Marking Text

From start to finish, make your reading of any text thinking-intensive. Marking text can help students be active readers. You can either introduce standard text marking symbols, such as:

- ? – question about this
- ?? – confused by this
- C - connecting to something (text, self, world)
- ✓ - knew this before
- ✤ - important idea
- ! – surprising
- L – new learning

Or you might encourage students to develop their own personal symbol system.

In addition to symbols, readers should mark up the margins of text with WORDS:

- ideas that occur to students as they read
- notes about things that seem important
- reminders of how issues in a text may connect with class discussion or course themes.

This kind of interaction keeps readers conscious of the reason they are reading and the purposes you as instructor have in mind. Later in the term, when students are reviewing for a test or project, margin notes will be useful memory triggers.

A good habit for students is to ask questions while reading - “what does this mean?” “why is he or she drawing that conclusion?” “why is the class reading this text?” etc. Students should write the questions down (in margins, at the beginning or end of the reading, in a notebook, or elsewhere). Questions are reminders of the unfinished business readers still have with a text: something to ask during class discussion, or to come to terms with on their own, once they’ve had a chance to digest the material further, or have done further reading.