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| **University of Mohamed Kheider- Biskra**  **Department of English**  **Module**: Reading  **Teacher**: Herzallah  **Group**:05/06 |

**How to Understand What You Read**

**Understand How to Read Actively and Critically**

Reading well increases your chances of success not only in college but also at work and in your everyday life. Good readers can find helpful, practical information about anything they are interested in: starting a business, finding a job, treating an illness, protecting themselves from unfair practices, and so on.

Understanding what you read in college — so that you don’t fi nish an assignment without having a clue what it was all about — requires active, critical reading. The steps on the next few pages describe how to read for maximum understanding.

**Preview the Reading**

Before you begin to read, look ahead. Go quickly through whatever you are reading (essay, chapter, article, and so on) to get an idea of what it contains. Many books, especially textbooks, help you fi gure out what is important by using headings (separate lines in larger type, like “Preview the Reading” above). They may also have words in **boldface**. In textbooks, magazines, and journals, words may be defi ned in the margin, or quotations may be pulled out in larger type. When you are reading a textbook or an essay or article in a college course, look through the chapter or piece for headings, boldface type, defi nitions in the margin, and quotations.

**Read Actively**

Reading actively means *doing* something with the reading instead of just looking at the words. Here are a few ideas on how to be actively involved with what you are reading.

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| **Reading Actively**  • Underline or highlight the main idea.  • Use another highlighter to show ideas that support the main idea.  • Put a checkmark (✓) in the margin in places where you find important information,  and go back to review those places when you fi nish reading.  • Put a question mark (?) next to things you do not understand. Go back to  these places later to see if their meaning is clearer after you have read the  whole piece.  • Put an exclamation mark (!) next to ideas or points you do not agree with or  find surprising.  • Write your reactions in the margin. |

As you read, the two most important questions to keep in mind are:

**BASIC READING QUESTIONS**

1. What is the author’s main point?

2. How does he or she support that point?

**Find the Main Point**

The main point is usually introduced early in a selection, so read the first few sentences or paragraphs with special care. If the writer has stated the main point in a single sentence or a couple of sentences, highlight or underline these words.

**PRACTICE 1 Finding the Main Point**

Underline the main point of the following paragraph. Then, write the main point in your own words in the space provided.

1, The ability to select the sex of children will not cause a disastrous imbalance in the world. According to social scientists, worldwide imbalances in the ratio of men to women have happened throughout history due to differences in mortality rates between men and women, catastrophes such as wars and epidemics, and other factors. Such imbalances are not necessarily harmful. In fact, they may be helpful. According to Dr. Malcolm Potts, a professor of public health at the University of California,” If there is a prolonged decrease of one sex over the other, that sex is likely to become more valued by society. We now see this in the case of younger generations of women in Korea and Japan.”

The main point:…………………………………..;;;…………………………………………………

2. On the contrary, the ability to choose the sex of children will benefit the world because it will reduce overpopulation and decrease the number of unwanted children will benefit the world because it will reduce overpopulation. Studies show that if couples strongly want a boy or a girl, they are likely to keep having children until they succeed. In western societies, this trend is producing larger families than people desire or would produce if given more control. Internationally, preference for a son leads to larger families in countries like Bangladesh, Nepal, Egypt, Sierra Leone, and Pakistan. In countries where there are legal restrictions on family size, preference for sons leads to abortion or the killing and/or abandonment of girl babies. Professor Dolly Arora of the University of Delhi, for instance, reports that an estimate 200,000 female fetuses are aborted each year in India. Allowing these parents to choose their child’s sex would eliminate this practice.

The main point:…………………………………..;;;………………………………………………

**Find the Support for the Main Point**

*Support* — the details that show, explain, or prove the main point — takes different

forms, depending on what you are reading. When you read assigned selections in college, you need to be aware of how the author is supporting or proving his or her main point. Ask yourself, “How is the author trying to get me to remember, believe, and agree with the main point being made here?” Sometimes the author uses statistics, facts, definitions, and scientific results to support the main point, and at other times the author uses memories, stories,

comparisons, quotations from experts, and personal observations.

In tests and writing assignments, you are often asked to respond to reading selections. For example, you may be asked to consider an author’s main point and to explain whether you agree or disagree with it. In your response, you would explain *why* you agree or disagree by referring to the author’s support.

**PRACTICE 2 Finding the Main Point and Support ideas**

Double underline the main idea, and place a checkmark in the margin next to sentences that support the main idea.

