

## Methods for Close Reading

### What do we mean by “close reading”?

- Close reading is a way for us to interact with a text to improve our understanding, or a way to make notes for ourselves later.
- It can be as simple as highlighting parts that stick out to you, or just jotting down your own thoughts in the margins, or on a sticky-note.
- Sometimes close reading is called “interacting with the text,” because you are also asked to interact not only with the physical text on the page, but with the author’s ideas.

### How is close reading helpful?

- Sometimes texts can be long or difficult, so annotating and marking a text can help you keep track of content. It can be helpful to break up a text into a smaller more manageable parts.
  - Additionally, by physically marking on a text people often have better retention of the content.
- By taking note of the parts you find confusing, you can ask your instructors or classmates later.
- It helps you figure out what you disagree or agree with, and what you have questions about, which in turn can help you develop a paper or articulate a criticism.
- Additionally, lots of writing requires us to paraphrase or quote an author, so marking a text for potential support helps you make a well-supported paper that clearly engages with the assigned text.

### How to mark your texts

- The following is a list of common parts of a text, and some kinds of marks that you can make.
- Not every text will have all of these parts. For example, a mostly textbook might be mostly exposition and probably have more key terms, rather than a persuasive argument.
- There’s no right or wrong way to go about close reading, not everything is helpful for everyone in every situation. So try them out and see what works for you!
- Be as creative as you like, the following only contains examples. A lot of readers have their own set of symbols that they use which mean different things.
  - Don’t like highlighters? Don’t use them. Prefer rainbows of pens? Do that. Hate writing in books (or it’s a library copy)? Use sticky notes.

<b>What's on the page</b>	<b>What to mark and why</b>
Unfamiliar words	<i>Circle them, then jot down their definition in the margin or the bottom of the page.</i> It takes practice to learn new words.
The author's thesis	<i>Highlight or write a star next to it.</i> It'll help you keep track of why the author is telling you what they're telling you
Topic sentence/ controlling idea sentence	<i>Highlight it or paraphrase in the margins.</i> Noting these will help you understand what the paragraph is trying to tell you.
"They Say"/Literature Review	Academic writing often has a "they say" component where the author situates themselves relative to the conversation on a topic, and review what others have said about it. <i>Write "They say" next to the section.</i>
"I Say"	Academic writing often has an "I say" portion where the author gives their own opinions, arguments, and ideas on the topic they reviewed in the "they say" part of the text. <i>Write "I say" next to the section.</i>
Key words/ core concepts	Some ideas or themes are really important to a text, and affect the author's points. <i>Highlight or underline them.</i>
Definition of a term/concept	Sometimes authors provide their own definitions of terms because that's how they'll use the concept later. It might be different from an ordinary definition. <i>Underline them.</i>
A difficult sentence/paragraph	<i>Make a question mark.</i> Note about what you find confusing about it, so you can think about it later or ask your instructor.
Recommendations/ suggestions	Note what the author seems to think should happen, based on their argument. <i>Write "recc" in the margins.</i>
Examples/ analogies/ statistics	Sometimes authors use these devices to support their points or illustrate their ideas. <i>You can jot down "ex" for example next to it, or "analogy" when it helps illustrate their point</i>
Summary/Reiteration	At the beginning or end of a paper or section, and especially in an abstract, an author might summarize what they will argue or have already argued. Taking note of this will give you an idea of what this paper is about. <i>Try paraphrasing the core ideas in the margins.</i>
Steps of an argument/arguments	Authors often spend a paragraph or two (or sometimes whole sections of longer papers) on a part of the argument. <i>Try summarizing on the step of the argument, or outlining the parts of the argument on a sticky-note.</i>
"Golden Lines"	Does a line strike you as important? Do you relate to it? <i>Highlight it and jot down why.</i> Your thoughts on a text are important.
Something you disagree with	Think an argument or part of an argument is wrong? <i>Highlight it and write down your objection.</i>
Something you agree with	Think the author got something right? <i>Highlight it and write down why you agree</i> especially if you agree for a reason the author hasn't discussed.
Support for a paper	<i>Highlight or note support for your ideas.</i> Evidence for your claims can be useful so you can find them if you need quotes or paraphrases for your paper, and when you need a page citation you've already noted what page it's on.