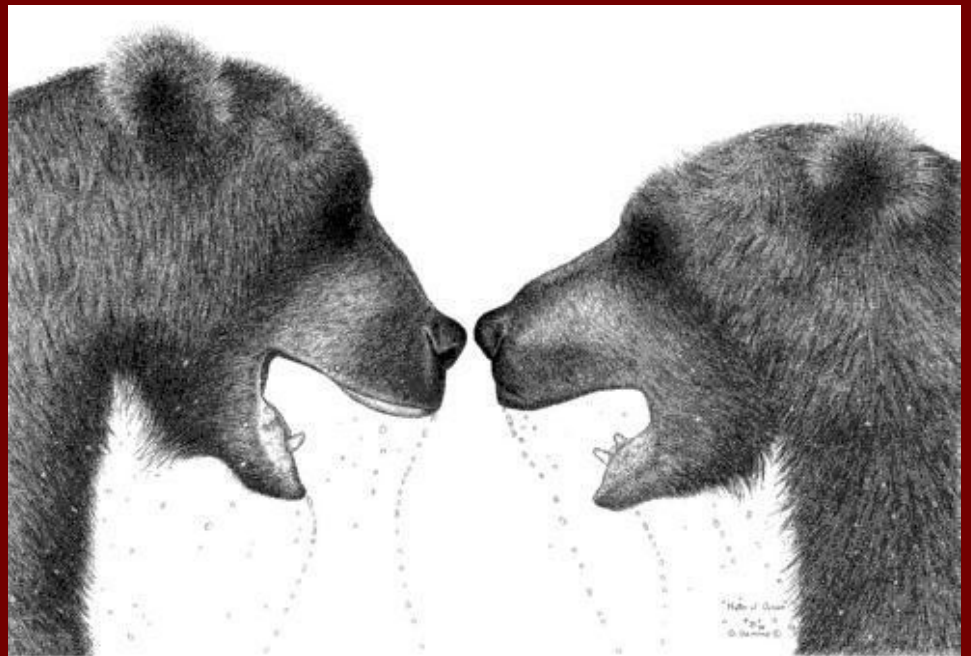
Reading critically when...

1. Distinguish facts from opinion (the two general types of support) SEE HANDOUT
 - Facts: can be proven or have been proven
 - Opinions: judgments, interpretations or beliefs
 - The sun will rise tomorrow*
- Also must determine the quality of identified opinions

Opinions

Some opinions are more valuable than others. What determines value?

- A. Credibility of source
- B. Quantifiable data
- C. Sufficient support
- D. No fallacy in argument



What is fact and what is opinion isn't always so easily definable

1. *US businesses are rapidly changing their ways of operating to become world-class competitors*

Fact: US businesses are changing their operations

Opinion: How rapidly the change is occurring

2. *The Ford Taurus, the Chrysler Minivan and the Oldsmobile Aurora are now competitive with the best automobiles in the world.*

FACT: The competitiveness of the automobiles can be checked and quantified vs. other autos

OPINION: "the best automobiles in the world."

Making Inferences

- A conclusion drawn on the basis of what the author “suggests” rather than “states.”

Image 1

Image 2

Image 3

Synthesis

- The process of information to
- This works like
- What is the Jer



Evaluating Quality

- Are opinions adequately supported? *Choose one opinion and show how the author supports it.*
- Are facts verifiable? *Give one example of a fact in the article of a verified fact.*
- Is material out dated? *If so, provide an example.*
- Is the author credible? *How do you know?*
- Are sources cited? *If so, what are they?*
- Is the reasoning logical?