

Class Description: This seminar provides students with strategies for managing college-level reading. The cross-discipline approach makes the class relevant to students from multiple programs of study. The goal of this class is to help students manage their individual reading workloads and give them a sense of confidence in their reading-intensive college courses.

After taking this class, students should be able to:

- analyze different kinds of texts
- manage their reading time for maximum information retention
- distinguish between essential and non-essential information in readings
- read dense, difficult texts more efficiently

Session	Purpose	Activity
1	Managing Yourself	Identifying and Analyzing Types of Texts: Intro to course; icebreaker; pre-test; lesson: assessing your attitude toward reading; reading samples from different kinds of textbooks
2		Pacing Yourself: Managing your time; studying efficiently (Where do I read? For how long? At what intensity?)
3	Managing Your Text	Scanning for Main Ideas: Previewing a chapter; finding key words in subtitles; turning headings into answerable questions
4		Summarizing a Reading: Learning the difference between summary and paraphrase; deciding when each strategy is appropriate; summarizing a short article
5		Paraphrasing a Reading: Testing your comprehension of texts by putting them in your own words; paraphrasing a complex paragraph
6		Annotating Your Texts / Taking Effective Notes: Using your reading skills to streamline notes; understanding vocabulary in context; using efficient note-taking strategies
7		Recognizing Main Points and Supporting Details: analyzing paragraphs; identifying topic sentences; distinguishing between essential / non-essential information
8		Reading the Context: Understanding topic & theme; purpose & audience; tone & diction; making inferences from the text itself.
9		Analyzing an Event from Multiple Perspectives: Malcolm X activity
10		Sum-Up: Post-test; Summary of key concepts

Session 1: Identifying and Analyzing Different Types of Text

Introductions

Icebreaker (See pp. 4-5)

Pretest: Distribute “The Last Stone Age American” (see Supplements) and allow students to read it silently for ten minutes. Collect the article and distribute the quiz (p. 6). When students have finished the quiz, go over the answers as a group. Explain that this class will teach them strategies to read more efficiently and effectively and that a similar quiz will be distributed at the end of the semester after they have learned these strategies.

Lesson

I. Basic Concepts:

The book is heavy, the words are big, the font is small, and the topics put you to sleep? Think about “managing the reading” instead of just “reading.” There are different kinds of readers, teachers, and textbooks. Consider what kind of text you have, and use a learning strategy that will fit the reading. Preview the section and divide it into parts. Stay active, annotating the text and taking notes or designing cards or charts for a test review. Work for short periods of time and take frequent breaks. It’s hard work but it’s also effective studying.

Strategies for different types of texts:

Fiction: Fiction tells a story, is usually written chronologically, and features a natural progression of action. Novels can be read quickly.

As you read, take notes about the genre, setting, characters, and plot. Mark passages that are important so you can reference them later in a discussion or test. You can develop charts with the author, title, time period, characters, plot and themes. Use the chart to compare and contrast different novels.

Nonfiction: Some nonfiction texts are arranged with topics, subtopics, and specialized vocabulary highlighted in different colors. Other texts are nothing but page after page of paragraphs. Nonfiction is written in a logical progression and is organized either chronologically or topically.

Nonfiction usually takes more time to read than fiction. Preview a section before reading and break it down into smaller sections. Work through each small section, taking notes according to what you need to learn and remember. Organize your notes into outlines, charts, or concept cards for future use.

Poetry: Poetry is written in lines, not in paragraphs. It does not always follow a natural progression of thought. Generally, poetry does not present information in a straightforward manner and requires time for analysis.

When reading poetry, look at the form of the poem. Does it rhyme? Is it in a specific form, such as a sonnet? Does it tell a story or call attention to a problem? How do the content and form relate to each other? Note the author, time period, subject, verbal imagery, and figures of speech. If you must analyze a poem and don’t know where to start, write down your own impressions. Then, look up information about the poem and the writer. Make notes, concept cards or charts for future reference.

Math: Math texts do not tell a story or organize material into sentences and paragraphs. Math books usually present a statement, an example, and an explanation/summary. The reader must study a problem and make leaps of understanding from one line to the next. Each line must be understood before the next one can make sense. Math books must be read slowly and carefully, and mastering a concept can take minutes, hours, or days.

When reading a chapter in a math book, don't start with the homework problems. Start at the beginning of the chapter. Make sure you understand the words and symbols being used. Work out the sample problems of the chapter. Don't just read—write. After working through an example, cover it up with a piece of paper and try to work it out by yourself. Write down your prediction of the next line and then pull down the paper to see if you were correct. If not, analyze where you went wrong. Keep testing yourself to determine if you understand the material. Go back and review a previous chapter if you have forgotten a rule or formula. Then work the homework problems.

Most students can't just listen to a math lecture and then immediately solve the homework problems. Try working through the chapter *before* the lecture. After the lecture, compare your notes to the chapter examples. Then work the homework problems. A focused study group can help.

II. Application: Consider the textbooks you have to read. Identify them as fiction, nonfiction, or mathematical. Consider your own reading habits. Where and when can you sit down and actively work through a reading? How do you like to organize your information – into notes, outlines, graphs, concept cards, or some other form?

Have you ever read a chapter several times, trying to understand and remember it? How can reading a chapter once, using a learning strategy, be more effective than reading it several times without one?

III. Assignment: Choose a chapter that you have to read. Identify what kind of text it is and how many pages are in it. Work through the chapter, using a learning strategy and taking notes as needed. Bring your notes to class.