

## Reading Guide<sup>1</sup>

### WRIT 1101: *Writing Colloquium*

As you read this summer and this coming semester, follow this reading guide and use it to write your reading responses. You will do some steps before you begin reading, some as you are reading, and some after you have finished reading the selection. Often, in order to complete some steps, you will need to review or reread all or part of the selection. Part of the purpose of this guide is to help you improve your analytical or critical reading skills, which will be essential to your future academic and professional success.

1. **Author:** Who is the author of this text? What information is available about him or her either in introductory material or deduced from the reading itself? From what you have learned about the author, how might his or her background affect his or her perspective or point of view on the topic?
2. **Definition of terms and concepts:** Write down any terms or concepts that appear in the reading that are unfamiliar to you. Use a dictionary, encyclopedia, or other reference source to find and write down a brief definition of what each term or concept means in the context of this reading.
3. **Message:** Write a brief summary of the main message you think the author is trying to convey in this text. For book-length readings, write a brief summary of the main message of each chapter.
4. **Supporting arguments:** List the most important ideas or sub-topics that the author discusses in order to convey his or her message.
5. **Activating background knowledge and experience:** As you read or reread the text, write down anything that occurs to you that connects this reading with something you have learned about or experienced previously. This might be another reading you have done (either for this class, another class, or on your own), a personal experience you have had, something you saw on TV, heard on the radio, saw in a movie, read on the Internet or in a newspaper or magazine.
6. **Reader's response:** Briefly summarize your reaction to and thoughts about this reading. The following are a few questions you might ask yourself to get you started, but don't limit yourself to only these questions: Did I find it relevant to me personally in any way or not? Why? Did I find the author's arguments convincing or not? Why? Did this reading provoke an emotional response in me—did it make me sad, angry, happy, etc.? Why? Did anything I read in this text affect my thinking about something I am dealing with in my life, something I am studying in another class, or an issue important to my community, the country, or the world? What? How did it affect my thinking? Did this reading make me aware of something I hadn't thought much about previously? What? Did this reading make me curious to find out more about some topic? What?

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<sup>1</sup>Borrowed with permission from Dr. Beth Vinkler.

## **Annotating Texts<sup>2</sup>**

As you begin the first assignment of your college career, we encourage you to read carefully, thoughtfully, and effectively. Excellent reading skills, like excellent writing skills, promote success both during college and after. We expect you to annotate your text, and some instructors may check books for annotations. Here are some tips on how best to annotate.

### **Benefits of Annotation**

- Helps reader recall main points of a text days, weeks, or even months after he or she originally read it.
- Helps reader organize thoughts for a paper related to the text.
- Helps the reader avoid accidental plagiarism by greatly streamlining the citation process.
- Helps reader in discussions about the original text.

### **Highlight passages:**

- that helped you understand the text.
- that confused you.
- that reflect a possible topic idea for a paper related to the text.
- that you plan to cite in a paper related to the text.
- that you want to bring up in a class discussion.

### **Write in the margins:**

- main idea of each paragraph to help you see the structure of text
- any questions you have about the text:
  - about the author's point(s).
  - about vocabulary.
  - about historical or cultural context.
  - and any other questions...
- your reactions to passages you've highlighted:
  - shocking!
  - this helped me understand XYZ...
  - this passage shows bias – is this source reliable?
- notes from a class discussion for future use

### **The goal is understanding and remembering the reading.**

- Highlight phrases/sentences that help you understand.
  - Thesis sentences and topic sentences.
  - Terms you don't know – write the meaning in the margin.
  - Highlight ideas you agree or disagree with – “!” or “?” in margin.

### **A well annotated text is easy to review before an exam or for writing a paper.**

- Patterns should be easy to see.
- Your original impressions should be easy to recall.

### **There is no one right way – make a system that works for you!**

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<sup>2</sup> Adapted with permission from Ms. Anne Marie Smith; based in part on *St. Martin's Handbook*, 8<sup>th</sup> ed.