

# Getting Students to Do the Reading: Best Practices

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- 20% of students surveyed reported that they frequently fail to complete reading assignments (NSSE, 2008)
- It is likely that only 20% to 40% of your class has done the reading on any given day (Hobson, 2004)
- Students assume that the important information will be presented in class (Doyle 2008 cited by OSET)
- Most students (even those that have excelled academically) do not come to college with the skills necessary to read at the college level (Hobson, 2004)
- Students report that the most effective way to get them to do the reading is by having a required quiz or writing assignment—students report that cold calling (typically ungraded) does not work as well as an incentive (Hattenberg and Steffy, 2013, cited in Weimer 2015)

## Accessibility\*

✎ Don't assume students will:

- know how to read in your discipline
- understand why readings are assigned
- make connections between assigned readings and the rest of class
- investigate the text
- take notes effectively (or at all)
- look up words they don't understand
- ask questions

## Accountability

- ✎ Reading quizzes
- ✎ Required written assignments on the reading
- ✎ Summaries or outlines
- ✎ Student created study guide
- ✎ Write-Pair-Share
- ✎ Reading notes to be used during exams (Davis)
- ✎ Evaluate class discussions
- ✎ Stand until they make a comment (McWilliams)

## Applicability

- ✎ Provide context and guidance on what to look for in up-coming assignments
- ✎ Refer to reading assignments during class
- ✎ Repeat quiz questions on tests and exams
- ✎ Build on assignments about the reading (e.g., incorporate them into paper assignments)

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\*The categories of accessibility, accountability, and applicability are from Immerwahr

## Reading Quiz Questions that Promote Active Learning

- ✎ What was the most important point/event/topic in the reading? Why?
- ✎ What was the thesis of the reading?
- ✎ How was the information in the reading presented (e.g., chronologically, topically). What was the effect of this choice?
- ✎ How is the reading connected to the previous class?
- ✎ How is this reading connected to a previous assignment? How will it connect to a future assignment?
- ✎ What was the muddiest point/most confusing aspect of the reading?
- ✎ What questions were not answered by the reading?
- ✎ Is there anything in the reading that is opinion rather than fact? How might the topic be interpreted differently?
- ✎ Is some aspect of the topic neglected by the reading? Overemphasized?
- ✎ How would you summarize the reading for someone else in this class? Would your summary be different for a friend or roommate?
- ✎ Was there a moment during the reading when you started to lose interest? Why?
- ✎ Is there something in the reading you would like to know more about?
- ✎ Does it seem like the author expects you to have background knowledge that you don't have? What would help fill in those gaps?
- ✎ After doing the reading, what would you like to know more about?
- ✎ With whom do you most identify in the reading? Why?
- ✎ Are there lessons from the reading that apply to your life/our time? What does the reading suggest we should do/do differently?
- ✎ From what perspective is the reading written? How would it be different if written from a different perspective?
- ✎ Give an example of an important concept that is defined in the reading
- ✎ Find a quotation in the reading; how does this device support (or fail to support) the author's point?
- ✎ Find a reference to a primary source/secondary source; what function does this serve?

### Monte Carlo Quiz questions (Fernold):

1. Knowledge: Describe the major thesis, the central idea or set of ideas, in the reading. Make certain that the thesis you identify is primary. Also include one or two closely related ancillary or secondary ideas or theses, clearly identifying them as such.
2. Comparison: Identify two concepts or principles presented in the chapter or article and, when you first mention each, underline and define it. Then, show how the concepts or principles in some way(s) are both similar to and different from one another. If you wish, one of the concepts or principles may be selected from another reading, lecture, or discussion in this course.
3. Application: Select a concept or principle in the chapter or article, clearly define or describe it, and then indicate how it applies to you or someone you know. Provide sufficient details to justify convincingly that the concept or principle indeed applies as you suggest.
4. Critique: Write a critical perspective on some aspect of the chapter or article, citing evidence that prompts you to agree or disagree with the author's perspective. Note that a critique may be positive, negative, or some combination of both. Your evidence may be based on (1)

- personal experience, (2) observations of others, (3) reports of others, (4) scientific findings, or (5) logic. When citing evidence, identify the type(s) of evidence you are using.
5. Passion: Citing page number(s), quote verbatim a statement or brief passage that elicits in you some type of emotional response: excitement, frustration, pleasure, anger, sadness, surprise, confusion, fear, delight, some combination of the aforementioned, or whatever. Then identify your emotional response, describe the meaning(s) that the statement or passage has for you, and provide actual or possible reasons for your response.
  6. Student's Choice: Answer any of the above five questions.

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