

READING EXPOSITORY WRITINGS

The SQ3R Method Applied to Expository Writing Other Than Textbooks

CORE 112

Queens University

Below you'll learn how to attack your CORE readings to get what you need from them. No more passivity in the vain hope of somehow "absorbing" what the author wants to you know; no more highlighting, which simply postpones comprehension; and a minimum of underlining, in order to locate the main topics, questions, and answers provided by an author.

We can use the same initials (SQ3R) for this sort of reading as for reading textbooks, because the broadest contours of the process remain the same. *But the details differ significantly.* **In particular, please note the italicized passages below; they direct you to do some sort of writing in your assigned text.**

1. SURVEY: Surveying an expository text without frequent headings isn't just reading in a hurry; it's a disciplined first effort to locate the major topics or subjects dealt with in the assigned text. *Write each principal topic in CAPITAL LETTERS in your page margins* as you proceed through the assignment. Plan to go more slowly with philosophical prose; if you can't get through the entire assignment in half an hour, take a five or ten minute break, then go back to work. On finishing you've in effect made a topic outline of the entire assignment.

2. QUESTION: Now go back and turn each of the topics noted earlier into questions. *Use your page margins to add (in lower case script) the words that convert the main topics (already inscribed in capital letters) into questions, or use lower case script to frame the main questions separately.*

3. READ: Again read the entire assignment, this time more carefully and slowly, in order to formulate the author's **answer** to each question. Don't proceed from one question to the next until you can put the author's answer in your own words. **Don't yet record your answers in the text.**

Move paragraph by paragraph. This is active, exhausting mental labor; after half an hour, if you haven't finished the assignment, get up and move about for five or ten minutes, then go back to work.

A final step at this stage: note (a) any words you don't understand or (b) any terms the author appears to be using in a special way. Use a dictionary to locate the meaning of (a) and your own wits to work out the meaning of (b). *Make a list of these inside the back cover of your text, along with the meanings you've assigned to them.* **Teachers will check the list.**

4. RECITE: Once you've completed the "Read" stage, and preferably after an interval of several hours, see if you still can answer, in your own words, each of the questions recorded in the page margins. At this stage you do something else as well: as you formulate each answer in succession, *reduce that answer to a very few cue words or phrases that you then write in lower case letters in your text just beneath each question. Then "block" your answer by enclosing it in four straight sides that form a box.*

5. REVIEW: Shortly before class, again ask yourself each of the questions you've written in your page margins and see if those cue words you jotted down below the questions still evoke a full, coherent answer, in your own words. Now you're ready for a quiz, if one is given.

