

Critical Thinking & Reading Actively

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What is Critical Thinking?

- The process of examining ideas and drawing conclusions based on evidence and observation

Three Ways Reading Improves Writing:

- Read Systematically:
 - Know why you're reading and what you're looking for by setting up a plan
- Read Actively:
 - Annotate while you read so that you can make assertions about the ideas
- Read Critically:
 - Examine, Reflect, Evaluate, Respond to what you read

Read Actively

- When reading, try to summarize, question, clarify, predict, and evaluate as you go
- WRITE after you read, even if it is a short paragraph or journal entry.
- Mark up the text (annotate) and immediately follow that with note-taking—moving the annotations into study questions, a study guide, or an outline.
- Don't simply mark the book--take it a step further

What does it mean to annotate a text?

To 'mark' a text by circling important (or confusing) words, underlining key ideas (or things that strike you), writing questions in the margin, and reflecting in the margins

Other ways to react to text

- Map the text--write central ideas and then connect ideas to one another and to other texts with which you're familiar
- Outline the text--write out all of the major parts, points, and sub-points of the reading or 'text' by focusing on the introduction, the ideas, the thesis, and the conclusion

Purposes for annotating and note-taking

EVALUATING: this means to thoughtfully inspect and then react to the reading and the ideas in the reading, as well as HOW the writer presented the ideas

- Judge the credibility of the text--who wrote it and why?
- Put the text in a larger context--how do the ideas connect to other ideas
- Analyze the evidence and how the writer comes to particular conclusions
- How were you challenged by the reading?

Responding to the text

- Sometimes you'll be required to write a 'formal' response to a text, but it's always good to write an informal journal entry response to a text, whether you're required to write something formal later or not. This type of responding will help cement ideas from the text, and will help you build your foundation of information on a given topic

And don't forget!

No matter if you think you'll NEVER reference it again, make an MLA citation and a 25-word annotation. It's good practice, and you never know when you may want to reference that text again!