



Literacy at Hartford Public High School

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Suggestions For Marking A Text You Own

It is important that our students have practice in each class marking the text that they are reading. This is not possible with expensive, non-consumable textbooks, but it is a strategy that lends itself to frequent use with handouts, especially articles that mimic the type of information asked of our students on the CAPT.

Each teacher can develop a system of marking ideas in a text, for there is no correct way to identify what is important. The following suggestions might help a class to formulate an approach to highlighting text.

1. Use double lines under words or phrases to signify main ideas.
2. Use single lines under words or phrases to signify supporting material.
3. Mark small circled numbers near the initial word of an underlined group of words to indicate a series of arguments, facts, ideas--either main or supporting.
4. Rather than underlining a group of three or more important lines, use a vertical bracket in the margin.
5. Use one asterisk in the margin to indicate ideas of special importance and two for general ideas of unusual importance. Reserve three asterisks for principles and high-level generalizations.
6. Circle key words or terms.
7. Box words of enumeration or transition.
8. Place a question mark in the margin, opposite lines you do not understand, as a reminder to ask the instructor for clarification.
9. If you disagree with a statement, indicate that in the margin.

Highlight key phrases, not complete sentences.

It is generally best to refrain from highlighting complete sentences. Concentrate instead on highlighting important words or phrases within important sentences. Delay your underlining until you recognize what is important to remember. A page with occasional highlights, bringing attention to fewer items, is easier to review.

Use a marking system that shows the relationship between key points and supporting points.

Underlining or highlighting alone may not be sufficient to distinguish quickly between main ideas and supporting points and to see clearly how they relate to each other. A marking system that uses symbols, numbers, letters, or lines will help you quickly identify relationships while you read and review. The marking system you adopt is up to you. The goal is to

develop a method that enhances your learning. Students find many effective marking systems, for example, double underline or star the most important points, single underline supporting points. Some students find it better to design a color coding system (using different highlighting colors for main and sub-points). Drawing arrows is an effective way to draw attention to connecting thoughts or to show cause and effect relationships.

Being an Active Reader Remarks from a College Teacher

"One of the most frequent things I say to my students is be an active reader not a passive one. Reading isn't like watching TV. You just can't stare at a page and expect to remember much. Read an assigned chapter quickly -- first for a general overview -- then go back and seek out the details. Keep a pen or a pencil, not a highlighter, in your hand. Underline important passages. Write notes, questions and reactions in the margins. When you read you should be having a conversation with the text. Don't let it do all the talking -- react to it. Your response helps you formulate the meaning of the text. Mark up your book like crazy."

Novel Reading Versus Textbook Reading Remarks from a College Teacher

"I am always surprised by the fact that many students read their textbook the same way they would read a novel, starting on page one and reading straight through to the end. Try reading your textbooks more like you would read a newspaper or magazine. Start by skimming through a section, reading the subject headings and any definitions that appear in boldface print. Study the pictures and figures carefully -- these are chosen to illustrate and highlight the essential points of the text. Next, read the introduction and summary and finally go back and read the text itself. Start with the material that most interests you, but be careful not to skip a section. Keep some scratch paper handy for jotting down important terms and working out problems. Leave your highlighter pens in the drawer. Most importantly, don't try to digest too much information at once. Read in 30 to 45 minute blocks of time with frequent breaks. This will help you to stay alert and focused."

There are many approaches to working with a text. It is our job, and our responsibility, to show our students various alternatives to handling the written word. Remember: in elementary school, students learn to read; in high school, they read to learn. We need to help them to do both: read and learn.

