0:00 Hey, welcome back to the Video section of our Writing 121 class. I hope that the pages that you’ve read about active reading have illuminated some ideas for you and I just wanted to underscore what I feel are some very, very important aspects of active reading. And I suppose the number one important aspect of active reading, in my opinion, is to interact with the essay you are reading. And what do we mean by that? Now, the pages have given us a few hints about what this whole interacting with what you’re reading means, but I’ll just share: Take it seriously. You’re in a conversation. When you are reading informative material, instructional material, any kind of material, you’re in an interaction with the author. What active readers do is they take themselves seriously as participants in a conversation, which means you get to ask questions about certain points. What does this person really mean? What is he saying? What kinds of other things are not being said? You want to annotate. If I had another piece of paper I’d hold it up and say ‘Annotate!’ and what that means is make notes in the margins of what you’re reading. Whether you’re using a notepad, whether you’re reading on your Kindle and you can use some sort of digital note-taking device, make notes, ask questions. And the reason for this is because as you begin to use your source material, or the essays you’re reading, as you prepare to, say, write a larger essay, which we’ll be doing in the later units of this class, you’ll be able to refer back to those notes and know what you were thinking while you were reading so that you’re re-reading experience can go that much more smoothly.

2:00 Now, let me share with you a related idea about this interacting with the author that we’re talking about. Now this is a graphic that you’re going to see in this class a bit. Message, audience, and speaker or author, O.K., which ever way you want to do it. This is something called the Rhetorical Triangle, and for you out there that want to do some research, type that into a search engine and you’ll see that our use of the Rhetorical Triangle, as learners of writing and instructors of writing, goes back thousands of years. It’s simply the easiest way to think of what’s happening when we’re writing or when we’re reading because we’re in a kind of dynamic interaction where we have a message that someone’s sharing with us, right, if we’re reading we’re the audience and we need to take into consideration things like ‘Well, how is this author reaching us?’ and then of course, ‘how is that author addressing himself as a credible person?’ ‘Is this person making himself an expert, sharing with us their expertise?’ Now, that’s how we use the Rhetorical Triangle as readers. Later in the class, when we get more into the writing side, you’re going to see that we’ll use the exact same triangle to remind ourselves of incredibly important principles that will help us become credible writers.

3:32 So, for now I just want to remind us about some of the key aspects of active reading. Here they are, are you ready for these? Can you see them with me? Underline important ideas and, wow, jot down notes to help you understand what you are reading. Ask questions. Seek clarity. #1- Interact! Interact with that person writing the review or article or essay or story. Interact that way. And, identify what is essential, circle key terms, record ideas in the margins, get active. Passive reading is not going to help, you can’t just sleep through some of the reading we’re going to be doing in this class. It’s very challenging.

4:29 Another extraordinarily valuable tool that you can use to become an active reader is to get in the habit of summarizing what you’re reading. You’re going to be using it later. So, you want to create summaries. I’m going to give you just a quick and easy technique to summarize right now. On a second reading, and I say this- you have to do your summaries on a second reading because you have to have read the entire piece that you’ve read to really understand the author’s message and purpose, right, to understand what he’s trying to get you to do or believe. Every single writing situation has this aspect of somebody’s trying to get you to do or believe something and you don’t often get it until you’ve finished the piece. Sometimes they’re going to put that zinger at the end and that’s what they’re hoping you’re going to do or believe. So, don’t begin summarizing until you’ve read the piece once.

4:33 But once you have, you go back to it. Then, on your second reading, understand what the writer is hoping the audience will do or believe. That’s the number one thing. You want to basically identify what English teachers call their thesis, right? What’s the main idea of all of these things? It’s the one thing they want you to walk away with. That’s the thesis. If you’re looking for a definition, that’s it. It’s the one thing that this writer wants you to walk away with. So you need to identify that to begin a summary.

6:02 O.K.? And then you want to discover the main idea in each paragraph. Next, you want to create a complete sentence that paraphrases the main idea of each paragraph, O.K. So you find out what the thesis of this piece is and then you write sentences that paraphrase each main idea in each paragraph. You’re going to come up with beautiful summaries. That’s another tool that you can use. So again, as you’re reading jot down those main ideas, ask questions to interact, and summarize what you’re reading so that you really...so that you integrate it into your self. So you take yourself seriously as a student here. So, thanks so much for watching this. There will...questions will follow and I’ll see you in the next one.

This workforce product was funded by a grant awarded by the U.S. Department of Labor’s Employment and Training Administration. The product was created by the grantee and does not necessarily reflect the official position of the U.S. Department of Labor. The U.S. Department of Labor makes no guarantees, warranties, or assurances of any kind, express or implied, with respect to such information, including any information on linked sites and including, but not limited to, accuracy of the information or its completeness, timeliness, usefulness, adequacy, continued availability, or ownership.



Documents also licensed under Creative Commons 4.0 International (CCBY)