**READING AND NOTETAKING STRATEGIES**

Below are reading strategies that will help you learn from the text, rather than simply scan the text for the correct answer.

Most textbooks are broken up into big, bolded headings and small headings. Immediately under the big heading is a summary of what that section is about. Under each small heading is a focused-in study of something that relates to the big heading. With that in mind, let’s learn how to be effective readers.

**Step 1:** PUT YOUR PENCIL DOWN as you read. You don’t need to have anything out. It’s only you and the book.

* Why? Because you don’t know what’s important until you’ve read through the whole section. If you highlight or underline everything, you won’t be able to see what’s most important, because you’ve deemed everything as most important. Therefore, do not have any writing utensil in your hand as you read through your book or the selected text.

**Step 2:** Read through the entire big section (usually three to four paragraphs). Just read it. Don’t write anything down. Don’t take any notes. Don’t answer any questions. Read it.

**Step 3:** Say, out loud, what the main point was. Try to summarize it in twenty or fewer words. This is called a *gist* – it’s a *short* summary of the main idea. Don’t try to overcomplicate it. After you’ve summarized the main idea in your head, read back through the section with that in mind.

* It is crucial that you do this first. Because you have read without a writing utensil in hand, and because you now understand the main idea of the text, you will take more efficient and effective notes. You no longer need to write down all of miscellaneous information that may not be beneficial to your understanding of the content.

**Step 4:** Pick up your pen. Follow the notes strategy page. Include vocabulary, and address any historical thinking skills (causation, comparison, etc) in your notes.

* By the way: it’s really easy to turn those notes into Cornell notes. Instead taking notes in outline form like you are used to, draw a line an inch or two in from the left side of the paper, and include the section headers there.

**CODING THE TEXT!**

This only works if you’re allowed to write on the text. Or, get creative and use sticky notes!

Coding text can be a quick way for your to become conscious of and record mental responses to your reading. This strategy will help if you are not accustomed to actively thinking as you read and will not be so intrusive that it will interrupt the flow of your reading. Below are a list of symbols that you can use to annotate your book as you read. Feel free to take my examples, or feel free to create your own! This strategy is far superior to highlighting every word.

? – confuses you

-- is interesting to you or very important

!! – possible test question

Q – question you have about the content (then write out the question you have and ask me in class!)

A – answers a question you previously had

Use arrows to connect important words/ideas/phrases together or to connect cause and effect

“CC” – Compare/Contrast (When Ethel Wood is helping you compare two civilizations, make a note of this to the side.)

“CCOT” – Continuity and Change Over Time (When Ethel Wood is showing you how one region or civilization changed or stayed the same across a time period, make a note of this to the side.)

You should circle and define vocab words in the margins.

*Two more things about coding the text:*

1. When you’re reading back through your notes to review for the test (which is REVIEWING, not STUDYING), you can also use these! It will help you point out important things, which will help you know what to study.
2. When you take notes in my class, you should come up with symbols that help you take notes in more of a shorthand fashion

* My favorites are:

= leads to

= increase

= decrease

= therefore

**Chapter Notes Template**

*Instructions: This is a basic outline for how you should be taking notes for each chapter. Please take your notes in this format – especially writing out the Section Titles and putting the bold words from the book in* ***bold*** *in your notes.*

**CHAPTER X: TITLE**

GIST: *(Summarize the BIG PICTURE of the chapter in 20 words or less. DO THIS LAST.)*

SECTION TITLE

* Notes
  + At the very least, define the bold words
  + Even better: explain the context of the bold words and why they are important/how they connect to other terms or ideas in the chapter.
  + If you see trigger words like those below, READ CAREFULLY and include these ideas in your notes. They’re historical thinking skills, and I love asking questions involving historical thinking skills
    - *Comparison*: “in comparison”, “like”, “similar to”; “in contrast”, “different”, “opposed to”
    - *Causation*: “the causes of…”, “the effects/consequences of…”
    - *Continuity and Change Over Time*: “this changed…”, “this remained the same…”
    - “the significance/importance of…”
* Questions? Things you don’t understand or want more explanation for?
  + Hey – you should come in and ask me these questions so that I can help you understand the content better ☺ Or, even better, make a study group!!
* Synthesis statements
  + This is where you synthesize – combine ideas - and show your understanding and comprehension of the text
  + Consider the following ideas:
    - *Compare/Contrast*: How does one event/person/idea compare with another that we’ve already learned?
    - *Change and Continuity Over Time:* Within this time period, are things changing or staying the same? What’s causing those changes or continuities?
    - *Historical context*: what else was happening in the world that affected this? Is a similar development happening in a different region of the world? (ex- industrialization started in Britain, and then spread west; imperialism started in Europe due to industrialization, so after the US became an industrial nation, they also sought to gain new lands)
* GIST: summarize what you just read in 20 or fewer words! What’s the main idea?

*^^^(You will repeat this for each section in the chapter)^^^*

You can do this template in a ton of fun ways. Check out the two notes examples I have for you!

1. One’s a free form style – I like that, because that’s how my brain words. I can easily draw connections and code and highlight my notes.
2. The other is a more-traditional Cornell style. For Cornell notes, you want to put the section titles off to the left, and take notes to the right.