**Ingrid and Rafael**

When I was ten years old and lived with my parents in Djakarta. Indonesia, I had two good friends, Ingrid and Rafael divided my time between them carefully, playing at Rafael’s house one day and at Ingrid’s the next.BothRafael and Ingrid had moved to Indonesia because of their father’s job; however, that was the closest they ever came to having anything in common. Rafael and Ingrid were almost total opposites in almost every other way.

As I mentioned, Rafael and Ingrid had a few similarities. Both of them were from foreign countries. Rafael was from Mexico, but he could speak English fluently, just as Ingrid, who was from Sweden, could, therefore, it was easy for us to communicate with each other. Another similarity was their family background. Both of their fathers were businessmen who traveled a lot. As a result, Ingrid had moved often and had lived in several other countries, just as Rafael had. Finally, both of my friends lived in my neighborhood.

Although my friends had similar background, they were as different as two children can be. First of all, they were completely dissimilar in appearance. Rafael had charcoal black hair, while Ingrid had shiny blond hair. Rafael’s beautiful white teeth were perfect compared to Ingrid’s, which were so crooked that she had to wear braces. On the other hand, Ingrid always dressed up and looked pretty in her pink dresses, whereas Rafael liked to wear torn jeans and untied black shoes. Ingrid’s face, with its sunkissed, freckled nose, was soft and feminine; in contrast, Rafael’s face, with its lively black eyes and sharp nose, was definitely masculine.

Another difference between my two childhood friends was in the activities we did together. When I played with Ingrid, I always came home clean, but when I played with Rafael, I usually came home covered with dirt and with scratched arms and legs. Ingrid and I usually did things girls do. For example, when we went to the beach in the summer, we spend the day collecting seashells and building sand castles. In contrast to Ingrid’s and my quiet activities at the beach, Rafael’s and my games were noisy. Sometimes we tried strings onto locusts’ wings and flew them around our heads like motorized model airplanes. We shouted and ran and threw sand at each other. In addition, while Ingrid and I could play for hours and hours without arguing, Rafael and I often fought. He would hold my arms and get his brother Armando to hit me in the stomach. One day, I got mad and punched Rafael right on his nose. I didn’t play with Rafael for a while after that.

To summarize, my two childhood friends were as different as two children could be. Ingrid was quiet, soft, and well-behaved; in contrast; Rafael was noisy, rough, and mischievous. However, I had fun with each of them and cried for days when moved away.

**PRACTICE 3 ( Reading Actively)**

Look back at the “Reading Actively” . Using the techniques listed there, read the following paragraphs actively.

**The right to own guns**

Since the first immigrants arrived in North America, guns have been part of American culture. The newcomers from Europe clearly needed guns for survival. They needed them to hunt for food and to defend themselves against attacks by hostile Indians. Later, as people moved west, they faced all of the dangers of living alone in a wild land. Again, guns were necessary for survival. In the ‘’Wild West,’’ settlers faced wild animals, angry Indians, and violent criminals. There was little or no law enforcement, and if someone wanted to steal your horse or your cow, there was no police department to call, no court, no judge, and no jail. People were truly on their own to defend their family and their property. Therefore, everyone had a gun, and gun ownership became as much a part of American culture as hot dogs and blue jeans. It is therefore not surprising that the writers of the U.S. Constitution gave every citizen the right to own guns.

**Read Critically**

Reading critically means *thinking* about what you read while you read it. Many people believe what they read without questioning it: If it is in print, it must be true, right? Actually, *no,* particularly with material you read on the Internet or in advertisements. You need to examine ideas carefully and question them before accepting what you read as truth.

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| **Critical Reading Questions**  • What is the purpose?  • What is the main point?  • What evidence, explanations, or claims does the writer use?  • Does the writer show evidence of bias? How?  • If there is fine print (like in a credit card offer or an advertisement), do I know what it says and what I am agreeing to?  • What do I think of what I have read? Why, specifically?  • How does what I have learned connect to other things I know? How does it relate to experiences I have had?  • What questions do I have about either the writer or the information presented? (In college, these are questions to raise in class.) |

**PRACTICE 4 ( Reading Critically)**

-Use your notes on “The Right to own guns” to respond to the questions in the “Reading Critically” box.

**PRACTICE 5 Reading Critically**

Working by yourself or with other students, read the following document: Designer Babies, Learning to drive/Frustration at the Airport and answer the critical reading questions.

**1.** What is the writer’s purpose?

**2.** Is the writer biased?

**3.** What are the key words or major claims?

**4.** What do you think of what you have read? Why? Does anything seem

odd, unrealistic, or unreliable? Give specific examples.

**Designer Babies**

The young husband and wife fill out the order form together: male, blue eyes, blond hair,62 tall,20/20 vision, muscular body build, athletic ability,1Q of 130+ quick wit, pleasing personality. They give the completed form to their doctor, who sends it to the laboratory. The lab prepares the correct mixture of genes and sends it back to the doctor, who injects it into the freshly fertilized egg that will become the couple’s first child. Science fiction? No, according to some scientists. They say that the time is coming when parents will be able to choose their children’s physical and mental characteristics as well as their sex. The question is no longer can we make designer babies. Now the question is should we. Although there are certainly reasons to be cautious with this or any new technology, I believe the benefits of genetic engineering far outweigh the dangers. (**Thesis statement)**

Opponents of genetic engineering say that it is wrong to tamper with nature.They fear that allowing parents to choose their children’s sex will cause a disastrous imbalance in the ratio of men to women in certain areas.Others fear that genetic engeneering will lead to the creation of “gene stores”where people can buy and sell genes.Even worse,they predict that children will become manufactured objects,like automobiles of dishwashers.

In response to the first argument, I say that human beings are constantly tampering with nature-from cesarean section to heart transplants and laser surgery. If it isn’t wrong to save lives by transplanting genes? For example, it is known that a gene named ap0-A1 increases a person’s level of HDL, the good cholesterol, and therefore reduces the risk of heart disease. Would it be wrong to transplant this gene to help a child in family with a history of early death from heart disease? To give another example, it is also known that having two copies of the gene CCRS provides immunity to the AIDS virus. Would it be wrong to use this technology to prevent the deaths of millions? Since genetic engineering can eliminate fatal genetically transmitted diseases such as cystic fibrosis and Tay-Sachs disease, why shouldn’t we use it?

The ability to select the sex of children will not cause a disastrous imbalance in the world. According to social scientists, worldwide imbalances in the ratio of men to women have happened throughout history due to differences in mortality rates between men and wwomen, catastrophes such as wars and epidemics, and other factors. Such imbalances are not necessarily harmful. In fact, they may be helpful. According to Dr. Malcolm Potts, a professor of public health at the University of California,” If there is a prolonged decrease of one sex over the other, that sex is likely to become more valued by society. We now see this in the case of younger generations of women in Korea and Japan.”

On the contrary, the ability to choose the sex of children will benefit the world because it will reduce overpopulation and decrease the number of unwanted children will benefit the world because it will reduce overpopulation. Studies show that if couples strongly want a boy or a girl, they are likely to keep having children until they succeed. In western societies, this trend is producing larger families than people desire or would produce if given more control. Internationally, preference for a son leads to larger families in countries like Bangladesh, Nepal, Egypt, Sierra Leone, and Pakistan. In countries where there are legal restrictions on family size, preference for sons leads to abortion or the killing and/or abandonment of girl babies. Professor Dolly Arora of the University of Delhi, for instance, reports that an estimate 200,000 female fetuses are aborted each year in India. Allowing these parents to choose their child’s sex would eliminate this practice.

Finally, I don’t believe that genetic engineering will lead to designer babies in the bad meaning of the phrase. I believe that after a period of discussion and experimentation, humankind will develop responsible practices for genetic engineering, just as it is developing responsible practices for other innovations of technology such as atomic energy and the Internet. As psychologist Joshua Coleman, Ph.D., stated in recent article on the subject,” Most people have responded to each breakthrough in evolution of human reproduction technology in a balanced manner.”There is no reason to think that they will not continue to do so.

In conclusion, although I agree that we should be cautious in using this powerful new technology, I believe that genetic engineering will lead to the elimination of diseases, the reduction of overpopulation, and improved conditions for females. It will not produce a generation of look-alike supermodels with genius1Qs,as some people fear.

**Text n:02**

**Learning to drive**

I could not believe it. Driving laws in Ontario allowed teenagers to get their licenses at the age of sixteen! As my sixteenth birthday approached, I beamed with excitement and anticipation. What I did not know at the time was this: The driving lessons that I learned in our old sedan would stay with me for the rest of my life.

My father, who adored driving, was the obvious choice to be my driving instructor. The first lesson took place in the driveway. While I sat in the passenger seat, he explained the devices in the car. I was particularly frightened by the gear shift, which was sticking out of the floorboard. However, my father patiently lectured on the different floor pedals, the turn signals, and, my favorite, the car horn.

Two weeks of lessons passed, and I was beginning to get bored with the scenery, which never changed. My father had me drive around the same block again and again. I was passing the same landmarks—the neighbors’ houses, the dead tree down the street, and the kids who were playing in the empty lot on the corner. When I could stand it no more, I asked to move to a street that had more action. “Tomorrow. I think you are ready,” my father replied, his eyes twinkling with pride.

