BUILDING AND ANALYZING TEXTS THROUGH READING AND WRITING
PROCESSES IN THE COLLEGE COMPOSITION CLASSROOM

A Project

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by
Julia V Prilepina

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Approved by:

________________________, Committee Chair
Amy Heckathorn

________________________, Second Reader
Dan Melzer

________________________
Date
Student: Julia V Prilepina

I certify that this student has met the requirements for format contained in the University format manual, and that this project is suitable for shelving in the Library and credit is to be awarded for the project.

__________________________, Graduate Coordinator
David Toise

___________________
Date

Department of English
Abstract

of

BUILDING AND ANALYZING TEXTS THROUGH READING AND WRITING PROCESSES IN THE COLLEGE COMPOSITION CLASSROOM

by

Julia V Prilepina

This project explores the role of reading process(es) in the college composition classroom. It seeks to present college composition students and teachers with useful reading as well as writing strategies that might benefit both as they engage in activities in the classroom. This project focuses on reading processes as a way to guide students and teachers in discussing how authors develop the content, structure, and organization of texts. The author chose a social constructivist theoretical framework to stimulate both students and instructors to build a unique response to texts. Relying on a variety of scholars whose focus was to discuss practical applications of reading processes, the author developed advice that foregrounded the value of critical reading and writing skills and the ability to track the individual reader’s and writer’s progress in the classroom. Knowing how to read well might pave the way not just for helping students become better critical readers but more importantly critical writers.

____________________________, Committee Chair
Amy Heckathorn

____________________________
Date
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CHAPTER 1: COVER ESSAY

F. Scott Fitzgerald once said, “All good writing is swimming under water and holding your breath.” While this author’s works are most often read for their literary value, over the years, I have learned to really appreciate his advice for writers. In particular, for me, Fitzgerald’s perspective on writing reveals the pressure that writers undergo when they first set out to write. In line with this advice, I believe that writers actually transition from the initial drafting stage to an advanced stage in their writing processes as soon as the pressure they experience and the effort they invest when formulating the draft become imperceptible to the reader. In other words, the writing product must sound effortless. I learned to appreciate the value of the writing process as I worked on writing assignments and on my final project in the M.A. Composition program. When planning, drafting, and revising documents for this project, I attempted to provide students and teachers with advice that they could actually use when reading, writing, and thinking about texts. The documents I created include tips, strategies, and suggestions that users can look at to guide them toward a better understanding of texts. In my materials, I also discuss strategies for reading actively, interacting with texts, reading critically, and analyzing reading material.

My overall goals and interests as a writer and future composition instructor emphasize the importance of helping students organize their reading and writing processes. I believe that as readers and writers we participate in an ongoing conversation with texts we encounter on a daily basis, whether they are academic or not. I have
realized that learning to write well requires rigorous discipline and enough courage to experiment with writing. To this end, my goal is to provide students with reading and writing strategies that will help them effectively use and distinguish between different genres such as scholarly articles, essays, and literacy narratives; understand and explain the content, context, and structure of texts; and critique their content, structure, and organization. As a writing instructor, I want to help students build self-confidence when working on any writing task, no matter how challenging.

My M.A. portfolio as a whole speaks to my understanding of what composition and rhetoric classroom pedagogy entails. An extensive knowledge of classroom pedagogy, including an awareness of different pedagogical styles such as expressivism and the social epistemic that I have gained through coursework and MA research, has helped me develop a unique approach to teaching writing as well as reading strategies in the college composition classroom. After an excursion into the theoretical and practical aspects of various classroom pedagogies, I realized that I lean primarily toward social constructivism. Social constructivists argue that the process of reading texts helps us develop our worldview and construct (or reconstruct) texts out of the available languages (Bartholomae and Petrosky). Writing instructors who apply a social constructivist approach in the classroom will encourage students to use language that they are familiar with and that will help them understand what the text is discussing and why. As opposed to other approaches to teaching writing, this approach sees it as a uniquely social process where writers interact with texts and recognize that they are part of an ongoing
conversation with other texts. When discussing how texts are organized, Bean et al. suggest that exploring texts in the classroom entails more than just conveying information to the reader. They claim that it is a dynamic process in which the reader collaborates with the writer and interacts with his or her worldview (9). According to social constructivism, readers participate in a conversation with texts and use the language(s) they are familiar with to construct and understand them. The materials I develop in this project encourage readers to critically self-reflect about writing as a social process.

Looking back, I can now see that it was after my internship in a first-year composition classroom that I became particularly interested in exploring reading strategies for my M.A. project. When working with students in that class, I observed closely how they read and wrote about texts. One of the details I noticed was that many of them simply got lost when they began reading and could neither really locate the main ideas nor understand the direction of the text. Anxious to help them, I asked the students to look at the beginning and ending of the text and identify its general and specific points. By the time they were done, I encouraged them to note the author’s progression of ideas. When leading class discussion during one session, I asked students to compare and contrast two course readings. In the process, I prompted them to develop a Venn diagram in which they summarized the main points in the texts and identified their major similarities and differences. As they worked on this activity, I asked them to consider questions such as the following: What are the author’s main points? What are the supporting points? What examples does the author give to substantiate the main points?
The students responded positively to my attempts to simplify and organize their reading processes. They were able to identify the similarities and differences between the arguments of two authors who were writing about the same topic and yet had their own unique positions on the issue. Besides helping them compare and contrast two course readings, this activity encouraged them to skim, annotate, and reflect on their responses to texts they read. It also prepared them for responding to a writing assignment in which they were asked to compare and contrast course readings. I have always been interested in helping students develop effective reading and writing strategies. My experience in this class contributed to my interest in this topic as well as helped me come up with useful tips and strategies for working with students in the college composition classroom.

This portfolio sees language as meaning making, since my materials and especially my publishable document discuss advice for students and instructors that stimulates both to think about the academic discourse communities of texts. As I worked on this project, I understood the value of seeing texts as part of discourse communities. In particular, I realized that as readers we should strive to make the text our own when we read. Being aware that all texts are part of a discourse community is important, because no texts are read and written in isolation. I believe that readers and writers should always share ideas when working on reading and writing processes. To this end, my M.A. project and overall purpose as a teacher lean toward a profound understanding of textual context and stimulate readers and writers to always be aware of the discourse community to which a particular text belongs. Consequently, in my project, I develop advice for
students and instructors that centers on understanding and evaluating the contexts that surround texts in the college composition classroom. In particular, some of my suggestions encourage students to consider the kind of readers who would read a given text and why. When developing class activities and suggestions for instructors, I take into account how the contexts of different texts help readers understand and reflect on the particular discourse community to which those texts belong. I also suggest that the formal and informal as well as the technical and nontechnical language of texts could be used as a clue to identifying their particular discourse community.

I am aware that students bring their own perspectives to texts, ones that are informed by their unique experiences with reading and writing as well as their use of language in general. Consequently, I ask students to practice reformulating or rewriting texts in a language or dialect that they understand. I believe that students will actually be able to connect to and understand the discourse communities of which these texts are part if they can adapt to the language that they use. In my project, I focus on helping students get used to different dialects in them. Translating texts into a language they understand is central, since they will be able to effectively use the dialect only if they rewrite it in the form that is accessible to them. Bean et al. recommend students to “[r]ewrite the selection [in texts], condensing where [they] can. Substitute [their] own words for the author’s, and add transitions to show the relationship between ideas” (232). As Bean et al. suggest, translating texts into a language students understand is vital when summarizing, since they are encouraged to make them their own by rewriting them in a dialect they are
 accustomed to using. In other words, I believe that when working in the college composition classroom it is absolutely necessary for teachers to make students aware of the different dialects that are used in the particular discourse communities of the texts they read. One of the goals of my M.A. project was to develop materials for students and instructors in the college writing classroom. To this end, I attempted to come up with advice that both could refer to when reading and writing about texts.

When developing my statement of teaching philosophy, I tried to think like a writing teacher and aimed to create strategies that I would actually use in the writing classroom. As I drafted my statement, I thought back to my experiences as a teaching assistant in a first-year college composition class and considered how I could better equip students for planning, writing, and revising writing assignments. The statement as a whole discusses my unique approach to teaching writing and places special emphasis on the organization of writing processes. The focus is thus to help students organize these processes by building self-confidence and keeping track of their individual progress as writers. My rich variety of experiences as a student and a teacher assistant throughout my undergraduate and graduate education helped me realize that teaching writing requires real dedication, understanding, and the genuine acceptance of students’ diverse reading and writing processes. Another major goal of my statement was to encourage students to interact with topics they write about. To this end, one of the strategies I outlined involved asking students to review their own drafts after they finish them and write comments on their work. My goal was to encourage them to interact and critically think about what
they wrote. In my statement, I accentuated the value of having students skim their own drafts “to get an overview of the architecture” (Spears and Spears 161). I believe that getting into the habit of doing this will help them become more aware of connections between reading and writing processes. My statement also underscores helping students practice using effective prewriting strategies so that they can prepare for drafting their writing assignments. My philosophy as a whole emphasizes teaching students to monitor their own progress and identifies the writing teacher’s role as an experienced coach who can support and watch them as they grow.

My project discusses the development of effective reading strategies that students and teachers can use in the college writing classroom. Thus, the variety of sources I include in my annotated bibliography use a social constructivist approach to discuss reading and writing processes. Some of these sources emphasize scholarly and theoretical approaches to the reading-writing connection. Scholars such as Peter Elbow identify and describe the existing conflict between reading and writing and aim to establish balance between the two by emphasizing writing over reading in the composition classroom. In addition, Nancy Morrow examines the student’s and teacher’s purpose for reading, which is to understand readings and be able to explain what a particular text discusses and how it can be applied in the classroom. Other sources in my bibliography discuss practical approaches to teaching the reading-writing connection. Scholars such as Bean et al., Bartholomae and Petrosky, and Salvatori all see reading as a process of composing meaning and reflect on how to use academic discourse such that students will move from
being more passive readers who merely reproduce texts they read and write about to being readers who apply what they read and actively interact with the texts they compose. After I had collected and annotated all these sources, I had a much better sense of the overall direction of my project.

My experience reading these materials has helped me realize that in order to understand the content, structure, organization, and context of a given text readers should identify their reading goals and plan out reading processes before they begin reading. As Bean et al. suggest, good readers should be able to actively read texts with an understanding of their goals in mind and “learn to recognize different authors’ purposes and methods, the ways that claims are typically asserted and supported in different disciplines, and the types of evidence that are valued by those disciplines” (5). My goal when teaching will thus be to help students become aware of different genres and the various conventions used in specific disciplines. I will work with students to help them become active readers and writers. The bibliography as a whole reflects my strong belief in the connections between reading and writing processes. At the same time, the sources I have gathered reinforce my vision of the social constructivist theoretical framework that I used throughout my project.

I was always very interested in developing reading strategies for college composition students. Initially, I was planning to conduct a study that explored the relationship between reading and writing processes. I was intending to research annotation reading strategies and examine how an increased focus on them in the college
writing classroom could help students become better readers and writers. My research questions were the following: Does the process of using annotation reading strategies in the college composition classroom to identify main ideas in texts help students write well-supported rhetorical analysis papers? How does annotation help them develop their formal academic writing skills? In addition, I always knew I was interested in exploring integrated reading and writing. As I started working on the project, however, I realized that it would not be feasible for me to actually find subjects for, organize, and go through the entire process in a timely manner. At that point, my first reader suggested that I reconsider my research design. After pondering and weighing my options, I decided to write guides for teachers and students that develop tips and strategies for reading about texts. Looking back, I now realize that the writing process in all its stages requires a special emphasis on critical self-reflection. Throughout, I kept constantly reflecting about my process, which involved active planning, multiple drafts, and careful organization. At every stage, I questioned the content, organization, and structure of my documents and attempted to formulate diverse reading strategies that both instructors and students can use in the classroom.

My guides for students and instructors focus on developing useful advice for working with texts in the college composition classroom. My advice for students emphasizes tips and strategies they can use to help them locate and make sense of major ideas in reading material. In my guide, I develop effective strategies for skimming and annotating texts as well as cover a variety of other strategies that I believe are useful to
students when reading. Further, I encourage them to organize how they read texts and think about why they are reading them in the first place. I also motivate them to perpetually question readings and reflect on how what they read expands and changes their worldview in a significant or meaningful way. The guide as a whole covers effective tips for simplifying texts to help students understand how major points are structured. In particular, one piece of advice I offer students when helping them recognize and identify the structure of texts is to look at what parts they are made up of and consider the length of the introduction, body and conclusion. In my guide, I encourage students to reflect on how the length of texts they read influences their responses to them. Looking back on the multiple revisions that this document has undergone, I can now conclude that it may prove useful to students, since it breaks down reading processes for them and trains them to effectively work with any text.

In the meantime, my advice for instructors discusses ways to understand texts, make connections between reading and writing, teach active reading, analyze genres, and teach reading processes. The tips, activities, and assignment and rubric suggestions focus on helping instructors simplify the process of training students to read texts in the college writing classroom. Some of the classroom activities that teachers can use ask students to read texts selectively and only focus on those parts that discuss the main points, supporting points, examples, transitions and conclusions. Others encourage them to create pointers as they read. In retrospect, as I look through the materials I created, I can conclude that by scaffolding reading and writing processes students and teachers can both
move toward an advanced understanding of texts and how they are constructed.

Owing to my participation in this program, I understood the importance of socially constructing texts during reading and writing processes. I now realize that as readers we should strive to make the text our own when we read. When reading, we discuss texts, share ideas and socially construct our understanding of them. Bawarshi suggests that “[t]he reader is in charge because it is the reader who decides whether to accede to the writer’s intentions or resist them” (21). I believe that readers and writers should always share ideas when working on reading and writing processes. Further, readers should understand writers’ intentions and be able to follow their reasoning. To this end, my M.A. project and overall purpose as a teacher rely on a profound understanding of textual context and stimulate readers to always be aware of the text's particular discourse community. In my project, I develop advice for students and instructors that centers on understanding and evaluating the contexts that surround particular texts in the college composition classroom.

Due to my experience with this project, I learned that developing materials for documents of this scale requires a great deal of commitment both on the student’s and the teacher’s part. I also learned that the process of working on projects that necessitate careful planning and painstaking revision depends as much on the student’s efforts and organization as on the teacher’s ability to understand and help organize the writing process. One of the realizations I made is that a real teacher should encourage students to develop the freedom to think for themselves as well as trust in their ideas and unique
understanding of texts. Further, I understood that it is up to the teacher to help students build the confidence to read and write any text regardless of the subject matter or the assignment’s level of difficulty. My eventual goal as an instructor is to help students organize their reading and writing processes and guide them in dealing with any text they encounter. I think that the writing teacher is supposed to trust in their success as much as the students themselves and actively support them as they move from one writing assignment to the next.

