

## ACTIVE READING

Read with a pen in your hand.

1. **Before reading**, consider the title and genre of the text. What expectations do you have based on the title and genre?
2. **Read closely.**
  - a. Slow down and reread if necessary. If it is poetry, read it aloud – listen to it.
  - b. Look up definitions of words and references you don't know.
  - c. Figure out the who, what, when, where of the text. (Otherwise known as Characters, Point of View, Plot, Setting)
3. **Take notes and/or annotate the text.** Develop your own system of shorthand.
  - a. Highlight/underline important words or phrases
  - b. Talk back to the text – ask questions
  - c. Make notes in the margins
4. **Identify themes and significance of text.** What does it all mean? Why does it matter?
5. **How does the form and language of the text affect meaning?** You might think about the style, structure, tone, and genre of the text. Does the author use any figurative language (metaphors/similes)? What about other literary devices (foreshadowing, allusion, etc.)?
6. **Take into account the context of the text.**
  - a. Biographical context: Who is the author? Does the author's biography provide insight into the text?
  - b. Historical context: When and where was the story originally published? What was going on at that time that might provide insight into the text? If the story refers to a specific historical event or person, how might knowing more information help you to understand the text?
  - c. Cultural context: What cultural beliefs or attitudes would provide explanation for or challenge what happens in the text?
  - d. Literary context: What literary period does this text fit into? How might that help us understand the text? Are there allusions to other texts or authors? Why might those allusions be important?
7. **Consider what critical approaches might provide new meaning to the text.** Refer to the class notes about literary theory (new criticism, structuralism, post-structuralism, feminist criticism, race theory, queer theory, ecocriticism, marxist criticism, etc.).
8. **Make connections to other texts.** Think about other texts you have read – do any of them address similar themes? What about similarities in culture, organization/structure, author's biography, genre, language, literary devices, or anything else?