Active Reading: Mark Up Those Texts!

ACTIVE READING:
Who falls asleep when they read? Who has a lot of reading from all their classes? Who reads something and then has NO idea what they just read?

Yes, we all face this, but active reading—being an engaged reader—can help. It may take a little more time but it’s totally worth it!

ACTIVE READING: ANNOTATING A TEXT
In order to read effectively, you need to develop a strategy that will work for you. Annotating a reading passage--writing notes on the pages of the reading selection itself--is one strategy you can use to become actively involved with what you are reading.

Although annotating may seem to take more time, it will benefit you in several ways:
• When you return to a text (when studying for an exam or writing a paper), you won't have to reread the entire piece. Notes written within the text and in the margins can remind you of important ideas.
• When you write notes about reading selections, you develop active rather than passive reading strategies. In general, when you are involved with what you read, you will better understand, remember, and engage with texts. Isn't this what we want? (And you won’t fall asleep!)

Even though each reader has a preferred method of annotating text, the following suggestions provide some guidelines for marking a passage or annotating a text. This strategy should not only be helpful for this class, but for other classes, especially those which require a lot reading.

1. **Write notes** in the margin or at the top or bottom of the page, i.e., key summary words or phrases.
2. **Circle or underline** key words or phrases or ones to come back to.
3. **Use stars or asterisks** in the margins to emphasize the most important ideas.
4. **Pose questions in the margins** to express your difference of opinion about the author's message, or **put a question mark** next to anything you don't understand (what teachers mean when they ask: "Are there any questions about the readings?").
5. **Use a personal symbol** (! or Yes!) next to anything that seems on target to you.
6. **Write notes on Post-It notes** and use them to mark important pages of a text. This is great for library books or those you don't want to write in.

Now, try it with a short article.

1. Tap your schema (background knowledge) a bit on the article by answering the following:
   a. What are some gender rules/roles/stereotypes males and females face growing up?
      
      Females ________________ Males

   2. Is it possible to NOT face gender rules/roles/stereotypes? Why or why not? If it were possible, how would you do it—raise a child without gender expectations?

3. Now, try annotating. There are some examples for the first two paragraphs.

   **Canadian Couple Won't Reveal Child's Gender** Posted by Amy Graff, May 24 2011
   
   http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/blogs/sfmoms/detail?entry_id=89656

   Ever since the 1970s when Marlo Thomas and Friends introduced the idea of raising gender neutral kids in the *Free to Be...You and Me* record, parents have encouraged their boys to play with dolls and their girls to build with blocks.

   *(Annotations: What questions or comments can you make about the first paragraph? Do you know of the *Free to Be You and Me* record? You may want to annotate about what that is. You may also want to make sure you know what “gender neutral means.” What else might you annotate?)

   A Toronto couple is taking this concept to a more controversial extreme by keeping the gender of their 4-month-old baby a secret. They have no plans to reveal whether their child named Storm is a boy or a girl. They say it will be up to Storm to deliver the news when he (or she) is old enough and ready.

   *(Annotations: What is the main idea in this paragraph? Do you have any comments on that? What else might you annotate?)

   Share these with a tutor or your instructor and then continue reading the rest of the article.

   Shutterstock / Haywiremedia
   A Canadian couple is keeping the gender of their 4-month-old baby under wraps. Are they helping or hurting their child?

   The parents, Kathy Witterick, 38 and David Stocker, 39, hope to raise their child in a world that's "unconstrained by social norms about males and females," according to the *Toronto Star*. They want
their child to freely grow into his (or her) own person and to find his (or her) true self unhindered by gender stereotypes.

Only a handful of people know whether baby Storm is a boy or a girl: the parents, of course; Storm's brothers, Jazz, 5, and Kio, 2; a close family friend; and the two midwives who delivered Storm at home in a birthing tub.

You might assume Storm's appearance would give the gender away but photographs posted on the Toronto Star depict a blonde-haired baby that looks no more like a boy than like a girl--there's really no way of telling. The parents mix up the pronouns they use when referring to their child. They dress Storm in pink one day and blue the next, and often the baby is wearing gender-neutral colors like red. What's more, Storm's longhaired brothers are often wearing more girlish colors and they're mistaken for females.

The parents alerted friends and family of their idea to keep Storm's gender under wraps in an email: "We've decided not to share Storm's sex for now -- a tribute to freedom and choice in place of limitation, a stand up to what the world could become in Storm's lifetime (a more progressive place? ...)."

Their announcement was met with mixed reactions. The grandparents were slow to warm up to the idea. Many friends were supportive but a few were confused, even angered. Some feared that Storm would grow into a child who's bullied by peers.

Reactions in the Internet world have been equally conflicted. Some criticize the parents for treating their child like a lab rat and others applaud their efforts to fight against societal pressures. Many point out studies indicating that male and girl behaviors are influenced by prenatal development, not only by societal pressures. They say boys will go after toys that are stereotypically male even if you push dolls on them.

Over at BabyCenter, one reader chimes in: "I see this backfiring in the future when the kid is confused as hell going through puberty and the social outcast throughout their life. You can have a girl and let her play with doll and truck and roll in the mud and not pressure her to 'act' like a girl. And little boys can enjoy playing dress up and playing with dolls too. We are given our gender for a reason and if we were meant to be neutral we'd all be hermaphrodites."

At Babble, one reader writes in: "I think there are great points to what this family is doing, I wouldn't be able to keep my baby's gender a secret, but it's not for me to judge this families choice to raise their children in what seems like a loving, healthy way."

Is it possible to raise a gender neutral child? Do you think the parents are helping Storm or just messing the child up by keeping his (or her) gender a secret?

Read more: http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/blogs/sfmoms/detail?entry_id=89656#ixzz1UTTHiFtG

You may want to try writing a brief summary of your annotations or discuss your annotations with a tutor, your instructor, or a classmate.

Then, try annotating a reading that you have for one of your classes!