I believe that writing in general helps us develop into responsible learners. As a writing teacher, I will encourage students to take responsibility for the kinds of choices they make when they write. My experience planning, writing, and revising documents for my M.A. project has helped me realize more than ever that the writing process requires thorough understanding of the content, careful organization of the structure, and enough knowledge of the context of the particular writing topic. The purpose of my project is to show that students should scrupulously go through every step of this process without glossing over details. I also highlight the importance of understanding, organizing, and evaluating both reading and writing processes. In view of my experience with my project, I believe that my responsibility as a writing instructor is to guide students as they engage in their unique processes. Ultimately, the project's focus speaks to my eventual goal as an instructor, which is to help students make responsible reading and writing choices in the college composition classroom.
CHAPTER 2: TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

I have always had a profound regard and admiration for the figure of the teacher-scholar. The best and most gifted writing teachers in my life have taught me a lesson that has remained with me since. From them, I learned that reading and writing are elaborate processes that require rigorous annotation of texts, thorough development of ideas, active revision, and infinite patience. Looking back, I now realize that the teacher's task is to guide students toward a clearer understanding of reading and writing processes. My purpose as a writing instructor is to help students become aware of the diverse learning community of which they are part and learn to accept a variety of views and approaches in the classroom. As a teacher, I will prompt them to construct their own understanding of texts and practice effectively using their unique reading and writing processes.

When working with students in the college composition classroom, I rely on a social constructivist theoretical approach. According to it, readers and writers construct their own understanding of texts and recognize that they are in an ongoing conversation with other texts (Bean et al.). Further, teachers who practice this approach in the classroom can present students’ varied responses to texts as evidence that reading is a constructive act (Bartholomae and Petrosky). As a teacher, I will aim to help students perceive how they can best construct an understanding of texts.

I want to equip students with the skills to organize their writing processes for themselves so that they will be able to address any writing topic. I will focus on helping them develop a sense of how they will write the content, structure their ideas, and build connections to other texts they read. One of my goals as an instructor is to help students
plan their writing processes thoroughly when confronted with any writing task. One prewriting technique that Spears and Spears mention is brainstorming: “In [a] brainstorming session, [the student] d[oes] not worry about logical order or sentence structure or spelling. She ask[s] questions and [gives] some tentative answers” (334-335).

As a teacher, I will emphasize prewriting and ask students to read and write texts in stages. I will work with them on structuring and organizing their unique writing processes and ask them to narrate or explain how they will plan, write, and edit their writing assignments. As I discuss students' writing processes with them, I will also stimulate them to build self-confidence as writers.

A major goal of my teaching philosophy is to ask students to constantly think about how they read and write and why. Accordingly, one of my techniques as a teacher will be to help students translate texts they write about into a language they are familiar with and can understand. In particular, I will motivate them to explain what they understand in texts both to each other and to me. For this reason, in some of the activities I use in the classroom I will ask them to paraphrase texts they read. As a teacher, I will also prepare students for reading texts that are written in a variety of genres. I will have them practice paraphrasing and describing the rhetorical features of texts. To help them better understand assigned texts, I will ask them to rewrite the subject and purpose of reading material in their own words. This activity will enable them to think about the rhetorical features of texts and help them identify how well they understand what they read.
In addition, I will assign students to explain what they read in their own words by summarizing, synthesizing, and analyzing the causes and effects in texts they work with. I want to help students identify what they already know about the topic and think about how their knowledge affects their understanding of texts. I believe that one of my responsibilities as an instructor is to provide students with a solid toolbox of skills and tools that they can refer to when reading complex texts and responding to challenging writing topics. Hence, I will ask students to summarize, synthesize, and analyze texts' causes and effects when working on reading and writing assignments. In doing so, I will help them build a better understanding of how texts are developed and structured.

One of my practices is to motivate students to skim their own drafts before revising them. I will recommend them to review their work by writing comments on their papers to guide them in their revision. Regardless of the purpose and scope of the assignment, I will prompt them to approach writing tasks with confidence and strong awareness of content, structure, and style. When teaching, I will ask students to skim their own drafts because I believe that before they read texts and work on writing assignments they should first become aware of the content and structure of the text. Further, I will help them learn to distinguish between main ideas and specific points.

My experience working in the high-school and college composition classroom was vital in developing my teaching philosophy. As a classroom assistant, I formulated a unique approach to teaching reading and writing processes. My goal was to help students gradually build an understanding of texts. When I was an undergraduate at UC Davis, I worked as a teaching assistant at Davis Senior High School for a full academic year.
More recently, while completing my M.A. degree in Composition at CSUS, I interned in a first-year college composition course at American River College. As an intern and teaching assistant, I worked primarily in English, ESL, and foreign language classrooms. I focused on helping students develop a sense of how they can effectively plan, write, and revise their writing products. In English and ESL classrooms, I aimed to help them improve the quality of the content, organization, style, and mechanics in their writing. I also broke down writing processes and advised them to focus on their writing styles only after they were absolutely certain of the content of their papers. It is my practice to prompt students to describe the relationship between the content and structure of texts and critique their structure and style.

As a writing instructor, I want to prepare students to face all writing tasks bravely and to skillfully go through the steps in their unique writing processes without being daunted by the purpose and scope of a particular assignment. I will thus encourage them to approach writing tasks with confidence and strong awareness of content, structure, and style. In sum, my ultimate goal as a writing teacher is to help students realize that they will be able to write well and productively as long as they maintain strong faith and confidence both in their own ideas and the organization of their reading and writing processes.
CHAPTER 3: ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

The sources I have collected here discuss reading-writing strategies from theoretical, practical, and scholarly perspectives. In this bibliography, I am aiming for a fair balance of research on integrated reading and writing. For this reason, the sources I have gathered include theoretical discussions of the connection between reading and writing as well as discussions of practical applications of reading-writing strategies in the college composition classroom. Some of my sources discuss the theoretical value of integrating reading and writing activities in the teaching of composition. Others are rhetorics and readers that walk users through reading and writing activities and serve as guides for practical applications in the college composition classroom. Yet others are studies that reveal a gap between reading and writing in college composition, suggesting that greater emphasis should be placed on integrating the two instead of viewing reading as less important than and hence inferior to writing. My goal in this project is to develop guides for students and instructors containing tips and strategies that will help them examine connections between reading and writing; practice reading actively and critically; annotate and skim texts; work with genres; and interact with texts. I will thus suggest that reading and writing are reciprocal processes, and that both should be seen as equally valuable in the composition classroom.
Scholarly Sources

Bunn, Michael. “Motivation and Connection: Teaching Reading (and Writing) in the Composition Classroom.” *College Composition and Communication* 64.3 (2013): 496-516. Print.

Arguing that explicitly integrated reading and writing may actually increase student motivation to complete reading assignments, Bunn explains why it is a good idea to think about reading and writing as interconnected processes. He begins by proposing a definition of reading that focuses on the cooperation between readers and writers and emphasizes the importance of seeing connections between the two. He then examines the extent to which composition instructors theorize and teach reading-writing connections. His article puts instructor survey and interview responses in conversation with student survey responses to show whether teaching reading-writing connections explicitly has an effect on student motivation to read. He concludes that teaching reading by focusing on its connections to writing can encourage students to read and increase the likelihood that they will become successful readers and writers.

Since I aim to develop materials for students and instructors that they could use during reading and writing, I think that Bunn’s focus on relating writing assignments directly to the readings is beneficial for both. I will use this article in my instructor guide to encourage my teacher audience to relate the reading directly to the writing assignment. In particular, I will use the author’s approach to student motivation in reading and writing activities to develop strategies and tips that will help students stay engaged during both activities. I will also create strategies and tips that will explicitly assist instructors in
showing how reading can be used to benefit writing. One of the activities I developed asks students to rewrite the purpose of the text in their own words so that they are able to explain it to themselves. The rationale behind the activity is to encourage them to work on their writing and reading skills simultaneously. In designing it, I refer to some of the conclusions Bunn makes. The most important of these is that instructors should select readings and design prompts simultaneously to make it easier for them to articulate the connections between reading and writing to students.


Elbow discusses the conflict between reading and writing, suggesting that the imbalance between the two activities is unnecessary. He shows that reading is actually privileged over writing in the classroom setting not just because students spend more time reading than writing but because of conflicts over the meaning of texts. Arguing that reading and writing can actually work quite fruitfully together, he suggests that it is up to readers and writers to create a more perfect and balanced relationship between them. To establish this balance, teachers will need to add emphasis to writing in their teaching and curriculum development as well as help students learn to use writing in more creative ways. Elbow’s article is a scholarly inquiry study that discusses the site of conflict between reading and writing; explores how reading is privileged over writing; examines the benefits of eliminating this privilege; and aims to understand how to end the war between reading and writing as well as create a more fruitful interaction between the two.
I will use Elbow’s suggestions for finding balance between reading and writing to help create tips and strategies that emphasize their equal importance. In my guide for instructors, I will use Elbow’s suggestion that it is easier to see how meaning gets constructed, negotiated, and changed when students write than when they read. My guide will include tips for interacting with texts. One of the tips gives suggestions about using sources and what it would be a good idea for students to look for when observing how authors integrate quotations in texts. The advice I develop also gives instructors suggestions about training students to effectively incorporate sources in texts they write. Elbow’s article will help me accentuate how meaning gets constructed in texts students read and how authors integrate quotations in their texts. I will thus use this source to help me develop in-class activities instructors can use when training students to effectively incorporate materials in texts.


Elbow argues that the phrase “reading and writing” reveals the implicit assumption that reading precedes writing rather than follows it. He challenges this assumption and suggests that writing actually prepares students to understand what they need for reading. Writing before reading encourages students to escape their passive stance in school. He suggests that first graders can “write” every word they can pronounce even though they use their own manner of writing as well as invented spelling. Prompting this kind of writing allows children to control their letters and texts more
easily. Elbow further suggests that learning promotes reading over writing. He disagrees with the traditional learning approach and instead argues that writing is more invested in meaning making. Ultimately, he claims that students will be more careful with reading if they are given a greater opportunity to write. For this reason, writing should be accentuated in the classroom. The text is a scholarly inquiry study that views reading as “really writing” or actively creating meaning and writing as “really reading” or passively exploring what culture and history have engraved in people’s heads. Elbow thus approaches reading and writing from a theoretical stance. The text uses the scholarly inquiry method to argue for the tight relationship between reading and writing.

One of the goals of my project is to create tips and activities that students and instructors can refer to when working with texts. My guide for instructors has a section that discusses tips for teaching reading to students. One of my tips in that section focuses on training students to identify and describe the relationship between the content and structure of texts. An activity I then suggest asks them to describe the content of the text and think about how identifying the structure makes it easier / more difficult for them to understand it. I will use Elbow’s suggestion that writing precedes reading rather than follows it to explain how and why it is important for students to write responses to texts while reading. I will also use his suggestion to show that writing before reading might help students formulate their own ideas about texts as they read and thus become active readers.

The authors discuss the basic writing crisis and the factors that contribute to its origin and development. They argue that there is a historical and persistent trend in literacy education that permeates the basic writing crisis, suggesting that reading and writing should be treated as distinct and separate processes, with reading being considered the less complex of the two. Since the acquisition of literacy is a slow and protracted process, any postsecondary instruction in reading and writing is, in effect, remedial and thus vulnerable to the political and educational forces targeted at its removal. This article uses the scholarly inquiry method to discuss the basic writing crisis, its origins and potential implications for writing students. When examining the factors that contributed to the crisis, the article uses a textual method that explores the attempts that have already been made to integrate reading and writing. It breaks down the six principles of reading and writing practices, focusing on how students should approach them. The principles are integration, time, development, academic membership, sophistication, and purposeful communication.

This text is useful for my guides because it will provide me with the necessary historical context for discussing the reading-writing connection and its benefits and applications in the classroom. I will use the six principles the authors mention to help me develop tips and activities that focus on integrating reading and writing. In particular, one of the principles I will refer to in the instructor guide is integration. One of my tips
discusses strategies for understanding the social context of texts. This includes reading information about the author and the historical background surrounding the text. When discussing the principle of purposeful communication, the authors of this article suggest that students should be given more opportunity to interact with texts in meaningful contexts. Given my discussion of the social context of texts, this source will help me develop strategies for understanding context by training students to read and write about the similarities and differences they find between the social and historical contexts of texts.


Morrow explores connections between reading and writing in an attempt to understand why teachers assign readings to students in college composition courses. To help her in her goal, she explores why and how readings have been described as interconnected processes. To support her argument in her discussion of the reading-writing connection, Morrow cites Salvatori who suggests that the goal of instructors is to make “visible [their] teaching strategies [of these connections] and expose their [students’] rationale” (452). She argues that it is up to instructors to explain to students why reading is important for them. According to Morrow, we read in order to understand. Consequently, she suggests that it is central for teachers to understand and be able to explain what a text is and how it can be applied in the composition classroom. In her article, the author uses the scholarly inquiry method to discuss the various facets of the
reading-writing connection. She then uses the same method to discuss the emergence of different pedagogical approaches to writing. She argues that the views on reading and writing are many. It is up to teachers to teach students how to produce their own readings of different kinds of texts. In doing so, instructors will empower students to become participants in an ever changing and ever widening conversation about texts.

This text will help me in my discussion of the reading-writing connection, as it will give me a chance to examine reading and writing tips and strategies from the teacher’s perspective. The kind of advice I will give in my guides encourages instructors to train students to see reading as an activity that views the reader as an active participant who reads the text, processes it, and responds to it. Morrow suggests that the instructor should help students read texts with an understanding of what they are reading. I will use Morrow’s suggestion – we read in order to understand – to develop strategies that will encourage students to focus on what a text is actually saying before thinking about how its style and presentation affect what they understand in it. My contribution to the current conversation about the social construction of texts will involve training students to see themselves as co-authors of texts. I will develop strategies that instructors may use to assist students as they join the conversation about texts. My rationale for focusing on the reading-writing connection will be to reinforce students’ awareness of their readers as they write.

Salvatori discusses the theoretical and practical appropriateness of using reading as a means of teaching “writing.” The author suggests that the word “argument” has multiple resonances in the context of the article. On the one hand, she participates in an ongoing debate about the place of reading in the composition classroom. On the other, Salvatori suggests that the arguments of texts themselves are central to her proposed understanding of reading and the process of teaching it. The article is a scholarly inquiry study that discusses what kind of reading gets to be theorized and practiced in the college composition classroom. When the author argues that composition instructors possess the delicate responsibility to read students’ arguments, she indicates that they are responsible for preparing students to write arguments in ways that allow readers to interact with texts. Conversely, the author suggests that the student is responsible for writing arguments in such a way that the reader will be able to read and understand them.

This article will be useful for my discussion of the reading-writing connection from a theoretical and a practical perspective as it will help me develop tips and strategies for understanding texts and describing the relationship between reading and writing. One of my tips for teachers recommends training students to think about how authors of texts they read talk to each other. One of the activities I then suggest asks students to consider if several of the authors whose texts they read would agree or disagree with one another’s claims. Salvatori’s text will help me support this and other tips and activities, since it
focuses on preparing students to think about what they read and how. She frames reading and writing activities by asking students to respond to the text, reflect on how they read, and then assess the text that their reading produced. I will use her suggestions to develop ways to describe and reflect on the relationship between reading and writing and how the two can benefit each other.

