

# Critical Reading

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Arresto

Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Literature # \_\_\_\_\_

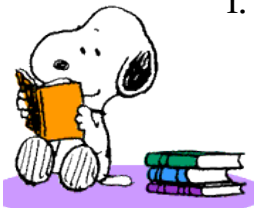
One of the keys to success in school, **in all classes**, is the ability to read *critically*. Hopefully, at this point in your education, you can read. But that doesn't mean that you know how to read *critically*. When people read critically, they are interacting with the text – this is known as **annotating**. To become a critical reader, you must annotate the text: **underline, highlight, and write key words and ideas in the margins**. Obviously, you won't always be able to annotate in the school-issued texts, but in those instances you should read with a pack of Post-Its next to you or simply annotate on a piece of loose leaf.

Students who interact with the text retain more information and retain it longer. In middle school you will have much more reading than you did in elementary school, and the difficulty of the texts will also be greater. Because of this, it is important that you retain as much information as you can the first time through as you won't always have an opportunity to reread the text – especially on timed exams.

Becoming a critical reader is the first step to becoming a critical thinker, which is one of the most important traits of a successful person.

I once attended a conference, and the speaker told us that our students need to “read like a detective, and write like a witness.” It is important to consider that when reading – always look for clues left by the author!

Here are some important notes to help you become fantastic critical readers:



1. **FIND A QUIET PLACE TO READ:** I know it will be tough, but leave your phone in another room! Most of you do not possess the will power to avoid texting for more than seven minutes, so eliminate the temptation. Also, make sure the TV is off, and if you must play music, it should be classical (e.g. Mozart or Beethoven) or something instrumental (meaning no lyrics). If there are distractions, then you can't read critically.
2. **PRE-READ THE TEXT:** Take a quick look at the assignment. Pay careful attention to titles, authors, headings, keys, footnotes, illustrations, publication dates, etc. If you're assigned a single chapter for homework, count how many pages it is before you start reading – you should know how long it takes you to read a page. Preparing yourself for what you're about to read will help you to become a better reader.

## Critical Reading

3. **ANNOTATE AS YOU READ:** If you aren't annotating, then you aren't reading critically. You should always have a pen/pencil/highlighter/Post-It in your hand as you read. Quality readers will *underline, highlight, and write in the margins* when reading. Focus on key words, main ideas, significant quotes, and important data when annotating. **INTERACT WITH THE TEXT!** Studies have shown that students who annotate their texts retain more information than those who solely read.

4. **LOOK FOR CONNECTIONS: Text to text; text to self; text to world.** Connect the reading to other works you've read (text to text), to your own personal life (text to self), and to what's going on in the world around you (text to world). When you make these types of connections, you can more deeply understand and appreciate the work. **Write these connections in the margins.**



5. **READ WITH A DICTIONARY NEARBY:** When you encounter a word that you're unfamiliar with, first, try to figure out its meaning by using context clues. If that doesn't work, look it up and **WRITE THE DEFINITION IN THE MARGIN!** Expanding your vocabulary is a major key to becoming a better reader, student, and human being.

6. **ASK QUESTIONS:** If something confuses you as you read, **write a question in the margin**, and ask your teacher about it the next day in school. Otherwise, you will more than likely forget your question.

7. **REFLECT ON THE READING:** When you're done reading, think about what you've just read. What was the author's purpose or the main idea of the text? What points do you agree or disagree with? What poetic or literary elements do you recognize? Once again, **write these reflections in the margins.**

8. On a test/quiz, always read the **short-response questions** before you read the passage. Doing this will help to guide your reading, and you will be able to underline or highlight the information needed to answer the questions. Excellent test takers know how to budget their time.

