

# Reading Non Fiction Texts

It is critical that you learn to read nonfiction, or expository texts, because this is the type of reading that you will do most as an adult outside of school.

These texts use facts, details, opinions, and examples in order to explain something.

The text might use definition, sequence, categorization, comparison-contrast, enumeration (listing), process, problem-solution, description, or cause-effect in order to make an argument.

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While reading nonfiction texts, you should follow these steps:

1. Read and consider the title—what might the article be about?
2. Find the author's name and any other information about the writer
3. Identify the source (i.e. the original publication and date) of the article
4. Read the introduction or opening paragraphs carefully, checking these against the title
5. Skim through the article and read all the boldface subheadings, pullout quotes, or sidebar information
6. Skim through the article and read the first sentence of each paragraph (if this sentence is clearly not the claim locate and read each claim)
7. Examine any other typographical features such as italicized or bolded words—why are they emphasized?
8. Examine any graphic content (e.g., maps, illustrations, images)
9. Read the last paragraph of a section carefully
10. Study any questions or additional information provided at the end of the article, before, during, and after reading
11. Read the entire article, keeping in mind what you have gained from your pre-reading and checking your new understanding against the initial understanding, revising as needed.

\*You should create notes in the margins (if the text is yours), on post-it notes, or on a separate sheet of binder paper.

\* Also underline key passages and ideas.

\*The more you interact with the text, the more you'll comprehend and gain from your reading.

(Turn Over)

# Annotating Non-Fiction Texts: What to do

To reveal patterns and understand the text at a deeper level.

While reading, you should create notes in the margins (if the text is yours), on post-it notes, or on a separate sheet of binder paper about the following:

1. Connections to major themes that you are noticing
2. Unknown vocabulary words...define them
3. The structure of the text
4. Quotes/Ideas that you find interesting or wish to discuss
5. Questions that you have—both factual and analytical (Costa's levels 1-3)
6. Emotional Connections... connect to your own experience
7. Connections to ideas that remind you of things that you have learned about... an "Ah ha" moment

\* Also underline key passages and ideas.

\*The goal is to interact with the text.

**As you get used to annotation, you may develop your own methods and symbols. For this reading, and this class, annotate the following things with the following symbols:**

- **MI: Main Idea**
  - Find the main idea of each section or paragraph, underline it and write "(mi)" in the margins.
    - Example: "There are two games that most of us play. One is getting ahead" (page 25, paragraph 2).
- **E: Evidence**
  - Find at least one piece of evidence to support each main idea you find. Write an "E" in the margins.
    - Example: "Getting placed in the right classes, chasing straight A's—that's what counts" (page 25, paragraph 2).
- **S: Signal words (Academic Language)**
  - Box the word and put an S near it. These are words that help you with the writer's organization. They can include words like "first," "second," "finally," "next." They can include phrases like, "There are two games...", "Before moving on to high school..."
    - Example: "The second kind of game..." (page 25, paragraph 3).
- **T: Transitions**
  - Box the word and write a T near it. These are words that help you understand the author's logic. They can be words like, "however," "but," "furthermore," "again."
    - Example: Before moving on to high school..." (page 25, paragraph 3).
- **?: Questions**
  - Use a question mark to show what you don't understand or need help on.
    - Example: If you don't know the meaning of "conformity," write a question mark and look it up later if it seems important to understanding (page 25, paragraph 3).
- **!: Interesting Ideas**
  - Use an exclamation point to show what is interesting or new to you.
    - Example: The book mentioned on page 26 at the bottom of the page is about a subject that is interesting to me.
- **X: I disagree**
  - Use an X when you thinking the author's claim is wrong or evidence is unconvincing.
    - Example: The author claims that most students lose their interest in school in elementary school. You might think it doesn't happen until middle school.