**Practical Applications**


This text discusses reading and writing activities and ways in which each can be imagined as an act of composition. In it, Bartholomae and Petrosky present materials from a course they taught for several years. They describe the course’s content and what they learned from the experience of teaching it. In particular, they discuss reading, writing, and teaching activities through their work with “basic writers.” The authors argue that basic writers can learn to use academic discourse in courses that require them to both read difficult nonfiction books and describe their reading activities in writing assignments. They also suggest that all reading requires interpretation and that interpretive methods are grounded in culture. By familiarizing themselves with the language and methods of the university, students can create authoritative and academically successful personae in their writing. The text uses the scholarly inquiry
method to break down reading and writing activities for students. As the authors address teachers and practitioners, they use this method to describe and analyze reading and writing both from a theoretical perspective by discussing and analyzing approaches to texts and from a practical perspective by offering a variety of course materials for students and instructors to use. The text also includes a case study that details a student’s struggle with establishing a voice when reading and writing. In it, the author describes how a student understood the importance of using exploratory drafting to come up with ideas for writing. To handle the complexity of writing, students will have to become better readers.

This text will aid me in developing tips and strategies for instructors that will give me an idea of the kind of assignments and rubrics I can include in my guide. The materials I develop discuss ways to understand texts; make reading / writing connections; read texts actively; analyze and differentiate between genres; and translate texts. I will use this text to give me an idea of the variety of assignment suggestions I can refer to when creating tips, activities, and writing assignments that instructors can use in the composition classroom. In particular, one of the assignment samples I looked at asks students to read a text and annotate it. Then, it prompts students to find three passages in which the author of the text comments on his experience, where he talks like a writer, who is looking back at his past. Students are then asked to write a journal entry in which they discuss how some of the experiences he describes relate to their own and why. I will use such assignment suggestions to come up with my own assignments. Some of the assignments I create encourage students to write journal entries or essays where they
describe how their individual experiences as readers relate to their understanding of the texts they read.


This text discusses genre theory and its contribution to a refined understanding of invention in writing. When describing what he calls “the genre function,” Bawarshi outlines what is at stake for the study and teaching of writing. He therefore attempts to imagine invention as a way in which writers locate themselves via genres, within diverse positions and activities. According to Bawarshi, invention is a process in which writers are acted upon by genres as much as they act themselves. The author’s approach requires the composition scholar to replace invention from the writer to the sites of action or the genres in which the writer participates. The author also feels that students can get more out of learning how to fit in socially and rhetorically as they go from one genred site of action to the next. He explores the genres of the classroom such as the syllabus and the writing prompt to introduce his approach. The text breaks down genre theory and uses the scholarly inquiry method to guide the user through each genred site. According to Bawarshi, first-year writing students should study and write about writing by learning to use and negotiate the rhetoric of different genres. The text guides students through the variety of genres they are exposed to during reading and writing processes.

Bawarshi’s text will help me develop strategies and tips for instructors and students by describing the relationship of the text’s style to its content. I will suggest that
genres mediate the choices students make when reading and writing texts. The tips and activities I develop in my instructor guide provide users with strategies for reading essays and scholarly articles as well as literacy narratives. I will use Bawarshi’s process of invention to show that reading and writing activities are mediated by genres. For this reason, my tips and strategies emphasize ways of dealing with texts by focusing on the content, organization, and style of different materials. Students will be prompted to write reminders for themselves about the particular genre of the text and describe how they respond to it. The tips and strategies I create will help remind readers and writers of the style of the text they are dealing with and the kind of content and structure that is most appropriate for that particular style.


This text organizes its selections by rhetorical aims or purposes, providing students with readings for rhetorical analysis so that they can apply rhetorical strategies in their own writing. The rhetoric discusses reading as a process of composing meaning, seeing academic writing as a means by which writers interact with texts. In particular, it teaches students how to analyze texts when placed in a conversation with other texts. It also teaches them how to identify their bias or perspective and how to discuss texts in terms of content and method. The rhetoric uses the scholarly inquiry method to break down reading and writing strategies for students. In addition, it contains in-depth discussions of analytical reading and demonstrates how skilled academic readers
construct the meaning of a text. Ultimately, it guides users in analyzing texts.

Since one of the goals of my project is to develop strategies and tips for students to reduce texts to their basic elements, Bean et al.’s text will be useful to me when giving advice about interacting with texts. My guides provide users with tips and strategies that view reading as an activity that involves active interaction with the text and ideas presented in it. One of my suggestions is to ask students to look at the background information of the text they are reading and writing about. A strategy that Bean et al. recommend when interacting with reading material is mapping texts. In my guides, I will suggest that there are a variety of ways to map texts. According to Bean et al., one strategy is to develop a map of the text’s structure so that students are aware of how the author organizes ideas. I will use this strategy to suggest that besides the structure readers and writers can also map the text’s rhetorical features in terms of the order in which they are used in the text.


Foster discusses the need to assess the results of reading / writing pedagogy for students. He argues that the teaching use of discrete readings, particularly its impact both on students’ attitudes about themselves as writers and on their writing practices, needs more attention than it has received up to this point. Foster proposes to assess the impact of the teaching use of discrete readings from the perspective of the students themselves. He wants to interrogate the reading / writing connection by evaluating how students’
essays affect their attitudes and writing practices. In his study, Foster explores how students responded to the contexts of their reading assignments by resisting, accommodating, and frequently recontextualizing texts for themselves. His article is an ethnography that documents students’ responses to the voice and tone of texts in their reading assignments. Foster’s study discusses the effects of his pedagogy on a large group of students.

One of my major goals in this project is to help students and instructors emphasize the importance of personal responses when dealing with texts. When coming up with tips and strategies for instructors, I will use Foster’s study to help develop activities that focus on reading / writing connections. Since the article presents students’ responses to reading and writing, I will cite them to assist me in developing in-class activities that instructors can implement in the writing classroom. I will use some of the students’ feedback on the reading and writing assignments presented in the article to get ideas for assignments that best address student needs. When coming up with tips and strategies for understanding texts, I will use Foster’s approach of evaluating the purpose of reading and writing pedagogy to help instructors create rubrics that will take the students’ attitudes and personal responses to writing into account. I will also suggest that personal writing should be used on a regular basis to help students stimulate ideas.

Salvatori suggests that the improvement in students’ ability to manipulate syntactic structures and their growth as writers is the result – not the cause – of their growing ability to participate in and reflect on the reading of complex texts. She wonders that if the two language activities are actually related, the question teachers should ask is not “what causes what” but how to teach composition in order to benefit from the interrelationship of reading and writing. To help her achieve her goal, the author describes the writing of one of her students. In a case study in which she discusses how to benefit from the connection between reading and writing, Salvatori describes the experience of a student who began by developing active reading skills but who then moved from a writer who merely reproduces the texts she reads and writes about, to one who more actively interacts with the texts she composes. In the end, Salvatori suggests that even though reading and writing activities are connected, improving in one does not imply that the student will necessarily improve in the other. Yet, she believes that reading appears to subsume the activity of writing to a greater extent than most composition pedagogy figures.

This text will help me develop tips and strategies that focus on finding correlations and connections between reading and writing. My instructor guide presents users with tips that discuss how reading can help students improve the content and style of their writing. One of these asks students to look at how authors organize ideas in texts.
The activities I propose involve constructing outlines of texts students read and describing how reading different materials influences the kind of writing students produce. Salvatori’s discussion of the student’s improvement as a writer who benefited from perfecting her active reading skills will also help me develop reading and writing strategies that will motivate students as well as instructors to question, reflect on, and evaluate the texts they read and write.


This text helps students explore both reading and writing activities by introducing them to reading techniques which include suggestions for annotating (reading with a pencil in hand); making inferences and drawing conclusions; determining common patterns of development in texts; noting transitional devices; and evaluating prose. In addition, the text gives students detailed instruction in the techniques of writing both analytical and argumentative essays. Spears and Spears use scholarly inquiry to discuss reading and writing activities by recognizing their inseparable nature and their potential to enhance the learning experience. The goal of integrating reading and writing is to prepare students for the college composition classroom. The text thus examines both reading and writing techniques, looking closely at textual elements and suggesting ways in which students can approach critical reading strategies.

Since my project explores integrated reading and writing, this text will help me focus more closely on introducing students to reading techniques to ensure better
comprehension of reading material for writing results. In their text, Spears and Spears
develop techniques for making sense of difficult reading material such as paraphrasing,
summarizing, and annotating. They define both annotating and paraphrasing as well as
provide detailed techniques for paraphrasing and summarizing texts. I will use the
authors’ discussion of these techniques to help me develop tips and strategies for
questioning texts; annotating and highlighting important sections; and helping students
clarify confusing passages for themselves by connecting the reading material to what they
are familiar with. I will also discuss reading and writing as connected activities that
involve condensing / summarizing ideas when reading and discussing as well as when
writing and synthesizing ideas. In addition, I will use some of the synthesis and
paraphrase assignment suggestions in the text to give readers an idea of different ways to
synthesize reading material.
CHAPTER 4: PUBLISHABLE DOCUMENT

Constructing, Understanding, and Reading Texts in the College Composition Classroom

Guide for Students

In this guide, you will be introduced to tips and strategies that will walk you through reading processes. The guide presents you with advice about reading by encouraging you to think critically about the content, structure, organization, and style of texts you read. Some of the sections below examine tips and strategies for understanding texts; reading texts critically; and interacting with reading material. These sections discuss advice for reading texts in stages through a focus on breaking down the main points, distinguishing between general and specific ideas, as well as developing clear reading goals. You will also read about techniques for skimming and annotating texts by surveying textual content, structure, stylistic features, and context. Further, the guide addresses critical reading tips and strategies that involve actively questioning ideas in texts and thinking about how the reading material expands your worldview. Finally, the purpose of the guide is to encourage you to make reading material your own by constructing an understanding of texts you read and confidently paving your way through them. Onward to reading...
Understanding Texts

In this section, you will be introduced to tips and strategies for simplifying texts, reading materials in stages, and developing objectives for yourself as you read texts. In particular, here you will be encouraged to look at how texts are organized. The section explains how the process of simplifying texts may help you get a clear idea of what they are discussing and why. The tips also focus on reducing texts to their elementary parts by asking you to pay attention to the main ideas, supporting ideas, examples, and conclusion. The overall purpose of this guide is to provide you with reading strategies that you can use to help you understand texts. This particular section addresses the guide’s overall purpose by asking you to identify the text’s structural elements, discuss its ideas, and analyze the examples. By looking at some of the suggestions below, you will have an opportunity to create reading goals for yourself as you read as well as work on writing activities that will help you reflect on those goals.

Tip #1: Look at the background of the text you are reading. If you were involved in either a verbal or written discussion of the text, think about how the background of the reading material might help you understand the content better. It is important to be able to recognize that a text is “part of a larger conversation about a particular topic” (Bean 31). In other words, when reading a text, be aware of what you already know about it, what others have to say about it, and why. Think about how an awareness of the text’s context affects your understanding of what you read and how.
Strategy 1: Look at the background of the text. Before reading it, be sure to familiarize yourself with information about the author, topics and themes he or she dealt with, and questions he or she asked. To familiarize yourself with background information of the text, read about the context in which the author wrote it and consider how knowing about it influences your response(s) to the text.

Strategy 2: Think about how the background that surrounds the text you are reading helps you understand the material better. Practice posing questions to the text such as “What did you know about the topic of the text before you began reading it?”; “How does your background knowledge help you understand what you are reading?” and “Why, in your opinion, is it important to know background information about the topic you are reading about?”

Strategy 3: To help you understand the context of where the text was published, pay attention to the types of publication you are looking at such as books; journals; magazines; articles; reports and periodicals. Determine whether or not the publication is peer reviewed. A peer reviewed text is read by subject experts before it is published in a journal. These experts then evaluate this source as one of the body of research for a particular discipline, find errors, recommend changes that the author could make in the text, and may even suggest that it should not be published in the first place (www.emich.edu/library/help/peerreview.php). Also,
consider these questions as you reflect on the context: Does the text have political, social, liberal, conservative, secular or nonsecular, and / or cultural leanings? What is the author’s political perspective? What is the author’s cultural background? Does the author have a particular religious perspective? How does knowing what kind of publication you are looking at help you become more aware of the text’s context?

Tip #2: To help you understand texts when reading, focus on parts of the text that state the main ideas, supporting ideas, examples, transitions, and conclusions. Be sure to focus on the most important parts and avoid getting caught up in every detail. When reading, identify material that relates to the text’s main points and reasons and condense it for yourself. Bean et al. suggest that “the purpose of writing a summary is to convey only the most important information, so you have to develop a feel for what to save and what to leave out” (231). To help you understand texts better, think about what the most important information is and what you expect to learn from the reading material. Consequently, when reducing texts to their elementary parts, focus only on sections that will help you understand the main ideas, supporting ideas, examples, and conclusions.

The two images below show one way to focus on the most important parts of texts. After you identify the major elements, try using the following diagrams (or similar ones) to map the text. These diagrams allow you to focus on the most important aspects of the text.
Figure 1: Guided Reading Concept Map
Figure 2: Constructivism Concept Map
Strategy 1: Look at the beginning and ending of each section and / or paragraph of the text. As you read, underline or highlight the text’s major ideas to help you isolate key points from the more trivial details. Looking at the beginning and ending of parts of texts is important, because it will help you locate the main ideas and the conclusions the author makes. It will also help you understand how the text introduces ideas and what you can learn from it in the end.

Strategy 2: When reading, write down what you do and do not understand in the text. Afterwards, based on what you already know from the reading, write down questions, hypotheses, and assumptions that occur to you about parts that you do not understand. Explain how what you know helps you understand the parts that confuse you.

Strategy 3: When reading texts and discussing them, be sure to actively talk to classmates and your teacher about what you do and do not understand in the reading material. Perpetually look back to some of the questions you developed when you were thinking about what you understand / do not understand in texts. Now, come up with creative answers to your questions. Write down your responses and share them with your classmates.

Strategy 4: As you read texts, label the structural elements or the introduction, major points, examples, and conclusion. In the process, state how each element
contributes to the whole (i.e. how each part prepares the reader for the one that comes after it and how effectively it accomplishes its purpose). For example, you could think about the introduction as the part of the text that gives an overview of the reading and that is basically a shortened version of it. Then, explain why you think it leads readers into the text effectively.

*Strategy 5:* When reducing texts to their basic elements, look at the parts you underlined / highlighted earlier and rewrite / briefly rephrase them to help you get a condensed version of the entire reading for yourself.

*Strategy 6:* Isolate major points from the details in the text. You can even underline / label major points differently. For example, you could number key points and then label each example, explanation, or reason to identify the details that substantiate those points. That is, look for parts in the texts you read that support and back up the major points the author makes.

**Tip #3:** Learn to read texts in stages. When completing a reading assignment, try organizing your reading activity by focusing on the elements of the text in parts. First, identify its main ideas. What similarities and differences can you note between ideas? Afterwards, examine the particular examples that the author uses to support major points. To practice creating objectives for yourself as you read texts, try to think like a reader. In their discussion of the process of understanding major ideas in texts, Spears and Spears
suggest that “[y]our understanding of the main idea of the essay starts with your understanding of the paragraphs that make up the essay… [T]he paragraph is the main building block of the essay. Further, the point – whether in an essay or a paragraph – has to be supported, developed, and backed up” (43). The authors indicate that you should focus on the components of the essay or the introduction, the body, and the conclusion. They suggest that it would be useful to first understand the major building block of texts or the paragraph. After looking at the main ideas, transitions, and examples, study the text’s conclusion and note how it expands and comments on the text as a whole.

*Strategy 1:* When you begin reading the text, first learn to distinguish between general and specific points. To distinguish between the two, come up with questions that each of the general and specific points can answer. Label each point accordingly.

