

Requiring Students to Interact with Texts

Reading Logs

Divide sheet of paper into three columns and write these questions at the top of the columns.

1st: What does it say? 2nd: What does it mean? What does it do? 3rd: Why does it matter? What connections can I make with the class discussions or themes? For each paragraph or page write the answers.

Summary/Response Notebook

Write down new things presented in the readings. Summarize the author's ideas and then ask if those ideas were well supported. Tell whether you agree with the argument and explain why or why not.

Marginalia

Annotate the text with your own words. Summarize paragraphs, sections, and highlight the main ideas. Use discretion. Write down questions that arise as you need. Review the annotations before coming to class and mentally articulate the most important ideas from the text.

Summary Writing

Ask students to write a summary of the reading post it on the electronic forum or bring it to class to be handed in. Specify length and quality. Example: "Give me 75-100 words that summarize the main issues of the text."

Reading Guides

Responses to reading guides or guided-journal questions keyed to readings. Instructors can provide reading guides with questions or terms to help students direct their focus in the readings. Whether there are only five or as many as ten questions or terms, they could cause the students to synthesize material and make connections to broader issues.

Focused Reading Notes or Outline

Take questions asked in class and try to answer them with the readings in a notebook. Make a brief outline that highlights the main ideas and give short supporting reasons provided in the readings. Use outline form.

Imagined Interviews with the Author

Tell students that in the next class period they will be split into groups of two and be expected to assume the role of either the author or interviewer. Do it and ask students to share insights with the class.

Writing "Translations"

For those readings that are particularly full of jargon, assign students to "translate" those ideas into their own words, or even into a famous person's words, i.e. Homer Simpson, Oprah Winfrey, Jay Leno, Larry King, etc. Keep the translations short, succinct, and accurate.

Multiple-choice Questions Developed by Students

Ask students to write two or three multiple choice questions related to the text that represent the central ideas presented. Have them hand the questions at the beginning of class. Consider using them as a starting point for class discussions and/or using them on a future test.

Format the Assigned Reading.

Ask students to divide the reading into its separate parts. Then have them justify why those parts were included. How is part C related to part A? If they are not related, then ask why? How does part B help prepare you for part C? Why did you divide the reading the way you did?

Use Flash Cards

Students who have difficulty retaining the subject matter may benefit from creating flash cards that have the name of the topics written on one side and a full explanation of the topic on the other side.

Skimming the Readings

To help students understand a complex reading encourage them to read the first sentence of each paragraph as well as the first and last paragraph before reading the whole text. This can help them begin to process the ideas and ask necessary questions that will help with their comprehension.

SQ3R Method¹

Survey the Chapter - Determine the structure, organization, or plan of the chapter. Think about the title. Read the introduction, the summary, and the main heads.

Question - Use the questions at the beginning or end of the chapter. Formulate questions by changing the main-heads and subjects to questions. This helps determine relevance and importance of ideas.

Read – Read to answer the questions. Move quickly. Sort out items and ideas and evaluate them. If content does not relate to questions, go on.

Recite – Answer the questions-in your own words. Write the questions in abbreviated form, then write the answer using only key words, listings, etc.

Review – Increase retention by reviewing questions and answers regularly.

¹ From F.P. Robinson's *Effective Study*. New York: Harper's, 1961