

How to Be an Active Reader

Reading Comprehension & Annotation Strategies

Before Reading

1. What do you know? - What predictions can you make based on the title? What prior knowledge do you have that can provide context for the book? Once you've determined the setting, ask yourself what you already know. What do you know from other reading? What do you know from history class? What do you know from movies?
2. Read with purpose - When you read, determine your purpose. What do you want to know? Is it about what happened? Is it about why this is happening? Is it about the relationships between the characters. This can help you retain what you read, stay focused, and analyze what you are reading.
 - a. Ask questions for the whole book.
 - b. Ask questions at the beginning of each chapter.
 - c. Plot/Comprehension Questions: Who? What? When? Where?
 - d. Evaluation/Analysis Questions: How? Why?

During Reading

1. Annotate - Underline/Highlight/Bracket key information: character details, important events, significant quotes.
2. Comment – Does this make sense? Does this connect to something else?
3. Interact – How do you feel about what's happening?
4. Determine - What important information do you need to understand this story?
 - a. Who is the protagonist? The antagonist?
 - b. What is the setting?
 - c. Who is the narrator? (From what perspective is the story being told?)
5. Connect - Connect what you read to your own life. If the characters are talking about vacation, link it to a memory of a vacation you have taken or want to take.
 - a. Make notes in the margins.
6. Characterize - When you meet new characters, create a picture of them in your head. What do they look like? What do they sound like? Do they remind you of someone you know? Is the character someone you would likely be friends or enemies with?
 - a. Circle the names of new characters.
 - b. Underline or bracket key information you learn about characters.
 - c. If there are a lot of characters, keep a list and/or make a chart showing how they connect to each other.



7. Wonder - Ask questions. Do you understand what is happening? Do you like what is happening? Do you have any ideas about what this might lead to in the future of the book?
 - a. Keep a list of your “wonderings” or jot them down in the margins.
8. See - Make a movie in your head. Try to see the scene playing out. Give characters voices. This is especially helpful with important scenes because it can help you remember what happened.
 - a. Mark (with a star) important events/statements.
9. Infer - Draw conclusions and infer what the author is trying to tell you. Why is it important that all of the character’s friends are girls? Why is it significant that the character only wears yellow or is afraid of popcorn?
10. Predict - What do you think will happen next? What might be the consequences of certain actions?
11. Pause - Stop and summarize. After a difficult paragraph, stop and summarize to make sure you know what happened. Even if the reading is easy, stop after a few pages and summarize to help you understand and remember what happened.
 - a. It’s a good idea to make a quick jot list of important events/ideas at the end of each chapter. (This helps you remember short *and* long term!)
12. Organize - Use a graphic organizer. Keep track of all of the important information. You may want to use one of the organizers found at the links below.

After Reading

1. Summarize
 - a. Who is important?
 - b. What are the main ideas?
 - c. What are the key events?
 - d. What are the key ideas?
 - e. What are the primary conflicts? How are they resolved?
2. Assess
 - a. What was important? Why?
 - b. What did I learn? How did I learn it?
 - c. What are the author’s messages to the reader? (aka the themes)
3. Reflect
 - a. Did I like this book? Why or why not?
 - b. How does this connect to me?
 - c. How can I apply anything I learned to my life?
 - d. How would I describe this book to someone considering reading it?



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- e. What do I most want to remember about this book in 10 years?

Additional Resources & Strategies

<http://www.educationcorner.com/reading-comprehension.html> (good for non-fiction)