For a more *general* point, you can ask questions such as the following:

“What is the author’s general point? Now, how does the particular language of the text help you identify it? (Example from Murray’s “Write Before Writing”: There is one major negative force that keeps writers from writing and four positive forces that help writers advance to a completed draft.) (general point) The language that is used here is general, as the author does not yet explain what the forces of writing are.
For a specific point, you can come up with questions such as the following: What points does the author use to explain/elaborate on one of the general points? How does the particular language signal that it is a specific point as opposed to a general one? (Example from Murray’s “Write Before Writing”:
The first force is increasing information about the subject. As soon as a writer chooses a topic or gets an assignment, information about the subject attaches itself to the writer. The writer perceives and finds significance in what he or she observes, hears, reads, thinks, or remembers.) (specific point) The language that is used here is specific, since the author explains one of the forces for writing and gives an example about how this force helps students begin and move forward in the writing process.

As you do this, also think about the relationship between general and specific points. How do the specific points made in the text support the general points? Try to rewrite each general point as one of the specific points. Make it more specific. Does it make sense? Attempt to do the same with the specific points. Does that make sense to you?

Strategy 2: Next, look specifically at the development of ideas in the text and isolate supporting ideas from the main points you identified earlier. To help you understand how the main ideas in texts you read are developed and supported,
look for reasons, examples, facts, details, and quotations used in readings. In addition, make connections between the different ways in which the text is developed. Do you see similarities and differences between how the author develops the text’s major ideas?

Strategy 3: Look at the text’s examples and try to come up with your own explanation for their placement in the reading. Think about how each example relates to the point it is helping to illustrate.

Tip #4: Create objectives for yourself as you read texts. To help you develop your reading goals, first think about what you are trying to learn from a particular text. Next, look for and identify the topic(s) it discusses. Finally, reflect on how well the given text accomplishes the goals it outlines. The objectives you develop should help you get an idea of the focus and direction of texts you read. They can also help you break down reading processes. After you finish reading the text, be sure to critique what you read against the objectives you created for yourself. You may find that it is particularly useful to create your own objectives before completing reading assignments.

Strategy 1: To help you develop objectives when reading, work on actually rephrasing the major points addressed in the text in terms of objectives (e.g. to understand how _____ differs from ______). Think about what the text you are reading set out to do. What are its major points? Now, rephrase them as
objectives. Example: To explore (discuss, evaluate, suggest, identify, persuade, question or describe) a topic or theme of the text and synthesize (explain, analyze, or infer) information from the reading. When developing objectives, focus on identifying and describing the particular goals of texts you read. Before you actually formulate your objectives, make sure you look for the main ideas first. Once you find them, think about how you could describe the particular goals or objectives of texts.

**Strategy 2:** As you work on developing these objectives, think about what you actually want to understand from the text. First, decide on your purpose for reading. Depending on what you need from the text, choose an appropriate focus for your discussion of the reading material. Think about what you are trying to learn from the text and why. Do you think that a greater focus on the content, the context or the style would help you achieve your reading goal? How so?

**Strategy 3:** To help you understand your purpose for reading, identify why you are reading the text. Are you reading it to discover more about a topic, to prepare yourself for completing a writing assignment, or to get ready for class discussion? When reading, also think about what your teacher is expecting you to understand from the context of the text and how it relates to the context of the course as a whole.
**Tip #5:** Work on reading texts by developing a clear structure of the main points. In order to understand how texts are structured, think about what parts they are made up of; the length of the introduction, body and conclusion; as well as the order and development of ideas.

*Strategy 1:* Come up with your own headings for sections in texts that will help you make sense of what you are reading. When reading a text, it could help you to develop your own headings for sections in it so that you are aware of how it is structured.

*Strategy 2:* Write down sentences that begin and end the sections of texts you read. As you read, think about how the author structures the text by looking at the first and last few sentences of each section / paragraph. Use the texts you read as examples for your own writing.

*Strategy 3:* Think about how the author structures the text. Look at how ideas are developed within the paragraphs themselves. Identify the claims or major points, reasons, evidence, and assumptions you encounter as you read. Be sure to label every claim or major point made in individual paragraphs. Afterwards, look for and label the reasons the author(s) give(s) when elaborating on major points in the text.
Strategy 4: As you read, look at the transitions made in the text. If you were to extract them from the text, try to think about how doing so would change your understanding of the material as a whole. As you read, also try writing your own transitions for the text. Then, compare them to the ones used by the author. Since you already have the entire structure of the text written down, try extracting the transitions between sections / paragraphs for yourself to help you understand how to best connect ideas in your own writing.

Critical Reading

This section introduces you to tips and strategies that you can refer to when reading texts critically. The guide as a whole discusses reading as a process that involves critical awareness of the content, context, and structure of texts. Accordingly, the purpose of this section is to encourage you to read texts critically by questioning and reflecting on ideas, describing your reading process to yourself, and explaining how texts you explore change your worldview. The section provides you with a variety of ways to label parts of the text’s argument that seem reasonable or unreasonable to you. In addition, you are encouraged to think about how you respond to parts of texts that sound ambiguous to you. You are prompted to consider what you can do to clarify them by, for example, connecting readings to your own experiences. By practicing critical reading skills, you will hopefully develop a better sense of how to work with texts as a reader.
**Tip #1:** To read critically, avoid taking anything you see in the text for granted. When reading, focus on examining the arguments and evidence presented in reading material. Work on reading critically by continuously questioning what you read. Bean et al. suggest that “[y]our job in critiquing a text is to be ‘critical.’ However, the meanings of the term critical include ‘characterized by careful and exact evaluation and judgment,’ not simply ‘disagreements or harsh judgment’” (70). Your task then is to read actively by continuously questioning the text you are reading. Reading critically, as Bean et al. suggest, involves critiquing and evaluating texts by agreeing and disagreeing with ideas as well as explaining your reasons for your interpretation. To read critically, work on explaining ideas in texts to yourself. As you read, always record your impressions and responses.

*Strategy 1:* Get into the habit of perpetually posing questions to the text and finding your own explanations for parts of texts that are unclear and confusing to you. Why does the author say what he / she does? Do you agree or disagree with ideas expressed in the text? Why or why not?

*Strategy 2:* Think about how the evidence in the text supports the points made. Do you think that the evidence adequately explains the main points of the reading or not and why? On the other hand, do you think there are points in the text where more textual support could be necessary and why?
Strategy 3: Think about how answering the questions you posed to the text helps you critically reflect on the topic and major points.

Tip #2: Decide whether the major points and structure of the text are reasonable or unreasonable. To think critically as you read, consider the kinds of assumptions the author makes in the text. Can they be justified and how? When reading the text, try to see whether there are any points in it where the author’s argument contradicts logical sense and explain why you think this is the case. Think specifically about whether or not the major points in the text address the topic in a sensible way. By reading critically, you can practice identifying parts of texts that seem unreasonable or awkward to you. Bean et al. give the following advice about critical reading and writing: “To convince readers that their perspective is reasonable, skilled writers work to anticipate what their intended readers already believe and then use those beliefs as a bridge to the writer’s way of thinking” (72). In particular, as the authors imply, writers should always keep their readers in mind when thinking about how reasonable or unreasonable their perspective is. Consequently, it would be a good idea for you to constantly evaluate the text you read against what you know and what you want to learn from it.

Strategy 1: Identify the strengths and weaknesses of a text’s argument. Evaluate the argument by thinking about the major points themselves and whether or not they support / discuss the text’s main point well.
**Strategy 2:** To read critically, consider how the author’s tone or attitude to the subject matter helps you evaluate how well the text addresses the topic. Reading texts critically may also stimulate you to describe the author’s attitude to the content, which outlines the text’s main ideas and the purpose, which presents its overall goals. Describe the author’s tone in your own words. Then, think about how your own attitude to the content of the text agrees with or contradicts the author’s argument.

**Strategy 3:** When reading, practice distinguishing between facts and opinions. Think about the word choice that the author uses in the text when discussing facts and opinions. How does the kind of language that the author uses in the text help you characterize facts? What about opinions?

**Tip #3:** Think about how the author(s) of the text(s) you read actually change and challenge your worldview. In particular, reflect on how the text you have read affects how you think about its topic in general and why. It may help you to look at Bean et al.’s suggestion about how the text may affect your worldview: “To consider how much a text has influenced your thinking, try writing out some before and after reflections by freewriting your responses to the following statements… before reading a text, you should consider what its author seems to assume readers think about the subject at hand and how that author works to change such thinking by the time you finish reading” (89).
The authors recommend you to actively think about ways in which the texts you read can actually change your worldview. Accordingly, they advise you to write out reflections about a topic before and after you read the text. In the process, think about how the ideas expressed in the text have or have not changed your views after reading.

*Strategy 1:* As you read, think about how texts change / expand your worldview and what you already knew about the topic discussed before reading. To stimulate you to think about how the text expands your understanding of and ideas about a topic, be sure to make connections between what you already know and think about the topic and direction of the text and its actual content. As you think about this, it could help you to consider questions such as the following: Did the act of reading the text change the prejudices / opinions you had about the topic and how? What did you know about the topic before reading and how did it change your view of the text?

*Strategy 2:* Think about how texts you read challenge your worldview. As you read, make a list of ways in which the text influences your response to the particular topic and to related topics. Then, think about how your experience of reading the text is affected by the associations you bring to it.
Strategy 3: Think about why the particular text you read has a strong influence on your worldview. Describe how ideas discussed in the text affect your sense of the topic and related topics it addresses.

Interacting with Texts

In this section, you will be introduced to tips and strategies for interacting with texts. The purpose of the section is to encourage students to think of reading as process that involves active interaction. Some of the suggestions below discuss ways in which you can read texts by getting involved in a dialogue with what you read. The tips and strategies focus on your participation as a reader and your own contribution in your discussion about texts. They also emphasize your role as a mediator in a discussion – someone who could settle the differences between different ways of understanding the same text. To this end, the tips and strategies below give you suggestions you can refer to when alternating between the roles of reader and writer when working with texts.

Tip #1: When you read texts, learn to treat reading as part of an ongoing conversation in which you can be both the primary participant and the mediator of the discussion who can intervene when necessary and settle the differences between opposing views in the text. When you read texts, try to communicate with them. In the process, break texts down and analyze them in such a way that you will be able to actually enter into
communication with them. This interaction should stem from your active awareness of the issues at stake in the reading material and its implications for readers. For this reason, try to think of reading as a process that involves you in a dialogue with the text. According to Bean et al., readers should be able to regularly contribute responses to texts they read: “What the reader brings to the text is as important as the text itself… [It] is a dynamic process in which the reader’s worldview interacts with the writer’s worldview. The reader constructs meaning from the text, in effect creating a new ‘text’ in the reader’s mind” (9). Bean et al. suggest that the reader’s contribution to the text is as important as what it is actually saying. When reading, readers not only get in contact with the writer’s ideas. They also contribute their own responses to those ideas. Just like Bean et al. suggest, they create a “new text” in their minds. This text consists of the author’s ideas and their own responses to them. In the process, make parallels between what you already know about the topic of the text and what you are learning as you read. In contributing to the conversation about the text you are reading, you are creating your own version of the text that is informed by your own ideas and responses to it. The strategies below give you some suggestions for interacting with texts. To help you see texts as part of a bigger conversation, you can, as Bean et al. suggest, use textual cues such as format, style, and terminology.

*Strategy 1:* As you read, it could help you to “talk” to the text by rewriting some of the ideas you labeled earlier in it in terms of a dialogue (Author: …; Your
position: …) with the author. Think about what you would like to say to the
author about the text. Do you support some of the author’s points and why? On
the flip side, what do you have against some of the author’s points and why?

*Strategy 2:* Practice interacting with quotations you read in texts. Look closely at
the passage(s) that stand out to you as you read and write an informal response to
the ones you selected. Write a response in which you discuss your own ideas
about the quotations themselves and what you believe the author of the text
suggests in the selected passage(s).

*Strategy 3:* When interacting with texts, think about how the author’s argument
could be extended. How can you apply the argument? Can it be applied in another
context? Why or why not?

*Strategy 4:* Get into the habit of writing down instances in texts you read where
you agree or disagree with the author’s position as you annotate the reading.

**Tip #2:** Learn to interact with reading material by alternating between the roles of reader,
writer and narrator. Each of these roles will require you to clearly understand and respond
to texts. When working with texts, be sure to think either like the writer, reader, or
narrator who actively responds to the content, structure, and organization of texts. In the
roles of the writer and reader, actively interact with the text by writing as you read. In
addition, as the narrator, be sure to describe how the process of responding to texts you read helps you understand and explain their purpose better. As you practice interacting with texts, try participating in each of these roles in turn. To help you interact with the text better, practice switching between roles. Work on expressing your ideas about the text actively so that your experience reading it will enable you to understand as much as possible from it. Since reading is an active process that involves the reader’s lively interaction with the text, it could help you to actively switch between the roles of the reader, the writer, and the narrator. Then, you can start posing questions to it in an attempt to discover what it means.

_Strategy 1:_ As a reader, interact with the text by thinking about what you expect to learn from it and what you want to get out of your reading experience. Make a list of things you want to find out in the text. Consider questions such as these: What do you want to learn from the text? How does the process of focusing on specific passages in the reading help you understand their function and usefulness in the text? Why?

_Strategy 2:_ As a writer, interact with the text by recording your own ideas and opinions of the reading material you are writing about. Think about how your thoughts and opinions about the text help you respond to its main ideas, examples, and conclusions. Look at your writing assignment and consider questions such as
these: What is the purpose of the writing assignment? How does some of the information in the text help you address your writing assignment? Why do you want to know this?

Strategy 3: In the role of the narrator, interact with the text by narrating and discussing what you learned from it as you read. Use the first person (I) to explain what you understood from reading and how you developed your own sense of what the text is discussing and why. In particular, to interact with texts you read, describe the process you went through to arrive at your understanding of texts. Afterwards, think about how what you read connects to what you know, other texts you are familiar with, and your own experiences. As you read, talk your way through the text by actively explaining ideas, examples, and conclusions to yourself as you go along. In addition, be sure to explain how narrating what you learned helps you interact with texts.

Tip #3: To productively interact with texts, try to come up with your own responses, arguments, and counterarguments as you read. Practice thinking of reading as a process in which you are involved in an ongoing conversation with authors’ ideas. In order to simplify the process of interacting with texts for yourself, it may help you to think about Bartholomae and Petrosky’s advice about textual authority: “... all the students become vital participants, as both readers and writers, in a discussion which has as its focus
reading-and-writing-in-progress” (93). By actively participating in reading and writing, students will be able to see reading as an ongoing process in which they actively write down responses to texts by expressing their opinions, developing counterarguments, as well as revising conclusions and transitions. Respond to everything you identify in the text. What matters for you as a reader is whether you are able to make the text your own by coming up with responses, arguments, and counterarguments as you read.

Strategy 1: To come up with your own responses, arguments, and counterarguments, think about how you would explain the text’s main points to someone else. Then, write down your explanation. Use questions such as the following to guide you along: If you were to explain some of the points in the text to somebody who is not familiar with it, what explanation would you offer? What arguments and counterarguments will you use to explain, support, or oppose the author’s main points? How effective, in your opinion, are the transitions that the author makes?

