

# Improving Comprehension: Active Reading and SQ3R

Successfully increasing the amount and quality of information we are able to glean from our reading can take some practice, but it is well worth the effort. By taking an active role in our reading, we can also save time by reducing the need to re-read.

## ***SQ3R- SURVEY >QUESTION >READ >RECITE >REVIEW***

### **SURVEY- Look over the material before you delve into the text.**

The things we will take note of will vary depending on whether we are surveying literary works or informational texts. For instance, in informational texts you may need to review graphs, charts, and illustrations, while in literary works, these types of things will occur much less often.

- ◆ Take note of the title, the author,
- ◆ Take note of any **boldface** or *italicized* words,
- ◆ Look at how long the text is and break it into manageable sections if necessary,
- ◆ Read any introductory material, if there are questions or things to consider at the end of the passage read those too.

By taking a moment to SURVEY our reading, we are preparing ourselves to take a journey with the author; we are packing our bags so to speak.

### **QUESTION- Based on what we may have learned (or not learned) by surveying, formulate questions.**

If there are subheadings, turn them into questions. Consider what you may already know about the subject matter of what you are going to read, and develop questions that you think may be answered through reading. Here are some questions that may help guide you during reading:

- ◆ What is the author's main idea, thesis, or purpose?
- ◆ Is the author expressing fact, opinion, or both?
- ◆ What is the author's tone?
- ◆ What is the author's purpose?
- ◆ Who is the intended audience?

### **READ-Keeping in mind the questions you have formulated, as well as some of the questions above, *record any answers* that you come across as you read.**

**Mark your text.** Can you separate the main idea from the supporting details?

**If you are reading a literary work versus an informational text or an essay, take note of transitions or words that stand out for one reason or another.** *Transitions can often reflect a change in perspective or position, and those words that stand out to us can reflect choices the author has made in order to set a specific tone.*

### *Some tips for enhancing comprehension:*

- ◆ **If there is a lot of dialogue that is difficult to follow** try underlining or highlighting each character in a different color so that you can be clear about who has said what.
- ◆ **Write out the main idea, the author's point of view and list any words you may be unfamiliar with.** Write what you think they mean using context clues and then look them up, noting the dictionary definition and any synonyms that might be more familiar.
- ◆ **If a paragraph is difficult to understand, again, use context clues.** Read the paragraphs before and after to clarify. Identify the topic sentence. In most academic writing, it should be the first sentence. However, it can also be the last sentence, or the topic can be implied rather than stated plainly.

### **RECITE-Talk out loud or write ideas and supporting material.**

If a passage seems difficult to understand, try reading aloud. *Sometimes by incorporating another sense (hearing or touch) we are able to gain a better understanding, and we can often make retaining and recalling what we have read a bit easier.*

Remember the manageable sections we talked about making in the SURVEY section? At the end of each section, recite key points of what you have just read (main idea, supporting details, or major plot points). Then look back and check for accuracy. Try to identify any missing information and try again.

### **REVIEW-Look over the material immediately and then again later.**

*Immediately:* Construct a mental picture of the section you have read. Think critically, and manipulate the ideas by speculating, comparing, reorganizing, or categorizing. Consider any new ideas in relation to things you already know. Make study notes using key words or phrases.

*Later:* Review all of the notations you have made. Pay special attention to any areas that may benefit from additional information, such as particular details, that will help to clarify connections or make recall a bit easier.

The following page is a template that can help as you get more familiar with being an active reader!

## Survey

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Author \_\_\_\_\_

What type of text are you reading (genre)? Is it an essay, short story, journal article, poem, or novel?

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## Question

Based on the title, author and headings, what might the text discuss? What clues helped you to form this hypothesis?

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Is this text fact or opinion or fiction, and how did you come to that conclusion?

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What do you hope to learn, or what type of experience do you expect to have while reading this text?

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## Read

Summarize the main idea (1-2 sentences):

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List important supporting details:

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What is the author's point of view? Consider whether the text is written in first, second, or third person. Consider as well, why the author has chosen to write that way, and what rhetorical mode is being used. Is the author trying to persuade, describe, analyze etc.?

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Are there any questions that may still need to be answered? Have any new questions been developed since reading? Are there any new words that may need to be looked up? List them here: