

# Tame Your Textbook

## S.Q.4R

### S = Survey

- Skim the ENTIRE chapter
- Note:
  - Headings & subheadings,
  - Words in bold print,
  - Tables, charts, illustrations,
  - Margin notes
- Look for:
  - Review questions,
  - Summaries (Read these!)

### Q = Question

- Are questions provided in the text? If so, use them!
- If there are no questions provided, create your own using the sub-headings in the chapter.
- \*This will help you focus and not fall asleep!

### R = Read

- REMEMBER!! First, read the summary at **the end** of the chapter!
- Then read to answer questions
  - The ones provided,
  - or those you created yourself.
- Read **only one** section at a time.

### R = Record

- As you read each section, DO SOMETHING to draw attention to important information
- For Example:
  - Highlight or underline
  - Write notes in the margin (= annotate)
  - Write answers to your questions
  - Make flash cards for vocabulary and formulas
  - Outline key points
  - Create comparison charts, illustrations, or other visuals
  - NOTE: Recording will help you learn and remember!

### R = Recite

- After reading and recording **each section**, close your eyes and try to repeat the key points in your mind.
- You can walk around the library for 5 minutes while you do this

### R = Review

- NOTE: you'll probably record more during this step
- After class, **compare the text with your lecture notes**
  - Write down/ mark up areas of overlap in your text, notes, or both!
- Briefly **review all** recorded material in **previous chapters** before beginning a new chapter.
- Review everything for exams

## Finding the Main Idea

All paragraphs contain three basic items:

1. a topic
2. a main idea/thesis statement
3. details/explanatory material to support the main ideas/ thesis

When you have trouble understanding what you read, try this three step procedure for each paragraph. Ask yourself:

- topic**            1. What idea is mentioned most often (1-2 words)?
- main idea**       2. What is the most important thing the author tells me about this idea? What is distinctive about this idea?
- details**           3. How does the author explain or prove this?

Sometimes the author puts the main idea right into the paragraph in words, but more often, he merely implies it. You must be able to “see the forest, even with all the trees.”

Details add color and meaning. Each detail in the paragraph must somehow explain, illustrate or develop the main idea. If you cannot see the relationship between the details and the main idea, you probably have the main idea wrong. Make sure that every sentence in the paragraph somehow contributes to that main idea.

Depending on your purpose, you may want to remember many of the details, or just determine the main ideas. You set your own purpose for each reading you do. For example, you may be reading to determine just the major themes discussed, or you may be reading to understand each detail in a complicated scientific process. Setting your purpose to begin with will help you determine how to read the passage and what to concentrate on.

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If you correctly determine the main idea for each paragraph, you will begin to see relationships between these ideas. You will see a pattern of development, that is, how the author tells his story, builds his case, organizes his facts, etc. Being able to see these relationships is what a good reader should work for.

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The third and final step for the reader is personal. You must judge the quality or the ideas and arguments. Are the author’s facts correct? Is his development clear? Are his conclusions logical? This stage is called critical reading. It is the most challenging part of reading, but until you reach this stage, you have only done part of the job. You must constantly evaluate what you read, just as you evaluate what you hear.

## Questions to consider when reading a CORE Text:

NOTE: Responses should clearly demonstrate college-level critical thinking and analysis skills. Always consider how your section of CORE addresses the idea of what it means to be human. (Each professor has a slightly different perspective; read your syllabus!)

1. What is the purpose, argument, or main focus of the essay/book? (5 points)
2. Describe the text and include major themes and conclusions. Note – this is not a report but rather an analysis of the content. (15 points)
3. How do these themes come together in the essay/book? (15 points)
4. What are your personal thoughts about the text? (15 points)
5. Why do you think the author wrote the essay/book? As you develop your answer to this question consider your response to question one above. (15 points)
6. What is the most important sentence, paragraph, or point made in the essay/book? Why? (10 points)
7. How did this sentence, paragraph, or point relate to the course? (10 points)
8. Did the essay/book accomplish what it set out to do? (5 points)
9. How were you personally moved, transformed, or enlightened by the essay/book? (10 points)

Remember: Make sure you understand the over-all outline of the course and the frame of references of the instructor. Under what main headings does s/he see this material? If you were asked to state the five most important ideas in the course, could you do so? These five, six, ten, or twelve ideas should stand out in your notes and in your review procedures.

Give special emphasis to the topics in your readings that are also found in your lecture notes. Look for connections between texts.

NOTE: You must always cite an example in the text to support your interpretation(s). Read with pen in hand and annotate the text.