

Reading "Smart" in H-99 and L-111

BEFORE beginning to read...

1. Decide what level of reading your professor expects so you know how much time to allot.

- Speed reading or skimming = reading for a general overview or for specific information
- Casual reading = reading for general information or enjoyment → little need to remember
- Background reading = reading to understand the lecture better → remember the general idea
- Study reading = reading for understanding of the selection plus awareness of ways the material relates to topics discussed in the course → remember what you read and be able to refer to specific evidence from the reading; therefore, you need to annotate*!
- Analytical reading = reading to analyze, form an opinion → be ready to find support for your statements or writing with specific evidence from the reading. Annotation* essential.

[* **Annotation** refers to brief notations made in the margins while you read which make it easy to go back and quickly find particular sentences or passages without spending a lot of time rereading. Although highlighting and underlining can be used, they are only marginally helpful for this purpose. They should not be used alone.]

2. Ask yourself, "Why was this reading chosen? How does it relate to what we have been talking about?"

H99 and L111 readings are meant to relate to the course's theme and to challenge you to think about that theme from a different perspective.

- Think "thought provoking" not "interesting" or "enjoyable."
Don't think of H99 and L111 readings as a "story" -even if the reading includes the "stories" of individual people. These readings explore, struggle with, and attack issues.
- Reading in H99 and L111 involves a thinking process.
Sometimes you need to go beyond what the writer *says* to what the writer *implies*.

Your goal is to move through the following levels:

Level 1 - *Literal*: You must have an accurate understanding of the facts and ideas in the reading.

Level 2 - *Interpretive*:

- You consider what the author is trying to suggest or the author's point of view.
- Consider how the author has supported his/her ideas. What *specific evidence* can you point to from the reading? [Be ready to track down good examples quickly!]

Level 3 - *Evaluative*:

- Compare the author's ideas to what you have already studied in the course.
- Compare the author's ideas to your own experiences.
- Consider whether the author seems biased or uses insufficient evidence.

- Be ready to support each of your ideas with evidence from the readings. Know the page number! [Good annotation will really help you here!]

3. Using whatever "clues" are available to you before you start to read, try to find out as much as you can about the selection.

This "scouting report" will help you pin down what you need to find out from the reading - before you start to read. You will also have a much better sense of what to underline and annotate.

What kind of "clues" might be helpful?

- Read any *introductory information* that is available - *for example*, an introduction/preface to the book or an introduction to the specific chapter containing your selection.
- Read the *title*:
 - Before going any further, look up any unfamiliar words or phrases in the title!

- Think about what images or ideas the title suggests. Authors sometimes use titles in unexpected ways - with a different meaning from what you might expect.
 - Does the title suggest a topic? Could you turn it into a question and read to answer your question? *Warning:* Make sure to keep an open mind. Sometimes a title has several possible meanings.
 - Read any **questions at the end** of the selection.
 - What issues or themes seem to be raised by the selection?
 - What ideas seem to be important?
4. After collecting all available clues, **predict what you think the selection will be about.**
 What do you think the author is trying to say?
 What themes / ideas seem to be the focus of the reading?
 What supporting evidence are you likely to be looking for?

NOW, BEGIN TO READ THE SELECTION ITSELF.

5. As you read, watch for "**internal clues**" within the assigned reading:
- Read the opening paragraphs carefully.
 - Is the author's point stated?
 - Is the author setting the stage in some way?
 - Notice any reversal words such as *however, yet, but*.
 - Is the author making a case and then "knocking it down," the way a debater opens with an opponent's argument before presenting a different point of view?
 - As you continue reading, make a notation in the margin next to vivid examples or anecdotes which you might want to use as evidence later - in class discussion or in writing your paper.
 - ▶ You should be able to find your evidence quickly without doing a lot of rereading.
 - Be ready to explain how the author is building a case to support his/her point of view.
 - Did you find the evidence convincing? Why or why not? Be ready to explain.
 - Watch for mini-summaries in which the author summarizes what has just been discussed.
6. Do you need to stop to look up an important but unfamiliar word in the dictionary?
 If so, back up a sentence or two before rereading.

STOP after each "segment" [no more than a page] and try to summarize in your own words what you have read.

If you find the reading difficult,

- Return to any "clues" that you identified before you began reading the selection itself. What did you figure out about the selection before you started to read?
- Avoid becoming lost in the details. Instead, focus on figuring out the author's overall point.
- If a sentence seems almost incomprehensible, push to the end of a paragraph, then see whether you can translate the point of the paragraph into your own words.
- If a paragraph is baffling or unclear, try to keep going to see whether the point becomes clearer.
- If you reach the end of a paragraph, and you're still unclear what the author is getting at, keep going to the end of a page or a section and then see whether you can summarize it; then look at the "external clues" or the discussion questions. Do they help you make sense of the passage?

AFTER YOU HAVE FINISHED READING,

1. Skim back over your annotations to refresh your memory.
2. Then mentally list the key points you want to remember from the reading.