Strategy 2: To help you productively interact with the reading, write down your responses to the main points in it. Think about how you can respond to what you read by questioning ideas, suggesting your own, and reflecting about the importance of ideas in texts.
Strategy 3: Look for evidence in the text to support what you just wrote. Think of reading as a process in which you respond to ideas in the text and look for evidence to back up your responses. In particular, look closely at the evidence presented in the text and think about how well it supports and / or justifies your responses to the main ideas.

Tip #4: Skim through the basic features of the text by looking at the content, context, and style as you work on reading assignments to get the gist of what it is saying, how it is expressing its main points and why. When skimming, look for the main ideas, key supporting points, and conclusions of the text. In addition, pay close attention to the style of the text. Note the formal / informal, descriptive / terse, or technical / nontechnical language of the text. Think about whether or not the text is easy to read and navigate. In addition, examine the text’s overall structure such that you are able to condense its main ideas. Look at the outline of the text or the introduction, major headings, opening paragraphs, summary paragraphs, transitions, and conclusion. In the process, work on developing a plan that would help you keep track of what you read and write. When discussing the structure of a coherent piece of writing, one that has “a beginning, middle, and an end,” Deanne and David Spears argue that readers of a paper “should be able to begin by skimming through it quickly, to get an overview of its architecture” (9). By skimming through the text, you will be able to get an overall idea of what it is talking
about. It is critical for you to skim initially and then to label each part of the text to help you go from the stance of a passive reader to an active one.

*Strategy 1:* Before you begin reading, skim the first few paragraphs and the table of contents or an abstract if there is one. Write down your impression of these paragraphs or the table of contents after a short initial skimming. How does this exercise prepare you for actually reading the text?

*Strategy 2:* Look at the guides in the margins to help you skim the text. Does the text have questions for the reader, section summaries, and keywords in the margins? Read these guides before you begin skimming the actual content of the text. Also, try to answer the questions in the margins to understand the key features.

*Strategy 3:* Think about why you labeled the sections you did. What was your rationale for doing this? Also, think about how your impression of the abstract or the table of contents helps you prepare yourself for reading the basic features of the text and understanding its content.

*Strategy 4:* When skimming different texts in different genres, read through the introduction and conclusion. As you do this, think about the following questions: 1) How does a novel, poem, scholarly article, or whatever genre you are reading
typically begin and end? 2) How do its introduction and conclusion (if there is an introduction and conclusion) differ from texts written in other genres? 3) How does a skim of the introduction and conclusion of the text affect how you understand its content and style? 4) How does a skim of the introduction and conclusion of the text affect your opinion of what it is discussing and how?

_Strategy 5:_ When skimming, identify the key features of the text by marking the title, major headings, opening paragraphs, and summary paragraphs or conclusion. After you identify them, think about what the title reveals about the topic and content of the text.

_Strategy 6:_ As you skim, mark key words in the text that help you keep track of what you are reading. In particular, watch out for words that are repeated throughout the reading. Then, think about why they reoccur in the text and write down your explanation.

_Strategy 7:_ When skimming, identify the transitions in the text. Think about how effective they are in helping the author move from one idea to the next. Explain whether or not you think the transitions help you keep track of what the author is discussing.
Strategy 8: When skimming textbooks, pay attention to bold headings. In particular, think about the importance of bolded or italicized facts and ideas. Afterwards, explain why they are important to you as a reader and how they help you organize your skim of the text.

Strategy 9: When skimming textbooks, pay special attention to inserts in texts; chapter summaries; words in bold or italics; and text boxes.

Tip #5: When annotating, identify parts of the text that state the main ideas, examples, transitions, and conclusions. As you annotate, look at how the main idea is expressed. It can be either directly stated or indirectly implied. Determine whether the topic of the text is discussed in the very first sentence or if the text provides readers with background information about the topic. Then, look for examples and note how effectively (or not) they illustrate the points made in the text. Spears and Spears argue the following about the role of annotation in reading and writing processes: “Besides helping you concentrate, annotating allows you to interact with the text, to identify the important points, and most important to provide a focus for your reading” (162). The authors suggest that annotation stimulates concentration. It helps you actually engage with the text you are reading. By actively annotating the text, you can identify its most important points and understand what the text is actually saying.
**Strategy 1:** As you read, keep a journal in which you note your various responses to the text. In particular, select key passages where you will note what you understand about the text from a careful reading at the paragraph level, sentence level, and even the level of keywords. Note a few of the paragraphs, sentences, and keywords that strike you and discuss how and why you think they help improve your experience of reading the text.

**Strategy 2:** Keep a graphic organizer that lists and discusses your annotations. In one column, you could include a list of excerpts from the text that strike you as you read. Then, in another column, explain why you chose those particular excerpts. Also, in this column, discuss why you think the excerpts you listed help you understand what the text is saying, why, and how effectively. Finally, in a third column, be sure to record some of the more important lines that you could add to help you understand the content, structure, and style of the text better.

**Strategy 3:** When annotating texts, mark the keywords that are most frequently repeated in them. Think about how these keywords and their use in the text clue you into identifying the important parts of the reading. Then, explain why you think the text repeats these keywords regularly and why in your opinion they characterize the content of the text effectively.
**Strategy 4:** To annotate texts with an emphasis on the content, write down the author’s argument and explain it to yourself in your own words. Identify the text’s major supporting ideas and freewrite about how and why you think the process of explaining them to yourself in your own words helps you understand the text better.

**Strategy 5:** Mark sections, passages, sentences, and words that stimulate you to think about the purpose, structure, and style of the text. In particular, look for sections of the text that help you understand its purpose and organization. Then, see if you can explain to yourself why the process of marking those parts of the text helps you get a clearer idea of its content and presentation. Afterwards, explain why those parts are important to you as a reader.

**Strategy 6:** Create an index of the major themes, major ideas, and important passages in the text you are reading. When you mark something in the text, write down the page number and the themes, ideas, and keywords that appear significant to you.
Reading, Building Connections and Analyzing Texts: A Social Constructivist Approach

Guide for Instructors

This guide offers a variety of tips, class activities, assignment suggestions and rubrics that college-composition instructors can refer to when working with students on reading processes in the college-composition classroom. The purpose of this resource is to encourage teachers to walk students through reading processes by organizing them in a way that will stimulate them to take the initiative in their work with texts. The guide includes sections on understanding texts, building reading / writing connections, teaching active reading, analyzing genres, and teaching reading processes. The kinds of tips, activities, and class materials it offers encourage instructors to train students to read and write texts in parallel.

This guide relies on a social constructivist theoretical framework to develop resources for instructors. The framework focuses on building an understanding of texts, developing an awareness of reading processes, and practicing interacting with texts. In particular, according to social constructivist theory, knowledge is constructed over time when readers and writers get to know texts and formulate responses to them. Social constructivists also argue that texts are involved in an ongoing conversation with other texts. This guide refers to scholars such as Bartholomae and Petrosky who see reading as a constructive act in which the reader is responsible for decoding the meaning of the text.
I use the authors’ point that students participate in a discussion that has “as its focus reading-and-writing-in-progress” (93). I also use Salvatori’s discussion of the role of reading in composition in which she argues that by teaching students to tolerate and confront ambiguities and uncertainties when reading teachers can help them gradually learn to cope with “the uncertainties and ambiguities that they themselves generate in the process of writing their own texts” (662).

Some of the tips and activities I develop in this guide discuss advice for building connections between reading and writing. To help me support the advice in this document, I refer to Peter Elbow’s suggestion that reading, just like writing, requires revision. He also argues that “[w]hen we stop privileging reading over writing and put the real horse – writing in front – we stop privileging passivity over activity” (3). In order to train students to understand texts better, I suggest working with them to rewrite parts of texts they read into their own version of the material. Ultimately, my guide sees reading and writing as processes that use social construction to formulate and develop ideas in texts.

**Teaching Active Reading**

This section of the guide gives you advice about teaching active reading. The purpose of this part is to provide you with a variety of tips and class materials that encourage students to identify the content, structure, and style of texts. In some of the advice below, I develop tips that focus specifically on identifying and reflecting on the text’s main
points. I also include activities that teachers can use to train students to read texts actively and understand how they are constructed. In her discussion of reading as a process of constructing texts, Morrow makes the following argument about how the construction of texts influences the way students read: “Wherever texts are being constructed, issues of voice and authority are always evident. By teaching students how to produce their own readings of a variety of different kinds of texts, we empower them as participants in an ever changing and ever widening conversation. In recognizing the power structures inherent in texts, readers can begin, in Freire’s phrase, to ‘read the world’” (9). Morrow argues that readers and writers should be aware of issues of voice and authority when working with texts. She suggests that teachers are responsible for training students to read texts with an awareness of how they are constructed and with an understanding of the role of the author’s voice and authority. She also implies that teachers should train students to participate in a conversation about texts and be attentive to the power structures inherent in them. This section discusses advice instructors can refer to when training students to describe the organization and structure of texts.

This section also includes tips that discuss ways to annotate and mark important passages and details in texts. The tips focus on differentiating between the general and specific goals of texts as well as between major and supporting ideas. The activities below ask students to think about how effectively supporting points actually back up ideas in texts they read. In particular, in these activities, students are encouraged to read selectively so that they do not get lost in the details but learn to read texts with a purpose
and an awareness of how they are organized and structured. When coming up with tips and suggestions for college writing instructors in this section, I refer to Salvatori’s argument to develop reading tips by training student readers to become “conscious of their mental moves, to see what such moves produce, and to learn to revise and complicate those moves” (447). Students are asked to think about how they respond to texts they read and the process they go through when reading. As Salvatori suggests, readers should become aware of how they read, the purpose for reading a particular text, and their response to what they read. In line with this advice, one of the activities in this section asks students to distinguish main points from details. This activity focuses on understanding how main ideas are organized, set up and developed in texts. The purpose of such an activity is to prompt students to actively think about how they read and why. To this end, this section as a whole emphasizes ways to actively construct an understanding of reading material.

**Tips for identifying the content, structure, and style of texts**

**Tip #1:** When reading actively, train students to focus specifically on the *content* of the text. Begin by asking them to distinguish main points from details. Work with students on identifying the main points and explaining how well they describe the content of the text.

*Activity 1:* Assign students to think about the main points of the text and explain how they differ from details such as supporting ideas and examples. What is the
purpose of the main points in the given text? What about the supporting points? Ask students to write down their explanations.

*Activity 2:* Ask students to look at the *main* points of texts and think about how well they describe the text’s content. Then, encourage them to discuss their conclusions.

*Activity 3:* Ask students to look at the *supporting* points of texts and think about how well they support / develop the text’s main points. Then, encourage them to discuss their conclusions.

**Tip #2:** To read actively, work with students on describing the *structure* of texts. In the process, ask them to practice creating signposts for themselves as they read to help them identify and characterize the structure of the text they are dealing with.

*Activity 1:* To determine and describe the text’s structure, train students to read *selectively.* Ask them to read only those parts of the text that discuss its main points, supporting ideas, examples, transitions and conclusions.

*Activity 2:* Ask students to create pointers for themselves as they read by writing down several words or phrases that most accurately characterize the structure of the text e.g. introduces, gives an example, describes, analyzes, and concludes.
Activity 3: Ask students to rewrite the first and last sentence of each paragraph in their own words to get an idea of how it is structured. Then, ask them to discuss how effectively (or not) the paragraph moves from its topic sentence to its last sentence.

Tip #3: When reading actively, ask students to look at the style of the text and think about their responses to how it is written. Encourage them to color code the parts of the text that show how it shifts in diction and tone.

Activity 1: Ask students to think about how the language used in the text they are reading affects their responses to it. In particular, ask them to discuss how the language of the text influences their attitude to its topic and content.

Activity 2: Assign students to discuss how the word choice used in the text affects how they characterize its style. Ask them to think back to the purpose of the text. Does the word choice adequately reflect the purpose?

Activity 3: Ask students to think about how the tone of the text influences their responses to how it is written. Is the tone more objective, subjective, or in between? What effect does it have on students as readers?
❖ **Tips for annotating / marking texts**

**Tip #1:** Work with students on annotating texts by teaching them to distinguish between their general and specific goals as well as between the major and supporting ideas. The general goals refer to groups of ideas, while specific goals discuss supporting ideas and examples in texts. Encourage students to recognize the general and specific goals of texts by paying attention to the level of detail used in readings to discuss points.

*Activity 1:* Ask students to identify major ideas in texts they read by looking at the level of detail that the author uses to present them. Ask them to look for sentences that introduce ideas but that do not discuss examples or conclusions. Then, ask them to explain why they chose these particular sentences.

*Activity 2:* Assign students to discuss how and why the general and specific goals of the text affect their understanding of what it is saying. How does understanding what the text discusses both in general and specifically help students see the purpose of the text?

*Activity 3:* Ask students to distinguish between the general and specific goals of texts. Then, assign them to explain how the specific goals help support the general goals of texts.
Tip #2: Train students to annotate texts by encouraging them to develop their own annotation techniques. Expose them to a variety of techniques so that they can then select the ones they prefer to use. These include circling words that they do not understand, underlining parts from important passages, and explaining their significance in marginal notes.

Activity 1: Ask students to annotate texts by circling words that they do not understand. Then, ask them to look up what they mean.

Activity 2: Ask students to underline parts from passages that stand out to them. Have them locate parts that help them get closer to understanding the purpose of the text as a whole.

Activity 3: Assign students to explain the significance of the words they marked in marginal notes. Ask them to explain why and how they think the words they chose are important for their understanding of the text.

Activity 4: Assign students to compare and contrast these annotation techniques for themselves. Encourage them to discuss which ones they prefer and why.
**Tip #3:** Train students to annotate / mark texts by motivating them to identify passages that are unclear to them. Explain how and why marking particular passages in texts may prove useful to students when they are reading.

*Activity 1:* Ask students to look at texts several times and mark passages that they do not understand. In particular, ask them to explain what they do not understand in the passages they are looking at.

*Activity 2:* Ask students to annotate texts by explaining why the sections they marked are important to them. Ask them to explain how these sections expand their understanding of reading material.

*Activity 3:* Ask students to share their annotations and explanations with one another. Also, ask them to give suggestions for improving each other’s annotations.

*Activity 4:* When annotating difficult and confusing passages, ask students to explain the grammatical construction of particular sentences and think about how the syntax used in the text affects how they read it. Encourage them to consider the following questions as they look at the syntax used in the readings: How does the kind of syntax used in the text help them / not help them understand the
content? Does the length of the sentences affect how they read texts and why?

Ask students to note the syntax in the text that they believe is most difficult for them to follow when reading.

*Activity 5:* When annotating difficult and confusing passages, ask students to number the paragraphs and break them up into smaller and more manageable chunks for themselves as they read. Then, ask them to explain how doing this might help them break down difficult reading material.

❖ **Tips for teaching the relationship between the content and structure of texts when reading**

**Tip #1:** When discussing the relationship between the content and the structure of texts, work with students on examining how the topic of the given text is introduced and developed. Afterwards, ask them to look specifically at *where* main ideas are found in the reading.

*Activity 1:* Work with students on describing the content of the text. Ask them to think about how the text’s content develops and addresses its topic. Then, ask them to describe how the content fits into the structure of the text and why.
Activity 2: Work with students on describing the structure of the text. Ask them to consider where main ideas are found in the text and why. Then, ask them to describe how the structure helps organize the content of the text.

Activity 3: Ask students to look at the text and describe how the placement of ideas in the reading material affects how they respond to what the text is actually saying.

Tip #2: Encourage students to think about how the text’s structure prepares them for reading its content and why. Then, ask them to consider how ideas are arranged in the text. In particular, prompt students to think about how an awareness of the text’s structure helps them grasp the content and makes for a productive reading experience.

Activity 1: Ask students to look at the structure of the text and write a response in which they discuss how an awareness of its organization prior to reading helps them prepare themselves for actually exploring the content.

Activity 2: Assign students to discuss how their awareness of the text’s structure helps them explain the purpose of the text and why.

Activity 3: Ask students to think about why an awareness of the text’s structure helps organize their responses to the text. Ask them to make a list of reasons they came up with.
Tip #3: Work with students on describing the relationship between the content and structure of texts. Ask them to discuss whether or not they think the structure of the text organizes the content effectively and appropriately. Also, prompt students to consider how well the content fits the particular structure of the text.

Activity 1: Ask students to summarize the main points of the texts they read. Then, ask them to look at the text’s structure. Do they think the text’s structure effectively organizes its content? Why or why not?

Activity 2: Ask students to look at the main points of the text again and then create an outline in which they summarize these points as well as identify the structure of the text. As students create an outline of the text, they will be asked to think about how the organization of main points helps them organize their reading process and respond to the content more easily.

Activity 3: Assign students to write a response in which they describe the relationship between the text’s content and structure. Do they think that summarizing and outlining texts side by side is useful for them in understanding and describing this relationship? Why or why not?
Sample Assignment

For this assignment, you will be asked to read a text actively and look closely at its content. Your task will be to identify and discuss the general and specific goals of the text. Consider some of the following questions as you discuss the text’s general goals: What is the overall purpose? Where in the text is it discussed and how well do you think do the main points address it? Now, look at its specific goals. Think about the following questions as you discuss them: How does the particular tone of the text help you understand the author’s attitude to the topic? Where and how is the tone particularly evident in the text? How does it affect your understanding of / response to the text? Your paper should reflect a careful reading of the text. Cite parts of the passage that most strikingly describe its goals.

Sample Rubric

Superior

- Addresses paper prompt completely
- Clearly discusses and explains the overall purpose of the text
- Discusses the general and specific goals of the text in detail
- Thoroughly explains and describes the author’s tone and attitude to the topic
- Thoroughly explains how the tone affects the student’s understanding of the text
Demonstrates superior command of structure, organization, content, and transitions

Demonstrates excellent use of grammar and punctuation

**Strong**

- Addresses paper prompt well
- Discusses and explains the overall purpose of the text
- Discusses the general and specific goals of the text in some detail
- Explains and describes the author’s tone and attitude to the topic
- Explains how the tone affects the student’s understanding of the text
- Demonstrates good command of structure, organization, content, and transitions
- Demonstrates good use of grammar and punctuation

**Competent**

- Adequately addresses paper prompt
- Sketchily discusses and explains the overall purpose of the text
- Adequately discusses the general and specific goals of the text
- Sketchily explains and describes the author’s tone and attitude to the topic
- Adequately explains how the tone affects the student’s understanding of the text
• Demonstrates adequate command of structure, organization, content, and transitions
• Demonstrates adequate use of grammar and punctuation

**Weak**

• Poorly addresses paper prompt
• Poorly discusses and explains the overall purpose of the text
• Poorly discusses the general and specific goals of the text
• Poorly explains and describes the author’s tone and attitude to the topic
• Poorly explains how the tone affects the student’s understanding of the text
• Demonstrates poor command of structure, organization, content, and transitions
• Demonstrates poor use of grammar and punctuation

**Inadequate**

• Misunderstands the prompt
• Does not discuss and explain the overall purpose of the text
• Fails to discuss the general and specific goals of the text
• Fails to explain and describe the author’s tone and attitude to the topic
• Inadequately explains how the tone affects the student’s understanding of the text
• Lacks command of structure, organization, content, and transitions
• Has serious errors in grammar and punctuation that may impede understanding
Understanding Texts

This section discusses advice you can refer to when helping students understand what they read, how they explain what they understand from texts, and what they learn in the process. It presents readers with tips, activities, assignment suggestions, and rubrics that emphasize ways to summarize ideas in texts, translate or rewrite texts into a language that is more understandable to students, and describe texts’ social contexts. This section examines strategies for constructing an understanding of texts by condensing and rewriting them into their own version that they can relate to more easily. In their discussions of reading as a uniquely constructive act, Bartholomae and Petrosky suggest that the “varieties of readings a class actually produces…can be presented as evidence that reading is a constructive act, not that some students are good readers and some bad. And they can be offered as evidence that a written reading – an essay written about a text – is both retrospective and recuperative” (16). This advice emphasizes that every student produces a unique reading of any given text, which in itself indicates that reading involves the construction of responses to texts. The uniqueness of these responses shows that readers translate texts into a language that is more understandable to them and then express their own interpretations of the readings. Hence, as Bartholomae and Petrosky suggest, a student essay is “both retrospective and recuperative” (16).

Some of the advice in this section discusses approaches to translating texts by learning to paraphrase them. Since there are a variety of ways to paraphrase texts and
express opinions about readings, the essays students produce are unique and diverse. For Spears and Spears, understanding texts involves “condensing a writer’s words by identifying only the main points” (161). The advice in my guide suggests that you can train students to condense texts by focusing on those sections that state the main points when reading. This section develops tips and resources that emphasize why a text’s main points are so important in helping students understand the author’s argument. Ultimately, this part of the guide prepares you for training students to construct and develop their own understanding of texts they read and later write about.

❖ Tips for helping students condense texts

Tip #1: When asking students to summarize texts, first have them identify the topic(s) they cover. Ask them to practice briefly describing, explaining, and discussing the topic(s) and subtopics of the text(s) they have read.

Activity 1: Assign students to group ideas, passages, and examples presented in a given text into topic categories. Then, for each bigger topic, ask them to identify the subtopics. An example of topic and subtopic categories in Murray’s “Write Before Writing” would be: Topic – writing and teaching writing; Subtopics – resistance to writing, forces for writing, rehearsal for writing, signals for writing, and implications for teaching writing.
Activity 2: Ask students to look at the topics and subtopics they identified and attempt to build connections between them. Assign them to make a list of the kinds of connections they see between topics and subtopics in the text. For example, how does the section on “forces for writing” in Murray’s article help students prepare for reading about “rehearsal for writing”? Then, ask them to explain why and how these connections between topics and subtopics help them make sense of texts.

Activity 3: Ask students to discuss how they identified the topics and subtopics of texts with a partner. Assign them to share their lists and explain how the connections they make between topics and subtopics help them understand texts better.

Tip #2: Train students to summarize reading material by focusing on those sections that state the text’s main points. Encourage them not to focus as much on the development and examples given in the text as on condensing its main ideas.

Activity 1: Assign students to look through the text and mark sections that state the main ideas. Ask them to underline the main ideas and make notes to themselves about why they think those parts express the major points accurately.
Activity 2: Assign students to write down a few keywords that accurately describe the text to them. If they were asked to select several keywords or terms that best describe and characterize the text they have read, what will they be? Ask them to write these words down and explain how and why they selected them.

Activity 3: Ask students to rewrite the main points in the form of a question. Then, ask them to answer the questions. Does the text support their responses to the questions they posed?

Tip #3: When condensing texts, have students practice identifying the most important parts of a text’s argument. Ask them to decide what parts of the text are important for them in understanding what it is discussing. Also, encourage students to explain why the parts they identified are vital in helping them understand the argument.

Activity 1: Ask students to write annotations of the texts they read in class. Assign them to keep an annotated bibliography of all the materials they read throughout the sessions. Their annotations should contain a brief summary of the text’s major points and conclusion.

Activity 2: Assign students to get into small groups and write collaborative summaries of several texts they have read so far. Encourage them to write down
the basic points that they will discuss in the summary and ask them to talk about these points in their groups. Before they begin the discussion, assign students to select a scribe who will write down the summary. Then, ask them to collectively look at the texts and discuss their major points.

*Activity 3:* Ask students to create descriptive outlines of the texts they read. The outlines can include 1-2 sentences that will describe each major point of the text. Afterwards, ask them to discuss what they wrote in pairs. The descriptive outline will ask students to write brief statements in which they will describe the rhetorical content and function of paragraphs in the texts they read.

**Tip #4:** Train students to condense texts for themselves when reading by looking at how the author begins and ends them. It will be a good idea for you to encourage students to look at the beginning and ending of the text, since you will then help them see what the text is saying and determine its direction, emphasis, pros and cons. When looking at texts with abstracts, ask students to read the abstract in order to get the gist of the text and develop a clear understanding of its approach. Motivate them to look closely at the beginning and ending of texts to help them understand the main points.

*Activity 1:* Give students a few sample abstracts to read. After they read the abstracts, ask them to select one of the texts you recently discussed and identify
the introduction and conclusion of the text. Now, ask students to write an abstract in which they summarize the argument and focus specifically on how the author of the text begins and ends it.

**Activity 2:** Read through the introduction and conclusion of the text and summarize them. Ask students to select keywords from both parts of the text to help guide them in writing succinct and clear summaries.

**Activity 3:** Ask students to get together in small groups and write their own introduction and conclusion of the text. Afterwards, ask them to compare and contrast the introduction and conclusion provided in the text with the ones they wrote. How similar or different are they?

❖ **Tips for helping students translate texts**

**Tip #1:** When translating texts, train students to rewrite any text or parts of texts regardless of length and subject matter into their own version of that text. Encourage them to translate reading material into a language that is straightforward to them and that they understand.
Activity 1: Ask students to identify terms and phrases that they do not understand in the text they are reading. Then, assign them to get into groups and discuss what they think those terms or phrases could mean in the context of the text.

Activity 2: Working individually, ask students to write down their translation of words, terms, or phrases that are unclear to them. Assign them to infer what those words, terms, or phrases could mean in the bigger context of the text.

Activity 3: Give students a challenging text that they are unfamiliar with and ask them to identify parts that they think could be rephrased / translated to help them understand the text better. Afterwards, ask them to explain why they chose those parts of the text and how they think rephrasing / translating them could improve their reading experience.

Tip #2: Ask students to translate texts by learning to paraphrase and explain material they read. When reading texts, train students to rephrase important parts in their own words in order to understand them.
Activity 1: Ask students to bring to class a text that they are struggling with from one of their other courses. Give them a passage from this text and ask them to read it several times before restating it in their own words. Then, ask them to underline the most important parts of the passage.

Activity 2: Assign students to paraphrase the passage they just read. To guide them as they paraphrase, ask them to focus on the parts that they underlined and rephrase them first. Doing so will help them understand how the passage builds up. After rephrasing the parts that they underlined, ask them to paraphrase the rest of the passage.

Activity 3: Ask students to explain if they think their paraphrase helps them understand the passage better. Assign them to write a freewrite in which they explain why they think their paraphrase is an effective one. To help students think about this, ask them to look up words or concepts that they do not understand, either in the glossary of their text or online.

Tip #3: Ask students to translate texts for themselves by rewriting them in a way that emphasizes the rhetorical features of texts such as the subject, purpose, and audience. When working with texts, ask students to identify the role of these rhetorical features in their own words. Ask them to use the process of translation to help them understand the
rhetorical features of texts. It may help them to use their own words as they identify the rhetorical features.

*Activity 1:* Ask students to rewrite the subject and purpose of the text for themselves in their own words to help them understand it better. Afterwards, ask them to write a short journal entry in which they explain the text’s purpose.

*Activity 2:* Ask students to identify the audience of the text. Who are the intended readers? Do they think they would be for, against, or neutral to the issue being discussed in the text? Ask students to describe how they respond to the text as readers.

*Activity 3:* Ask students to describe the rhetorical features (mentioned above) discussed in the text. If they were to briefly characterize it in their own words, how would they do so? What is the author’s reason and motivation for writing? Ask them to first describe the role of the author in the text and then think about how the author’s argument and focus connect to his or her reason and motivation for writing.
❖ **Tips for helping students understand texts’ social context**

**Tip #1:** To help students understand the social context of texts, train them to look at parts of the text that provide them with the background information that surrounds the development of ideas in the material they are reading.

*Activity 1:* Ask students to study the context of the texts they read. Assign them to read background information about the topic of the text. Afterwards, ask them to make connections between the content of the text and the background information about the topic.

*Activity 2:* Ask students to think about how their understanding of the texts they read is influenced by their interaction with their classmates and the associations they bring with them when reading a new text.

*Activity 3:* Ask students to discuss how the connections they make between the content and context of the text compare to ones that their classmates make. How similar and different are the connections they make?
**Tip #2:** To help students identify the social context of texts, work with them on analyzing the discourse community to which the texts they read belong. Point out that not all texts may be part of a larger discourse community. Then, ask them to think about the kind of readers who would read the particular texts and why.

*Activity 1:* Assign students to identify the discourse community of texts they read. In particular, ask them to think about and list the kind of readers who would read the given text. Then, prompt them to consider why they believe the audience they identified would read this text.

*Activity 2:* Ask students to describe the particular discourse community of texts they read. Assign them to analyze the community and write down how it influences and defines both their worldview and the use of language in texts.

*Activity 3:* Assign students to share their reflections about how knowing the discourse community of a text affects how they read it. In particular, ask them to think about how reading texts that are similar to the one they read develops their understanding of and response to ideas they read about.
**Tip #3:** When helping students work with the social context of texts, ask them to find similarities and differences between the contexts of the material they read. Ask them to describe how they read and respond to texts that are written in different contexts.

*Activity 1:* Assign students to look at two texts they read in class and ask them to compare and contrast the contexts of the texts. If the context is academic, historical, environmental or even political, ask them to discuss how the context is also social because it involves interaction and active participation in a discourse community. For example, they could discuss a text that focuses on the effects of global warming in an environmental and political context.

*Activity 2:* Ask students to discuss whether or not texts fit into the particular contexts in which they are written. Then, consider if the text’s content and style are effective or not, in view of the content. If the context of a given text is a historical one, ask them to discuss how inserting the topic and main points of the text into a more current and social context pertinent to our lives would affect their understanding of it.

*Activity 3:* Assign students to write a reflection about how their awareness of the context of a text helps them understand it better.
Tip #4: Ask students to discuss how knowing the author’s background would affect their understanding of the texts they read. Encourage them to read information about the author that discusses how aspects of his or her background influenced how the assigned text was written.

Activity 1: Ask students to make a list of facts and details that they learned about the author from what they read in the text. What parts of the text(s) clue them into background information about the author?

Activity 2: Ask students to read information about the author and jot down facts and details that they learned from what they read. Ask them to think about how an awareness of the author’s background helps them read texts differently.

Activity 3: Ask students to write a response in which they discuss how useful it is for them to know information about the author of the assigned text. How does knowing information about the author help them understand / respond to the text better?
Sample Assignment

In this assignment, you will be asked to write a paper in which you discuss what you understand in the text you read, how you identify the main points, and what conclusions you draw from the text’s argument. The purpose of this assignment is to 1) practice summarizing the text’s argument, 2) identify the main points, and 3) discuss the social context. You will have an opportunity to practice all three skills in this assignment. As you work on this paper, consider how your understanding of the text develops as you read. Be sure to organize your paper so that you concisely address each of the three tasks below. Cite relevant passages from the text to support your discussion.

1) You will be asked to identify and condense the main ideas and major elements of the text. Subdivide the summary into sections where groups of paragraphs are focused on the text’s different topics. Afterwards, discuss the main ideas covered in the sections.

2) Translate the text’s content into an informal and conversational form by paraphrasing a given passage from the text you just summarized and explaining its major points in the language that you use on a regular basis. Be sure to also discuss the style and how it affects your understanding of the topics addressed in the passage.

3) Discuss the social contexts that shape your response to the assigned text. Also, think about how it is influenced by the context in which it is written. Consider how the background of the text helps you understand its content better. Describe
and critically think about how understanding the context and background affects your response to the text. What are the social contexts discussed in it? How do they affect your critical understanding of the text as a whole?

Sample Rubric

Superior
- Addresses paper prompt completely
- Makes substantial reference to the reading selection
- Identifies and condenses all the main ideas and major elements of texts
- Creatively paraphrases the passage by using language that is understandable to students
- Thoroughly explains the social contexts of texts and discusses how they influence the student’s understanding of the reading material
- Demonstrates superior command of structure, organization, content, and transitions
- Demonstrates excellent use of grammar and punctuation

Strong
- Addresses paper prompt well
- Makes enough reference to the reading selection
o Identifies and condenses some of the main ideas and major elements of texts

o Paraphrases the passage by using language that is understandable to students

o Explains the social contexts of texts and discusses how they influence the student’s understanding of the reading material

o Demonstrates good command of structure, organization, content, and transitions

o Demonstrates good use of grammar and punctuation

**Competent**

o Adequately addresses paper prompt

o Makes adequate reference to the reading selection

o Identifies and condenses few of the main ideas and major elements of texts

o Adequately paraphrases the passage by using language that is understandable to students

o Adequately explains the social contexts of texts and discusses how they influence the student’s understanding of the reading material

o Demonstrates adequate command of structure, organization, content, and transitions

o Demonstrates average use of grammar and punctuation
Weak

- Poorly addresses paper prompt
- Makes few references to the reading selection
- Identifies and condenses almost none of the main ideas and major elements of texts
- Poorly paraphrases the passage by using language that is understandable to students
- Poorly explains the social contexts of texts and discusses how they influence the student’s understanding of the reading material
- Demonstrates poor command of structure, organization, content, and transitions
- Demonstrates poor use of grammar and punctuation

Inadequate

- Misunderstands the prompt
- Makes no reference to the reading selection
- Identifies and condenses none of the main ideas and major elements of texts
- Fails to paraphrase the passage
- Does not explain the social contexts of texts and how they affect the student’s understanding of the reading material
- Lacks command of structure, organization, content, and transitions
- Has serious errors in grammar and punctuation that may impede understanding
Teaching Reading Processes

This section discusses reading processes and provides a variety of tips and classroom materials that stimulates how to read texts and why. In particular, the advice below explores the relationship between the text’s content and structure and focuses on developing awareness of reading processes. In his discussion of the role of reading in the writing classroom, Foster emphasizes the interactive character of the reading process. He cites Christina Haas and Linda Flower who maintain that “reading is a constructive, rhetorical process which includes the writer of the original text, other readers, the rhetorical context for reading, and the history of the discourse” (167). He then suggests that teachers should help students identify the interactive, relational quality of reading and cites Haas and Flower who say that we need to move from merely teaching texts to teaching readers” (169). The article accentuates the importance and value of teaching reading-to-write tasks. The classroom activities below discuss the processes readers go through when thinking about how texts are organized, where main ideas are found, and why. Some of them ask students to describe the structure and organization of ideas in texts. Others ask them to write a response in which they describe the relationship between the text’s content and its structure.

This section also discusses strategies that can be used in the writing classroom to help students describe their reading processes and make connections to texts they read. When reading, train students to always be aware of how they read texts and be able to describe their processes. In their discussion of integrated reading and writing, Goen and
Gillotte-Tropp develop an approach to integrated reading and writing that is grounded in six principles – integration, time, development, academic membership, sophistication, and purposeful communication. The authors’ goal in the article is “to understand and engage in reading and writing as a way to make sense of the world, to experience literacy as problem solving, reasoning, and reflecting” (100). To help teachers work with students on reading and writing processes, the authors suggest that they should train them to identify and become aware of the reader’s purpose. Accordingly, one of the activities below asks students to narrate their exploration of texts in order to encourage them to explain their individual processes. The purpose is to train them to keep track of what they understand in texts, how they arrive at their understanding, and what they still have to understand. This section as a whole provides instructors with advice that emphasizes reading as a process that involves the social construction of texts.

❖ Tips for organizing the reading process(es)

Tip #1: When organizing reading processes, ask students to think about how the text they are reading is set up. As students read, encourage them to organize their individual reading processes such that they are able to follow the text’s main ideas, describe its style and organization, and explain how the particular process they are using helps them get the greatest possible benefit out of the reading experience.
Activity 1: Ask students to observe how texts are organized. Have them look at the major sections, subsections, and transitions between paragraphs. Then, assign students to label major parts of texts as they read and discuss how awareness of the organization helps them prepare themselves for reading.

Activity 2: Assign students to discuss how texts are organized and write down a plan in which they explain what they will look for as they read. Ask them to look at the content of the text and explain how they will identify the major ideas. Then, ask them to look at the context and ask them to explain how they will identify it.

Activity 3: Ask students to look at the style of the text and explain how they will adjust their reading strategies to suit the particular text. If the text is more formal like an academic essay, ask them to explain how they will follow its argument e.g. how they will find the major ideas and describe the tone of the author. What is the tone like – serious and formal or more informal?

Activity 4: Ask students to consider how their reading processes change with respect to the genre of the particular text such as essays, scholarly articles, and literacy narratives. Then, encourage them to share their approaches to reading texts in different genres.
**Tip #2:** To stimulate students to organize their reading processes as they work with texts, ask them to think about how they would describe their individual reading approaches. Stimulate them to describe the steps they take as they read texts.

*Activity 1:* Ask students to describe their individual reading processes. Assign them to explain their purpose for reading texts. Do they focus on finding and labeling main ideas first, then the transitions, and then the conclusion of texts? Or do they look at the introduction and conclusion before looking at the rest of the text? Ask them to explain what they focus on as they read and how the choices they make as readers influence their responses to the text.

*Activity 2:* Ask students to share their techniques with one another and explain what they could do to improve their own approaches to reading. How do other students begin reading? What do they focus on and how does it help them?

*Activity 3:* Ask students to practice reading texts backwards. Encourage them to look at how the text ends and describe how its conclusion connects to the introduction. Reading texts backwards will give students an opportunity to show that they understand the main points, their development, as well as the structure of any text, because it will encourage them to think about how ideas are organized and
constructed. It will also help them build connections between the introduction and conclusion of any argument.

**Tip #3:** Train students to review the reading processes once they finish reading. Ask them to think about what they could do to change how they read texts and why.

*Activity 1:* Assign students to reflect on how they read texts by critiquing their own reading processes. Now, ask them to write a response to their own reading processes. Encourage them to consider the following questions as they write: 1) Do you think your reading process(es) are useful to you in reading difficult texts? Why or why not? 2) Do the choices you make as a reader help you understand, apply, and critique ideas in texts you read? How so? 3) Are your reading processes organized or do they need more careful planning? Afterwards, ask them to think about how their approach to reading a given text differs from the one they use to read another text.

*Activity 2:* Assign students to narrate their exploration of the text during class discussion. Ask them to write down an explanation in which they state how they determine the text’s topic and purpose. Then, ask them to verbally narrate how they read the text to identify its topic and purpose. In particular, encourage them to explore what they notice first, next, and last when they read a given text (e.g.
When I first begin reading the text, I look at all the major sections in it. Next, I identify the keywords that are repeated in it. Then, I look for connections between the keywords. Afterwards, ask them to explain what they learned from the process of narrating their exploration of the text.

*Activity 3:* Ask students to think about what they would like to change about their approach to reading texts. Then, ask them to think about what they like / dislike about how they read texts.

*Sample Assignment*

In this assignment, you will be asked to write a reflective paper in which you describe your reading process. Please describe how your reading process developed over time. What is your approach to reading any text regardless of genre? As you write your paper, describe the stages of your reading process. What do you look for when you read the text for the first time, second time, etc.? How do you organize the reading process for yourself? Do you annotate, write summaries, or explore connections between what you know about the topic and the text itself? Does your reading process help you make sense of texts? How so?
Sample Rubric

Superior
- Addresses paper prompt completely
- Actively reflects about the reading process and explains how the student organizes this process
- Gives specific examples of how the student organizes the reading process
- Provides a detailed discussion of the student’s reading process
- Demonstrates superior command of structure, organization, content, and transitions
- Demonstrates excellent use of grammar and punctuation

Strong
- Addresses paper prompt well
- Reflects about the reading process and explains how the student organizes this process
- Gives several specific examples of how the student organizes the reading process
- Provides a somewhat detailed discussion of the student’s reading process
- Demonstrates strong command of structure, organization, content, and transitions
- Demonstrates good use of grammar and punctuation

Competent
- Adequately addresses paper prompt
- Sketchily reflects about the reading process and sketchily explains how the student organizes this process
- Gives few examples of how the student organizes the reading process
Provides a discussion of the student’s reading process that consists of generalizations

Demonstrates adequate command of structure, organization, content, and transitions

Demonstrates adequate use of grammar and punctuation

**Weak**

- Poorly addresses paper prompt
- Poorly reflects about the reading process and explains how the student organizes this process
- Gives almost no examples of how the student organizes the reading process
- Provides a discussion of the student’s reading process that consists mostly of generalizations
- Demonstrates some command of structure, organization, content, and transitions
- Demonstrates some use of grammar and punctuation

**Inadequate**

- Misunderstands the prompt
- Does not reflect about the reading process and does not explain how the student organizes this process
- Gives no examples of how the student organizes the reading process
- Provides a discussion of the student’s reading process that consists only of generalizations
- Lacks command of structure, organization, content, and transitions
- Has serious errors in grammar and punctuation that may impede understanding
**Reading / Writing Connections**

This section of the guide presents a variety of approaches to teaching the reading / writing connection in the college-composition classroom. The tips, activities, sample assignments and rubrics below discuss suggestions for using reading to improve writing, using sources that students read when writing their own texts, and helping students interact with texts. The section relies on the social constructivist framework of the guide as a whole to discuss the reading-writing connection. To support the advice in it, this document refers to Bunn’s discussion of this connection in which he suggests that the “interaction between reader and text suggests that the process of reading is a *negotiation* between the knowledge and purposes of the writer and the knowledge and purposes of the reader” (501). This section offers tips and activities you can use when training students to identify the particular purpose of the author whose text they are reading. The advice in this part of the guide examines tips and activities that focus on identifying the particular purpose of the writer. Accordingly, the guide emphasizes the value of seeing the reading process as part of a negotiation between the reader and the writer.

This section discusses advice for teaching the reading / writing connection by describing tips and activities that help students practice incorporating materials from other sources. Another source this guide refers to when exploring the reading-writing connection is Salvatori’s study of correlations between reading and writing patterns. This study focuses on looking for and finding connections between reading and writing by “fram[ing] [both] activities (formal assignments, in-class writings, journals) that ask
students first to write their response to a text, second to construct a reflective commentary on the moves they made as readers and the possible reasons for them, and third to formulate an assessment of the particular text their reading produced” (446). By encouraging students to write about texts and then to reflect about and describe their responses to the reading, Salvatori prompts them to find connections between reading and writing. When writing, students are encouraged to think about how they read, what they think about the text, and how they evaluate their own reading processes. To this end, the advice in this section focuses on using reading to improve writing as well as interacting with texts.

❖ **Tips for helping students use reading to improve writing**

**Tip #1:** Train students to use the texts they have read to help guide them in their writing. When responding to a writing assignment, ask students to focus on examining a genre that resembles the type of genre they are writing. Encourage them to look at how authors organize and discuss ideas in their texts. Also, encourage them to use the texts they read to help them develop a sense of how they can complete their writing assignments.
Activity 1: Assign students to look at how authors organize their ideas in the assigned texts. Ask them to construct a diagram in which they list and explain the strategies that the authors use in their texts (e.g. In the first two paragraphs of the text, the authors introduce this idea and use this information to give examples and to show why it works).

Activity 2: Ask students to look at how the author(s) discuss(es) ideas in texts. In particular, assign students to look at the kinds of examples used in the text. Also, ask them to look at the level of detail that the author uses when discussing ideas. Does he / she go into great detail, not that much detail, or barely any detail at all when presenting ideas in texts? How does the level of detail used affect how students respond to the text?

Activity 3: Ask students to explain how they think looking at the organization of the text they read could help them organize their own papers. Depending on the genre of the text, ask them to think about how much detail it would help them to include in the introduction, body, and conclusion of the texts they write.
**Tip #2:** Work with students on discussing how texts influence their writing style. Ask them to think about what they learned from the authors whose texts they have read. How did the texts help them develop their own writing style?

*Activity 1:* Ask students to write a response to the text in which they describe its particular writing style. What is the writing style of the text like? Is the style formal or informal? On the other hand, is the author’s discussion of the topic concise or dense? Is the text’s style intended for a non-expert audience or does the text use specialized jargon? Is the text technical or creative / nontechnical?

*Activity 2:* Assign students to present their responses in class. How does their response to the content of the text affect how they respond to its style? Ask them to describe and explain their responses.

*Activity 3:* Assign students to describe what they learned from reading the texts. How does the process of reading different kinds of texts influence their own writing style? Ask them to consider this question after they finish reading.

**Tip #3:** When reading and writing about texts, ask students to look at how authors structure the texts they write. Train students to make connections between reading and writing by looking at how authors whose texts they have read structure ideas.
Activity 1: Assign students to look at how authors structure texts. Ask them to underline the signal phrases or words such as “also, in the same way, similarly, likewise; but, however, nevertheless, nonetheless, on the one hand … on the other hand, in spite of, in contrast; first and second” that help them move from one idea to the next. Also, ask them to think about how the texts they write help them understand how they can read texts better.

Activity 2: Ask students to look at the texts they read and think about their structures by identifying the introduction and conclusion of the text. Ask them to think about how effectively the introduction introduces the central idea of the text and how the conclusion aptly rounds off the major ideas.

Activity 3: Ask students to share their connections between reading and writing activities by describing what they still do not understand in the text after reading and writing about it. Then, ask them to specify how the connection between reading and writing helps them understand it.

Tips for helping students use sources they read when writing

Tip #1: Train students to reference texts they have read by looking at the requirements of the writing assignment. Then, ask them to think about why and how the paper they are writing will benefit from textual evidence. Also, ask students to consider how including it
will not only help them address the assignment but also understand how they can join ongoing conversations about the topic of the text they are working with. Finally, prompt them to think about why authors integrate sources in texts to support their points.

Activity 1: Ask students to look at the writing assignment they have been assigned. Before they even begin browsing for ideas to address the prompt, ask them to think about the kind of evidence that will be appropriate for the paper they are writing and write down their ideas.

Activity 2: Ask students to select several quotations from the texts they have read. Then, ask them to prepare themselves for inserting these quotations into the papers they write by deciding at what points in the paper they will be most appropriate to insert (e.g. Paragraph 1: insert _____ from ____ source).

Activity 3: Ask students to write a brief rationale for each of the quotations they inserted in their papers to help them understand why they selected the textual evidence they did. For this activity, encourage students to think about why they are inserting a particular quotation from the text they read into their writing assignments.

Tip #2: Work with students on incorporating materials from texts into the papers they write. Encourage them to carefully introduce the quotations they use from other texts by thinking about why they could be useful to them in discussing ideas in writing.
assignments. To successfully use sources in their writing, work with students on making connections between the material they incorporate from other texts and what they write themselves.

*Activity 1:* Assign students to introduce the quotations they will be using in their writing assignments. Ask them to write a few sentences or use a signal phrase that will lead the reader into the quotation that they selected.

*Activity 2:* Ask students to integrate quotations into their papers by mentioning the author’s name and explaining how the quotation they are using connects to the point they are making in their papers.

*Activity 3:* Ask students to think about how effectively they integrated quotations in the papers they are writing. Then, ask them to peer review each other’s work with quotations in their papers.

**Tip #3:** Encourage students to incorporate sources they have read in the papers they write by explaining how they will be using a particular source to support their points. Ask them to focus on the kind of sources they are using by considering how useful or not useful they are to them in supporting their arguments / discussions of the topic. Ask students to think about what they are learning from other authors about the topic.
Activity 1: Assign students to look at the papers they are writing and ask them to write down a few transitional sentences that will help them move on from the source they quoted to the next point in the writing assignment.

Activity 2: Ask students to explain why the quotations they have selected help them support and explain the points they are making in their papers. Ask them to explain how the source they are referring to helps them back up their own points. Do they think the audience they are addressing in their papers will be convinced?

Activity 3: Ask students to practice citing sources in order to participate in debates and establish different perspectives. Assign them to look at different texts that present arguments from a variety of angles.

Activity 4: Ask students to think about how effectively they integrated quotations into the text. Did they introduce the quotations and explain why they are relevant to the points they are making in their papers? Ask them to write a write-up in which they describe whether or not they found this activity helpful.
Tips for helping students interact with texts when reading and writing

**Tip #1:** To stimulate students to interact with texts, encourage them to write as they read. Ask them to begin a dialogue with the text they are reading by either agreeing or disagreeing with points made in it. As they read, ask them to think about the degree to which they agree or disagree with the author of the text.

*Activity 1:* Ask students to enter into a conversation with texts by thinking about how several of the authors whose texts they have read talk to each other. What could one of the authors say to another of the authors? Would they agree or disagree with one another?

*Activity 2:* Ask students to challenge some of the ideas in the texts they read by interjecting their opinions of statements made in the text. Ask them to explain why and how some of the statements in the text do not make sense to them.

*Activity 3:* Ask students to think about how writing as they read helps them respond to texts better. In particular, ask them to look back at what they wrote in the previous two activities and have them consider how writing as they read helps them respond to what they are reading.
**Tip #2:** Train students to write comments that explore and discuss details in texts. To help them interact with reading material, ask them to look at the points made in texts and write comments that continue the discussion begun in the readings. To help them do so, encourage them to interject ideas that occur to them as they read to help them clarify points for themselves.

*Activity 1:* Ask students to think about what they learned from the text. Assign them to write suggestions about what the author could have said if he / she had continued the text.

*Activity 2:* Assign students to explain what they think are the positive and negative qualities of the text. What parts are convincing to them? What parts are not? Why?

*Activity 3:* Ask students to explain what they think is lacking in their understanding of the text. What do they not understand in the text that they would like to understand?

**Tip #3:** To encourage students to interact with texts productively, ask them to analyze the language used in the text. When responding to the text, encourage them to look at how the author uses the particularities of language. Recommend students to pay attention to specific terminology used in the text.
Activity 1: Ask students to think about how the specific terminology used in the text affects their understanding of it. Does specialized terminology affect how students read it? How does the terminology in the text influence their response to it?

Activity 2: Ask students to discuss the relationship between the language and content of the text. How effectively does the language of the text express / describe its meaning? Are the kinds of descriptions and examples used in the text effective?

Activity 3: Ask students to share their impressions of the role of language in the text. Then, ask them to consider how they would have changed the language as they read in order to understand the text better.

Sample Assignment

In this assignment, you will be asked to write a paper in which you discuss connections between reading and writing processes. Identify connections between the two by thinking about the relationship between the content and the style of the text you have read. How does the style of the text help you relate to the content better? Do you think the text’s style makes it more or less difficult for you to read it? Now, think like a writer and discuss the relationship between the content and the style of the text from the writer’s perspective. As a writer, what kind of style would you have used if you were to
write about the topic of the text? Would the style be more formal or more informal? Consider how the process of reading texts helps you think about how you could write about them. Cite parts of the text that most strikingly describe its content and style.

Sample Rubric

**Superior**

- Addresses paper prompt completely
- Creatively identifies a variety of connections between reading and writing by describing the relationship between the content and style of the text
- Discusses and explains in detail how the style of the text helps the student relate to the content better when reading and writing
- Clearly explains how the text’s particular style affects the student’s reading and writing experiences
- Cites relevant evidence from the text to support the discussion of connections between reading and writing processes
- Uses superior command of structure, organization, content, and transitions
- Demonstrates excellent use of grammar and punctuation
**Strong**

- Addresses paper prompt well
- Creatively identifies some of the connections between reading and writing by describing the relationship between the content and style of the text
- Discusses and explains in some detail how the style of the text helps the student relate to the content better when reading and writing
- Explains how the text’s particular style affects the student’s reading and writing experiences
- Cites some relevant evidence from the text to support the discussion of connections between reading and writing processes
- Uses good command of structure, organization, content, and transitions
- Demonstrates good use of grammar and punctuation

**Competent**

- Adequately addresses paper prompt
- Sketchily identifies the connections between reading and writing by describing the relationship between the content and style of the text
- Uses generalizations to discuss how the style of the text helps the student relate to the content better when reading and writing
Uses generalizations to explain how the text’s particular style affects the student’s reading and writing experiences

Sketchily cites some evidence from the text to support the discussion of connections between reading and writing processes

Uses adequate command of structure, organization, content, and transitions

Demonstrates adequate use of grammar and punctuation

Weak

Poorly addresses paper prompt

Identifies almost none of the connections between reading and writing by describing the relationship between the content and style of the text

Lacks clarity in discussing how the style of the text helps the student relate to the content better when reading and writing

Gives a confused explanation of how the text’s particular style affects the student’s reading and writing experiences

Cites almost no evidence from the text to support the discussion of connections between reading and writing processes

Uses poor command of structure, organization, content, and transitions

Demonstrates poor use of grammar and punctuation
Inadequate

- Misunderstands the prompt
- Identifies none of the connections between reading and writing by describing the relationship between the content and style of the text
- Does not discuss how the style of the text helps the student relate to the content better when reading and writing
- Gives no explanation of how the text’s particular style affects the student’s reading and writing experiences
- Cites no evidence from the text to support the discussion of connections between reading and writing processes
- Lacks command of structure, organization, content, and transitions
- Has serious errors in grammar and punctuation that may impede understanding
Analyzing Genres

This section discusses advice that teachers can refer to when training students to read texts written in different genres. The advice presented here focuses specifically on essays and scholarly articles. Both types of genres are widely read and practiced in the college composition classroom. Consequently, some of the tips, activities, and assignment and rubric suggestions below break down approaches to reading texts written in these genres. This section provides instructors with tips for training students to identify topics of texts, types of evidence, and kinds of style. When discussing genre and its role in the writing process, Bawarshi suggests that a “genre conceptually frames what its users generally imagine as possible within a given situation, predisposing them to act in certain ways by rhetorically framing how they come to know and respond to certain situations” (22). This argument acknowledges the value of using genre as a tool for thinking about possible ways to read texts. It may be useful to composition instructors, since it suggests that genres rhetorically frame how users read and respond to situations in texts. Some of the advice in this section indicates that the knowledge of genre is crucial when reading texts such as essays and scholarly articles. The section also discusses how the presentation of the content in these types of texts prepares students for reading different materials in different genres.

Further, this part of the guide discusses advice that emphasizes ways to identify the organization of texts and construct an understanding of reading materials. The guide describes tips that discuss ways to use knowledge of genre to read texts with an
awareness of how they are written. In particular, some of the activities below focus on identifying and describing how topics are introduced and developed in texts. According to Bawarshi, the knowledge of genre is indispensable for helping students make rhetorical choices when reading and writing about texts: “Through genre analysis, then, we not only make students aware of different rhetorical conventions and what they reveal, but we also make students aware of how these different conventions position them as writers, the kinds of positions they need to assume as they reproduce these conventions” (164). Bawarshi indicates that genre analysis requires students to understand rhetorical conventions and how they help them identify their positions as writers. This argument shows that the practice of analyzing various genres prepares students for reading and analyzing different kinds of texts. The advice below discusses strategies for thinking about the rhetorical conventions of texts. In particular, some of the activities focus on the role of audience in readings and ask students to consider how it changes depending on the genre of texts. Ultimately, this section as a whole develops strategies for using genre to help students construct their understanding of texts.

❖ **Tips for reading essays and scholarly articles**

**Tip #1:** When reading essays and scholarly articles, ask students to identify the kind of topics that these texts discuss. Ask them to reflect on ways in which the essay and the scholarly article present a central claim. Then, ask students to think about how these texts are organized, what examples and transitions they use, and how they develop their ideas.
Activity 1: Ask students to think about how the essay/scholarly article introduces and discusses a topic. Then, ask them to note the kind of topics addressed in the text. Afterwards, ask them to look at how the author introduces each main idea in the text. Does the author lead in with an example or provide a more general introduction?

Activity 2: Ask students to think about how texts are organized. Assign them to focus on the order in which major ideas are presented. Does the presentation of the text make reading a comfortable/uncomfortable experience? Why? Ask them to think about the effectiveness of the examples and transitions made in the text.

Activity 3: Ask students to look at their own writing and try to come up with their own strategies for comfortably navigating texts. Then, ask them if the strategies they developed help them understand how to navigate texts more comfortably.

Activity 4: Ask students to write a response in which they discuss how an awareness of the role of audience in texts is crucial when working with reading material. Also, ask them to think about how the role of audience changes depending on the genre of the text.
Tip #2: When reading essays and scholarly articles, ask students to reflect on and analyze the kind of evidence used in these texts. Work with students on figuring out how effectively the evidence used supports the major claim(s) made.

*Activity 1:* Ask students to look at the kind of evidence used by authors in essays and scholarly articles and analyze it. Ask them to think about how it supports the points made in texts. How does the evidence help the author make connections to the main points in readings?

*Activity 2:* Assign students to look at the kind of evidence used by the author and ask them to think about how effectively it is presented in the text they are reading.

*Activity 3:* Ask students to think about other ways in which the author of the text could support the main points. Prompt them to brainstorm for ideas and state them as you write them on the board.

Tip #3: When reading essays and scholarly articles, ask students to look at the style of both types of texts. Work with them on describing and critically reflecting on the style and how it affects their response to the content of reading material.
Activity 1: Ask students to look at the style of the essay and the scholarly article. First, ask them to think about how the author responds to the topic he or she is discussing. After they have an idea of the author’s attitude to the topic, encourage them to describe the tone of the text. Then, ask students to pay attention to how diction, syntax, and punctuation are used. Assign them to explain how the particular use of each of these elements in texts affects how they read. How does the style of the text help them understand the particular genre better?

Activity 2: Ask students to consider how the style of the text affects their response to it. Do they treat it more seriously or less seriously because it is written in a more formal or a more informal style?

Activity 3: Ask students to share their responses with one another. Also, prompt them to think about how their responses to texts are affected by the specific language they use. Ask them to describe the language. For example, is it specialized or more conversational?
Sample Assignment

In this assignment, you will be asked to analyze the genre of a selected text(s) you read. Explain how knowing the text’s genre (essay, scholarly article, or literacy narrative) prepares you for reading the text. In your paper, highlight information that helps you understand the content, organization, and style of the text better. How does the text expand / change your idea of how essays, scholarly articles, or literacy narratives are written? Decide what information is important to you and what information is not as important in analyzing the genre of the text you are writing about.

Sample Rubric

Superior

- Addresses paper prompt completely
- Demonstrates superior awareness and clear understanding of various genres
- Explicitly states and discusses the relationship between the content, organization and style of the text
- Accurately describes and critically examines how the text’s genre and style help the student understand the text
- Demonstrates superior command of structure, organization, content, and transitions
- Demonstrates excellent use of grammar and punctuation
**Strong**

- Addresses paper prompt well
- Demonstrates strong awareness and solid understanding of various genres
- Clearly states and discusses the relationship between the content, organization and style of the text
- Describes and examines how the text’s genre and style help the student understand the text
- Demonstrates strong command of structure, organization, content, and transitions
- Demonstrates good use of grammar and punctuation

**Competent**

- Adequately addresses paper prompt
- Demonstrates some awareness and some understanding of various genres
- States and discusses the relationship between the content, organization and style of the text with some clarity
- Adequately describes and examines how the text’s genre and style help the student understand the text
- Demonstrates adequate command of structure, organization, content, and transitions
- Demonstrates adequate use of grammar and punctuation
Weak

- Poorly addresses paper prompt
- Demonstrates almost no awareness and no understanding of various genres
- Lacks clarity in stating and discussing the relationship between the content, organization and style of the text
- Almost does not describe and examine how the text’s genre and style help the student understand the text
- Demonstrates some command of structure, organization, content, and transitions
- Demonstrates some use of grammar and punctuation

Inadequate

- Misunderstands the prompt
- Demonstrates no awareness and no understanding of various genres
- Fails to state and discuss the relationship between the content, organization and style of the text
- Fails to describe and examine how the text’s genre and style help the student understand the text
- Lacks command of structure, organization, content, and transitions
- Has serious errors in grammar and punctuation that may impede understanding
Conclusion

This guide discusses advice teachers can refer to when training students to read texts in the college composition classroom. The goal is to present writing teachers with a variety of ideas they can keep in mind when helping students organize and make sense of their reading processes. I present teachers with advice and classroom activities they can look at as they work to help students construct an understanding of texts in the college writing classroom. The tips in this guide seek to encourage teachers to motivate students to make their reading processes as active as possible by prompting them to think about how they are reading, to actually narrate their individual reading processes to themselves, and to always reflect about the connections between reading and writing. In his discussion of why putting writing before reading is useful, Elbow suggests that “reading is just like writing: a process of cognitive (and social) construction in which everyone builds up meanings from cues in the text, using as building blocks the word meaning already inside readers’ heads” (5). Reading and writing both involve the active construction of meaning. The advice has focused on reading as a process that involves this gradual construction of meaning. Some of the tips and activities focus specifically on understanding the relationship between the content and structure of texts precisely because the guide’s purpose is to encourage instructors to help students think of reading as a process that involves making connections, discussing what they understood from texts, and questioning what they have not yet understood. I hope this guide will be useful to those who see reading as a constantly evolving process in the individual’s mind.
WORKS CITED


Bunn, Michael. “Motivation and Connection: Teaching Reading (and Writing) in the Composition Classroom.” *College Composition and Communication* 64.3 (2013): 496-516. Print.


