Active Reading Overview

By Tammy Hinson
What is active reading?

• A strategy that gets reader involved with material.
  – Helps reader understand the author’s opinion about the topic of the reading selection.
  – Helps reader form judgments about material that is read.
  – Best suited for reading that emphasizes the author’s concepts and opinions based on facts gathered through research and observation.
    • Short stories
    • Novels
    • Magazine articles
    • Editorials or opinion pieces

• Process that develops critical thinking skills
  – Analysis
  – Synthesis
  – Evaluation
Active reading questions

• Active readers must answer eight questions.
  – What is the author’s main idea?
  – What main points support the main idea?
  – Is the support adequate and convincing?
  – Is the author expressing facts, opinions or both?
  – What is the author’s tone/attitude?
  – What is the author’s purpose?
  – Who is the author’s intended audience?
  – What is the source of the author’s detail?
Active reading questions

• What is the author’s main idea?
  – What is the topic of the article?
  – What is the author’s opinion of that topic?

• What main points support the main idea?
  – What reasons or examples does the author give that help to explain his/her opinion about the topic.
Active reading questions

• Is the support adequate and convincing?
  – Does the author give reasons that make sense?
  – Does the author give more than one reason?

• Is the author expressing facts, opinions or both?
  – Facts are exact details.
  – Facts are specific information.
  – Facts can be proven to be true.
Active reading questions

• What is the author’s purpose?
  – To share?
  – To inform?
  – To entertain?
  – To persuade

• Who is the author’s intended audience?
  – Is the author writing to the general public?
  – Is the author writing to a special audience?

• What is the source of the author’s detail?
  – Observation
  – Personal experience?
  – Research?
  – Reasoning?
Active reading questions

• What is the author’s tone/attitude?
  – Serious?
  – Sarcastic?
  – Preachy?
  – Humorous?
  – Angry
  – Insulting?
Answering active reader questions

• Always complete four steps to find the answers to the eight active reader questions.
  – Surveying
  – Uninterrupted reading
  – Studied reading
  – Review
First step of active reading

• Surveying
  – Check the title
    • What does title tell you about what you will be reading?
    • Who is the author?
    • Has instructor said anything about the author?
  – Look through the material
    • Headings
    • Boldface type
    • Italics
    • Lists
First step of active reading

• Surveying
  – Read the opening and closing paragraphs.
    • What clues do these provide about content and writer’s purpose?
  – Read first sentence of each paragraph.
    • What clues these provide about the content?
  – Once readers have surveyed material they will have a sense of what to expect when the material is read in detail.
Second step of active reading

• Uninterrupted reading
  – Read material quickly, but attentively without stopping.
    • Circle words in the passage you don’t understand to check later.
    • Place question mark next to material you don’t understand.
  – Keep going
    • Try to determine the writer’s main point.
  – After completing this step, write as many answers to active reader questions that you can.
    • Look up every word that you have circled and write meaning in the margin near the circled word.
  – Take a short break, if you feel you need one.
Third step of active reading

• Studied reading
  – Underline author’s thesis (main point) if it is stated.
    • Identify the sentences that express the author’s opinion about the topic.
  – Also underline the main points that support the thesis.
    • Identify the sentences that explain the reason for the author’s opinion.
  – As you read, record your observations
    • Personal comments
    • Note your agreement or disagreement
  – After this reading, answer remaining active reader questions.
Fourth step of active reading

• Review
  – Close your book and try to answer each of the eight active reader questions.
  – Answers to these questions form a summary of the material you just read.
  – Or recite the answers to active reader questions to another person.

• Following this reading strategy should help you to understand most author’s concepts and opinions.