

Honors English 3: Pre-Course Assignment

Naperville Central High School Communication Arts Department

Reading...is a full-contact sport; we crash up against the wave of words with all of our intellectual, imaginative, and emotional resources."

— Thomas C. Foster, *How to Read Literature Like a Professor*

Welcome to Honors English 3! One of the goals of our course is to discuss literature in a nuanced, analytical, and insightful manner. To do this, we'll need to use the language of literature, or the "language of reading" as Thomas C. Foster calls it, to have these purposeful discussions. For your summer assignment, you are to closely read and annotate *How to Read Literature Like a Professor* by Thomas C. Foster. In this text, Foster explains how to read literary works more deeply. Focusing on patterns, theme, symbolism, allusions, intertextuality, and other literary devices, Foster will give you tips on how to be a more analytical reader, an important skill in our course. It is essential that you read this text closely because not only will it help you complete your summer reading assignment, but it will also provide you with the framework for our study of literary text throughout the school year.

In addition, you'll need to complete the following assignment with insightful commentary, in-depth thinking, and concrete connections.

Directions:

1. Read and annotate *How to Read Literature Like a Professor* by Thomas C. Foster. To this end, consider the following reading strategies based on Mortimer Adler's *How to Read a Book* to help with deciding what to annotate (see next page).
2. Choose **five** chapters to discuss in-depth. One chapter must be from chapters 1-5, the second from chapters 6-10, the third from chapters 11-15, the fourth from chapters 16-21, and the last one from chapters 22-27.
3. Create a five-slide Google Slides presentation—one for each chapter.
 - a. For each chapter you must:
 - i. Summarize the main point of the chapter
 - ii. Select the most important quote from the chapter and be prepared to explain your decision when you present in class
 - iii. Connect the idea in the chapter to something you have previously read or viewed (either in school or for pleasure). You may consider novels, plays, short stories, poems, films, and television shows. You do not need textual evidence from the literature or film connection, but you do need to make sure that you explain with enough detail for the connection to make sense.
5. Save your Slides presentation to your school Google Drive and be ready to submit it to Canvas on the first day of class. While we know some students worked with this book freshman year, the work you complete for this assignment should be new, and we will be using turnitin.com to check for originality and self-plagiarism.
6. Be ready to share and explain your presentation with other members of the class.

Twelve Ways To Mark Up A Book

Books are a fantastic way to gain knowledge. With books, one can learn new techniques, gain new skills, and learn from role models who have been to where one wants to be and can show the way. There are many different ways to read books and just as many ways to remember their salient points. One of the most effective ways to get the most out of a book is to mark it up. There is no standard way to mark up a text, but below are a few ways that students have found effective in marking up a textbook so that one can see the important points quickly, make it more memorable, and make it easy to pick up years later and re-acquaint oneself with the major concepts.

What Not To Do

- **Don't use a highlighter** – Quality marking isn't done with a fat-tipped highlighter. You can't write, which is an important part of marking the text, with a large marker. Get yourself some fine point colored pens to do the job.
- **Don't mark large volumes of text** – You want important points to stand out. Although we all know that everything can't be important, we often highlight all of the text on the page. You want to find the 20% of the text that is important (remember Pareto?) and mark that.
- **Don't take the time to mark up items that you read on a daily basis** – (e.g., magazines, newspapers), unimportant or irrelevant items.
- **Don't mark the obvious** – Don't waste time marking up things that are already in your knowledge-base or skill set. If you already know it, you don't need to mark it.

What To Do

- **Mark the text with a pencil, pen, or, even better, colored fine-tipped pens** – Remember, you are not highlighting, you are writing.
- **Know your preferences** – Some of you have an aversion to mark directly in the text. Books are precious things to many people and they want to protect them from damage and even the wear and tear of everyday use. If this describes you, grab some Post-It brand notes and do your marking and writing on them. This also gives you the advantage to move and reorganize them should you see fit. As for me, I like to mark directly on the page. I find that my books become more valuable to me when I add my contributions to the information that they contain.
- **Underline the topic sentence in a passage** – Remember, each paragraph has one topic sentence. The rest is supporting information and examples. Identify the topic sentence to find it easier.
- **Use codes** – Flag text with codes (e.g., Question marks to indicate disagreement, Exclamation marks to note agreement or to flag a strong statement, triangles to indicate a change in thinking, or a star for the topic sentence).
- **Write the passage topic in the margin as a reminder** – Just a word or two.
- **Write questions in the margin** – When you don't understand something or when you don't understand the author's thought process on a particular topic, write the question in the margin as a reminder to settle the question.
- **Circle new and unfamiliar words** – Look them up as soon as possible.
- **Add your or other author's perspectives in the margins** – Other authors have surely written on the same subject. What do they say? Do they agree with this author? If not, what do they say. Add these ideas in the margins.
- **Add cross-reference notes to other works on the same topic** – Use the author's name and a shortened version of the other book's title.
- **Add structure to a narrative text** – Use 1, 2, 3, 4...or an outline format I. A. B. C. 1, 2, 3, a, b, c...to add a structure that you understand.
- **Draw arrows to related ideas** – Or unrelated ideas...
- **Summarize** – Add your own summary after the last paragraph. That simple exercise will crystalize your thinking on the topic. If you can't write it, you don't understand it.

Extras

Post-It Brand Notes are great ways to also mark locations within books, much like bookmarks do. With Post-It Brand Notes, however, you can mark on them so you can see where you are turning before you start flipping through the pages. One can also use colored paper clips to identify pages or chapters that are important.

Conclusion

The idea is to enter, by way of your markings, into a conversation with the author so that his knowledge is added to yours so that a synthesis occurs and you gain a new understanding.

A new — or new looking — book is a treasure. In my experience, however, I have found that a well-marked book, becomes more like a treasured friend — one that you enjoy seeing again and again. It becomes much more enjoyable than a sterile copy that comes straight from the bookstore. Don't be afraid to mark up the books that you love.