

Reading Notes Instructions

Throughout the course, you will be assigned regular reading from your textbook. This is essential reading. However, you will not be answering specific questions from this reading. Instead, you will be taking Cornell notes and composing Interpretive and Global (IGs) questions from each section. Both Reading Notes and IGs are designed to provide you direct access to important factual information, and to serve as a springboard for critical analysis of the material. These are valuable skills that you will build upon throughout the year.

Reading Notes

Your reading notes will be worth credit in the Formative Assessment category in your grade and your questions and summary towards Life Skills, but more importantly they will be useful for quizzes/exams.

How to take EFFECTIVE reading notes from a textbook:

Pre-Read (Stretching)

Never turn to the first page of the chapter and simply begin reading. Never! Before you begin reading, pre-read the section – take a moment to see what you are getting into, and what you should expect to know or understand after reading this section. This may take only a few minutes, but is time well spent.

Take note of the title of the section, and think about its context within the larger unit. Check to see how long the section is. Look at the large bold headings that outline the chapter. Look at the smaller subheadings. Look at the bold key terms. Look at the pictures, charts, graphs, and/or maps. Read the captions.

Now you are ready to begin reading, and you should have an idea of what to take notes on.

Read

Read through the entire text once without stopping! If you keep stopping to take notes on everything and never just read it all the way through it is hard to follow along and understand the material. While you read through that first time circle words you don't understand and put a check in the margin so you can come back to them. Then go back after you have read through the entire section and take notes on the things you circled/checked.

Keep it Organized

The section/chapter essential question MUST be written at the top of your notes! Keeping your notes organized will help you during and after reading. Most obviously, if you plan on going back and studying from your notes, it will be easier to do so if there is an understandable organizational logic to them. Feel free to abbreviate things too!

Some sort of outline format is usually best. Many people have found success in combining the outline format with the Cornell note format. You can use the bold headings if you like. The important thing is to constantly be differentiating between the main ideas and the details and/or examples that help explain them. Your main mechanism for this is indentation. Highlight/underline key terms too!

Cornell Note Format

I encourage you to use Cornell note format because they require you to interact with them after you are done, going back and writing questions in the margin, or illustrations of key terms, or summaries of sections. This requires you to take in the information once again, think about it, and interact with them.

Cornell notes include a column on the left (about 1/3 of the page) where these things go. Also Cornell notes always require a summary at the end, which answers the essential question from the book!

Format for Notes

1. ID/S Terms

For each key term, topic, or issue (or ID/S) you must **identify** what it is (define it) and then explain why it is **significant**, hence ID/S. Use the unit guides I provide to help you figure out what is important to take note of! **Significance** should be focused on cause and effect (what impact it had, or what it led to), connections between content, continuity and/or change, or connections to today. This is **NOT** about simply defining words. It is the significance part that is the difference between ok/good notes and great notes. Great AP students can connect content, ok AP students can only define/identify.

2. IG Questions – Done the class after the notes are due!

Based on each reading, compose **AT LEAST TWO** Interpretive and/or Global Questions:

○ At least 1 Interpretive Question

- These questions don't have one correct answer that is "right there" in the text, but the text can be used to construct an answer to them.
- These questions might be answered differently by different people, and are often the source of a good discussion or debate that brings the text to life.
- Examples:
 - *How could Thomas Jefferson, who professed that "all men were created equal," justify slavery?*
 - *Does the Constitution favor large states over small states?*
 - *Did the framers create a Christian nation?*

○ At least 1 Global Question

- These questions reach beyond the reading and connect to other readings, subjects, or time periods.
- These are "big picture" questions that will be answered according to a person's own experience, assumptions, and/or ideology. As such, they are great discussion-starters. They don't have "right" answers and cannot be answered simply.
- Examples:
 - Can the rights of a minority group be guaranteed and protected in a democracy based on majority rule?
 - Can a government simultaneously protect liberty and security?

Tips & Expectations:

- You do not have to provide written answers to your questions, but you should be prepared to discuss them in class so it may be helpful.
- These IG questions work very well in coordinating with Cornell note format

Avoid:

○ Factual questions

- No: "When was the Constitution ratified?"
- No: "What was the Three-Fifths Compromise?"

3. Last but not least: Summary – Done the class after the notes are due!

For every assigned reading you must write a brief summary at the bottom of your notes (3-4 sentences). This must be in your own words, and is to help you reflect and to give you a better chance at remembering what you read! You will get a separate grade for your questions and summary for each chapter, which will be checked the class after reading notes are collected.

Tip: A good summary typically answers the essential question for the section in the book! So before you read, write down the essential question at the top and then make sure your summary answers that question! If it doesn't you won't get credit.