

Reading, Writing, Thinking



Drew University
Center for Academic Excellence, University Writing Center
Fall 2021

Workshop Itinerary

- Welcome and introductions
 - Roundtable discussion
 - Individual exercises
 - Troubleshooting (Q&A)
 - Wrap-up
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Roundtable Discussion

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Reading

Help! There's too much to read and not enough time to read it!

How can I read both quickly and thoroughly?

Reading

Sometimes, authors use very dense prose to make their points. Other times they use metaphorical, symbolic, or poetic language.

How can I be sure that I've understood an author?

Reading

The authors I'm reading for class often use a vocabulary unique to them.

How can I make authors with different technical vocabularies speak to one another?

Reading

Discipline specific reading strategies?

Thinking

How do I critically evaluate a text that I've read?

Thinking

How do I move from reading a text to making use of it in my own writing?



Writing

How do I move from reading a text to making use of it in my own writing?



Writing

What is style? How do I develop my own style?

Writing

How do I become a better writer?

How do I imitate/incorporate/learn from the style of a writer I like without copying them?

Practical Resources for Further Practice

- 1) Vanderbilt Library, [“Workshop Resources: Reading Efficiently and Effectively”](#) (especially “Charitable Criticism” and “How to Read a Book in an Hour”)
 - 2) [Purdue OWL](#) (Online Writing Lab)
 - 3) *They Say/I Say: The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing* by Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein (in Drew’s Library)
 - 4) *How To Read a Book: The Classic Guide to Intelligent Reading* by Mortimer J. Adler and Charles Van Doren (in Drew’s Library)
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Individual Exercises

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Individual Exercises

Read the following excerpt and try to grasp the main idea of the essay. Then, write 2-3 sentences about what you've gathered.

Include:

- (1) who the author is addressing,
 - (2) what the issue is with which the author is contending, and
 - (3) what the author argues instead.
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“Hidden Intellectualism” by Gerald Graff, in *They Say/I Say* (3rd ed), 244-245.

Everyone knows some young person who is impressively “street smart” but does poorly in school. What a waste, we think, that one who is so intelligent about so many things in life seems unable to apply that intelligence to academic work. What doesn’t occur to us, though, is that schools and colleges might be at fault for missing the opportunity to tap into such street smarts and channel them into good academic work. Nor do we consider one of the major reasons why schools and colleges overlook the intellectual potential of street smarts: the fact that we associate those street smarts with anti-intellectual concerns. We associate the educated life, the life of the mind, too narrowly and exclusively with subjects and texts that we consider inherently weighty and academic. We assume that it’s possible to wax intellectual about Plato, Shakespeare, the French Revolution, and nuclear fission, but not about cars, dating, fashion, sports, TV, or video games.

The trouble with this assumption is that no necessary connection has ever been established between any text or subject and the educational depth and weight of the discussion it can generate.

Real intellectuals turn any subject, however lightweight it may seem, into grist for their mill through the thoughtful questions they bring to it, whereas a dullard will find a way to drain the interest out of the richest subject. That’s why a George Orwell writing on the cultural meanings of penny postcards is infinitely more substantial than the cogitations of many professors on Shakespeare or globalization (104–16).

Students do need to read models of intellectually challenging writing—and Orwell is a great one—if they are to become intellectuals themselves. But they would be more prone to take on intellectual identities if we encouraged them to do so at first on subjects that interest them rather than ones that interest us.

I offer my own adolescent experience as a case in point...

Individual Exercises

Here's one attempt:

In this essay, Graff contends with the common assumption in academic circles that certain subjects are off limits to academic work. He argues that by thinking this way, academics miss opportunities to engage students in academic work through the issues that most interest them. His primary claim is that *anything* can be the subject of academic inquiry if one brings thoughtful academic questions to it.

Individual Exercises

Take a book or essay that you need to read for a final paper or project this semester, and go through the process of pre-reading/skimmming it.

Then write 3-4 sentences summarizing:

- (1) who the author is addressing,
- (2) what the issue is with which the author is contending, and
- (3) what the author argues instead.

Then, write another sentence or two sketching how this text will help you in the point(s) that you hope to make in your paper/project.

Troubleshooting (Q&A)

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Thank you for joining our workshop today! We hope it was helpful!

Please take a moment to fill out the evaluation to let us know how we can improve in the future!



Complete the EVALUATION:
<https://forms.gle/CGW7TzmiM4AiiuaL8>