My emotions were in overdrive the next day. I was finally on a busy street at night. I shifted from first gear to second gear with no problems. Then came third gear. When I reached the speed that I wanted, I put the car into fourth. I was flying in the old sedan! My father’s concerned voice broke my spell. He said calmly, “Honey, there’s a red light ahead.” I was traveling far above the speed limit and heading toward a red light. All the information that I had learned in the previous weeks leaked out of my brain. I did not know how to react. I blared the horn and flew through the intersection, which by pure luck was empty.

It is now thirty years later, and I have not forgotten that day. In fact, if I accidentally drive through a red light now, I remember the emotions of a sixteen-year-old and the wisdom of a loving father who taught her to drive.

**Text n:03**

**Frustration at the Airport**

I had never been more anxious in my life. I had just spent the last three endless hours trying to get to the airport so that I could travel home. Now, as I watched the bus driver set my luggage on the airport sidewalk, I realized that my frustration had only just begun.

This was my first visit to the international terminal of the airport,

and nothing was familiar. I could not make sense of any of the signs. Where was the check-in counter? Where should I take my luggage? I had no idea where the immigration line was. I began to panic. What time was it? Where was my plane? I had to find help because I could not be late!

I tried to ask a passing businessman for help, but my words all came out wrong. He just **scowled** and walked away. What had happened? I had been in this country for a whole semester, and I could not even remember how to ask for directions. This was awful! Another bus arrived at the terminal, and the passengers came out carrying all sorts of luggage. Here was my chance! I could follow them to the right place, and I would not have to say a word.

I dragged my enormous suitcase behind me and followed the group. We finally reached the elevators. Oh, no! They all fit in it, but there was not enough room for me. I watched in despair as the elevator doors closed. I had no idea what to do next. I got on the elevator when it returned and gazed at all the buttons. Which one could it be? I pressed button 3. The elevator slowly climbed up to the third floor and

jerked to a stop. A high, squeaking noise announced the opening of the doors, and I looked around timidly.

Tears formed in my eyes as I saw the deserted lobby and realized that I would miss my plane. Just then an elderly airport employee shuffled around the corner. He saw that I was lost and asked if he could help. He gave me his handkerchief to dry my eyes as I related my predicament. He smiled kindly, and led me down a long hallway. We walked up some stairs, turned a corner, and, at last, there was customs! He led me past all the lines of people and pushed my luggage to the inspection counter.

When I turned to thank him for all his help, he was gone. I will never know that kind man’s name, but I will always remember his Unexpected courtesy. He helped me when I needed it the most. I can only hope that one day I will be able to do the same for another.

**Review and Reflect**

When you have finished an article, an essay, a chapter, or a book, take some time to go back and look at your highlighting, marks, and notes to yourself. To help you remember the reading and your reaction to it, you may want to make more notes as you reflect. Reread things you did not understand, and try to answer the following questions.

■ How would you summarize what you have read in a few sentences?

■ What is your overall reaction to what you have read? Why do you have this reaction? (Note: If you answer, “It’s boring,” you need to give some specific reasons why.)

■ What do you think your teacher wants you to get from the reading? Now we will move to reading documents that are part of every college course: course syllabi and textbooks.

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| **English 098 — Tuesday / Thursday, 8:30 –10**  **Professor Murphy**  **Phon**e: 708-555-1113 / E-mail: murphy@sssc.edu  **Office hours**: T / Th, 11–12:30 and by appointment  **COURSE DESCRIPTION:** Students will use the writing process and will read, write,  and edit effectively as well as use and document online and library sources.  **COURSE OBJECTIVES:**  • Use a variety of writing strategies.  • Recognize and correct grammar errors.  • Read and think critically and apply information.  • Develop ideas in paragraphs and essays with clear theses.  **COURSE MATERIALS**: Susan Anker, Real Writing with Readings, Fifth Edition  **GRADING POLICIES (PERCENTAGE OF GRADE):**  Papers 60% Homework 10%  Tests 25% Class participation 5%  **GRADING SCALE FOR TESTS AND PAPERS**:  **A** 90 –100% **C** 70 –79%  **B** 80 – 89% **D** 60 – 69%  **COURSE POLICIES:**  • Attendance: Class attendance is required. Students who miss more than three  classes must schedule an appointment with me to avoid penalty.  • Classroom rules: Arrive on time. Turn off cell phones.  • Late or missed work: No late work is accepted without my consent.  • Academic integrity: This course adheres to the college handbook. |

**PRACTICE 6 Reviewing Your Syllabus**

Read your syllabus for this course. (1) What are the course goals? (2) What is the absentee policy? (3) Where is your teacher’s office, and when are office hours?