

NON-FICTION ANNOTATION

TEACHER GUIDE

STEPS 1-4 – “MARKING THE TEXT”

“Marking the Text” is an active reading strategy that asks students to think critically about their reading. During the first reading, students will come up with a “big picture” summary. While reading the text, students analyze ideas, evaluate ideas, and circle and underline essential information. This strategy has three distinct marks: numbering paragraphs, circling key terms, and underlining information relevant to one’s reading purpose. With pencil in hand, students focus on what is being said in the text, leading to increases in comprehension and retention of textual material.

TIPS FOR “MARKING THE TEXT”

- *Always* have an essential question or prompt for students to use for focused reading.
- If you are not working with consumables, consider photocopying passages of texts that are essential to class discussions or closing activities. Other options include utilizing sticky notes or transparencies and dry-erase markers.
- Remind students that active reading becomes increasingly important as texts become more difficult. This is a strategy designed to help readers gain greater comprehension of challenging texts.
- Summaries have flexibility. One option includes students writing a one sentence “big picture” summary after each section of a text. Another option is simply writing one summary at the end of the entire text.
- Increase opportunities for students to talk about marking the text. Students should discuss their markings as often as possible.
- Provide time for rehearsal; students must have time to practice this skill.
- Create opportunities for students to read and mark a variety of different texts. Reading assignments should vary in length, sophistication, and purpose. However, it is best to practice with shorter pieces.
- Utilize your document camera! Ask students to share their markings over a few paragraphs and discuss their thought process. You can also call on volunteers to lead a practice exercise with the class.
- Collect texts that have been marked and write comments in the margins, explaining to the students what they are doing well and pointing to places in the text that they have overlooked or misunderstood. This is great as a formative assessment.
- As students master this skill, they will need less guidance. Always provide a reading purpose, but do not provide specific directions on how to mark text. When students finish marking the text, ask question such as, *How should you (or did you) mark this text? What did you circle/underline? Why did you make this decision?*

STEP 5-6 – “DIG DEEPER/WRITING IN MARGINS”

Good readers will think about texts in very specific ways as they read. We have defined three common ways highly proficient readers think about the texts they read (clarify, connect, question). Where is this cognitive work done? Readers will use the margins of their texts to record their thoughts, and for non-consumables, students can create temporary margins with sticky notes, record their ideas in their Cornell notes, use transparencies and dry-erase markers, or a photocopy of the original text. These steps could be used on its own as a first-read strategy.

TIPS FOR “DIG DEEPER/WRITING IN MARGINS”

- Be sure to refer students to the back side of the student “Non-fiction Annotation” sheet for the three main parts (clarify, connect, question) of this step.
- Margin writing should connect with the textual markings of steps 2-4, but they are not limited to only those markings.
- Consider teaching students one strategy at a time. Using all three strategies at once may be overwhelming. Be sure to provide time for rehearsal.
- Model for students how to write in the margins using a document camera or overhead projector. Begin with one of the three ways of thinking (for instance, clarifying information). Read a section of text and verbalize your thinking while you read. You will want to show your students how a reader clarifies ideas in the text. You might ask, “What did this passage say?” or “What do I not understand?” After you spend some time talking about the passage, write down some clarifying statements in the margins. Let students follow your lead on their own copy of the text.
- Assign specific paragraphs or sections of text that you would like your students to clarify or think about in some other way. Isolating parts of the text that require deeper analysis will help students learn to identify these by themselves.
- Engage students in various cognitive exercises. Ask question such as “How did this strategy improve your comprehension?” and “Why would readers want to use this strategy?”
- Create opportunities for students to learn this strategy in small groups or pairs.
- These skills are transferable to all academic classes and can be taught throughout the school day.
- Practice writing in the margins on sample state and local exams in order to teach students the value of active reading during testing situations. On the day of the exam, have them write in the margins as they read different passages.