

# READING & STUDY TIPS for STUDENTS

## Tips for Reading Primary Source Documents and Advanced Level Texts

Sometimes you may encounter articles written at a more advanced reading level than your own. Sometimes you may find words and phrases, events and names that are unfamiliar.

When you read an article or speech from a past time period, you may find that the speaker or author assumes the audience understands certain things that may have been commonly known during the era in which the document or speech was first written. But don't let that stop you! Think like a detective and you will find clues to help you understand what you are reading.

If you find some of the articles and speeches difficult to read, try the following strategies to help increase your reading comprehension. These tips can also be used for reading contemporary news articles.

- 1 Establish a purpose for reading.** What do you expect to learn? How will you need to use this information? What do you need to know or be able to do after reading the document?
- 2 Spend time previewing the material before beginning to read.** Try to identify patterns in the way the text is situated on the page. Look for use of bold and italics, and also determine how headings or titles are used. Examine any pictures that accompany the reading. Skim introductions and conclusions to try to get a sense of the general topic and main idea before diving into the details. Based on your preview, make some predictions about what you will read.
- 3 Adjust your reading speed to the difficulty of the material.** The more difficult the material, the more slowly you may need to read.
- 4 Think strategically to determine the meaning of unfamiliar words.** First of all, do you really need to know the meaning of the word? Try reading the sentence without the word and see if you can still understand what is being said. If so, continue reading. If you do need to know the meaning of the word to understand what is being said, try using context clues: is there a synonym or restatement of the word in the sentence? Does the word refer to something nearby? Is the word an example of something being discussed? You can also use word parts to determine the meaning of a word. Look at the word and see if you can single out its root, prefix(es), or suffix(es). Does the word look similar to any other words you know? If you can't figure out the meaning of the word, look it up in the dictionary or ask someone what it means.
- 5 As you are reading, stop from time to time to check your understanding.** Is what you are reading making sense? The more difficult the article, the smaller

chunks you may need to read at a time. If something doesn't make sense, read a little further to see if it becomes clear. If it doesn't, you will need to go back and re-read from the place where you started to become confused.

- 6 Highlight or underline important words, phrases, or ideas in the text.** Make notes in the margin: point out things that are interesting to you or that you have questions about. If you cannot write directly on the document, use sticky notes or write your questions on notebook paper. Keep track of questions you have as you go so that you can ask your teacher if you do not eventually figure out answers for yourself.
- 7 Visualize what you read while you are reading it.** Does the “movie” in your mind make sense? Visualizing what you read helps clarify understanding and will also help you remember it.
- 8 Discuss what you read with someone else.** Talking about what you have read helps you sort it out in your mind and gain a deeper understanding.
- 9** It can sometimes be helpful to **read a document multiple times**. Just like watching a movie a second time, sometimes you pick up details or ideas that you missed the first time around.
- 10** If you are an auditory learner (meaning: you learn better from hearing than reading), it may help you to **read the document aloud to yourself or to someone else**.
- 11 When you are finished reading, review and reflect.** Summarize what you have read. Write down your thoughts and reactions to the text or discuss them with someone else. Relate what you have learned in the reading to something else (compare it to another document or relate it to yourself or to others).
- 12 Evaluate your goal:** Did you accomplish the purpose you set out to accomplish? Can you do what you needed to do with the information from the reading?
- 13 Do something with what you have learned!** Write a letter or story about it. Draw a picture or create a symbol that represents it. Write and perform a song related to the issues in the reading. Anything you can do to use what you have learned while reading in a new way will help “glue” it into your memory and provide a deeper and more long-lasting understanding.