Introduction: Ways of Reading

MAKING A MARK

Reading involves a fair measure of push and shove. You make your mark on a book, and it makes its mark on you. Reading is not simply a matter of hanging back and waiting for a piece, or its author, to tell you what the writing has to say. In fact, one of the difficult things about reading is that the pages before you will begin to speak only when the authors are silent and you begin to speak in their place, sometimes for them — doing their work, continuing their projects — and sometimes for yourself, following your own agenda.

This is an unusual way to talk about reading, we know. We have not mentioned finding information or locating an author's purpose or identifying main ideas, useful though these skills are, because the purpose of our book is to offer you occasions to imagine other ways of reading. We think of reading as a social interaction — sometimes peaceful and polite, sometimes not so peaceful and polite.

We'd like you to imagine that when you read the works we've collected here, somebody is saying something to you, and we'd like you to imagine that you are in a position to speak back, to say something of your own in turn. In other words, we are not presenting our book as a miniature library (a place to find information), and we do not think of you, the reader, as a term-paper writer (a person looking for information to summarize or report).

When you read, you hear an author's voice as you move along; you believe a person with something to say is talking to you. You pay attention, even when
you don't completely understand what is being said, trusting that it will all make sense in the end, relating what the author says to what you already know or expect to hear or learn. Even if you don't quite grasp everything you are reading at every moment (and you won't), and even if you don't remember everything you've read (no reader does—at least not in long, complex pieces), you begin to see the outlines of the author's project, the patterns and rhythms of that particular way of seeing and interpreting the world.

When you stop to talk or write about what you've read, the author is silent; you take over—it is your turn to write, to begin to respond to what the author said. At that point, this author and his or her text become something you construct out of what you remember or what you notice as you go back through the text a second time, working from passages or examples but filtering them through your own predilection to see or read in particular ways.

In "The Achievement of Desire," one of the essays in this book, Richard Rodriguez tells the story of his education, of how he was drawn to imitate his teachers because of his desire to think and speak like them. His is not a simple story of hard work and success, however. In a sense, Rodriguez's education gave him what he wanted—status, knowledge, a way of understanding himself and his position in the world. At the same time, his education made it difficult to talk to his parents, to share their point of view; and to a degree, he felt himself becoming consumed by the powerful ways of seeing and understanding represented by his reading and his education. The essay can be seen as Rodriguez's attempt to weigh what he had gained against what he had lost.

If ten of us read his essay, each would begin with the same words on the page, but when we discuss the essay (or write about it), each will retell and interpret Rodriguez's story differently; we will emphasize different sections—some, for instance, might want to discuss the strange way Rodriguez learned to read, others might be taken by his difficult and changing relations to his teachers, and still others might want to think about Rodriguez's remarks about his mother and father.

Each of us will come to his or her own sense of what is significant, of what the point is, and the odds are good that what each of us makes of the essay will vary from one to another. Each of us will understand Rodriguez's story in his or her own way, even though we read the same piece. At the same time, if we are working with Rodriguez's essay (and not putting it aside or ignoring its peculiar way of thinking about education), we will be working within a framework he has established, one that makes education stand, metaphorically, for a complicated interplay between permanence and change, imitation and freedom, loss and achievement.

In "The Achievement of Desire," Rodriguez tells of reading a book by Richard Hoggart, The Uses of Literacy. He was captivated by a section of this book in which Hoggart defines a particular kind of student, the "scholarship boy." Here is what Rodriguez says:

Then one day, leafing through Richard Hoggart's The Uses of Literacy, I found, in his description of the scholarship boy, myself. For the first time I realized that there were other students like me, and so I was able to frame the meaning of my academic success, its consequent price—the loss.

For Rodriguez, this phrase, "scholarship boy," became the focus of Hoggart's book. Other people, to be sure, would read that book and take different parts or sections as the key to what Hoggart has to say. Some might argue Rodriguez misread the book, that it is really about something else, about culture, for example, or about the class system in England. The power and reach of Rodriguez's reading, however, are represented by what he was able to do with what he read, and what he was able to do was not record information or manâ€’e main ideas but, as he says, "frame the meaning of my academic success." Hoggart provided a frame, a way for Rodriguez to think and talk about his own history as a student. As he goes on in his essay, Rodriguez not only frames his text to talk about his experience, but he resists it, argues with it. He has his experience in Hoggart's terms but he also makes those terms work for him, seeing both what they can and what they cannot do. This combination of ing, thinking, and writing is what we mean by strong reading, a way of reading we like to encourage in our students.

When we have taught "The Achievement of Desire" to our students, it has been almost impossible for them not to see themselves in Rodriguez's description of the scholarship boy (and this was true of students who were not majoring in literary studies and not literally on scholarships). They, too, have found a way to see (even inventing) their own lives as students—students whose history was already both success and loss. When we have asked our students to write about this essay, however, some students have argued, and quite convincingly, that Rodriguez had either to abandon his family and culture or to remain ignorant. Other students have argued equally convincingly that Rodriguez's anguish was destructive and self-serving, that he was trapped into seeing his situation in terms that he might have replaced with others. He did not necessarily have to turn his back on his family. Some have contended that Rodriguez's problems with his family had nothing to do with what he says about education that he himself shows how imagination need not blindly lead a person away from his culture, and these student essays, too, have been convincing.

Reading, in other words, can be the occasion for you to put things together, to notice this idea or theme rather than that one, to follow a line of thought that hasn't been announced or secret ends while simultaneously following your own. When something happens, when you forge a reading of a story or an essay, you make you on it, casting it in your terms. But the story makes its mark on you as teaching you not only about a subject (Rodriguez's struggles with his teacher and his parents, for example) but also about a way of seeing and understanding a subject. The text provides the opportunity for you to see through one else's powerful language, to imagine your own familiar settings in terms of the images, metaphors, and ideas of others. Rodriguez's essay, in other words, can make its mark on readers, but they, too, if they are strong, active readers can make theirs on it.

Readers learn to put things together by writing. This is not something you do, at least not to any degree, while you are reading. It requires that you write what you have read, and that work best takes shape when you sit down to write. We will have more to say about this kind of thinking in a later section.
introduction: ways of reading

ways of reading

our business; and is my way of reading into current events.

our experiences with these texts is remarkable and certain.

the purpose and place of the kind of reading системов have organized this book, we would like to say more.

we are drawn to:

before explaining how we organized this book, we would like to say more.
The introduction of the essay is about forming an opinion. You may be asked to write an essay that expresses your thoughts on a particular topic. The introduction should capture the reader's attention and set the stage for the rest of the essay. It should be clear, concise, and well-organized.

The body of the essay is where you develop your argument. You should present your evidence and support your claims with facts and examples. Each paragraph should focus on a single idea and be well-structured. The body of the essay should be logically organized, with a clear introduction and conclusion.

The conclusion of the essay is where you summarize your main points and restate your thesis. You should also provide a final thought or call to action. The conclusion should be strong and leave a lasting impression on the reader.

In summary, writing an essay requires careful planning and attention to detail. By following these tips, you can write an effective essay that communicates your ideas clearly and persuasively.
Reading with and Against the Grain

In a dorm room, I'd pull out my book and begin to read. I read quickly, flipping through pages as if I were sifting through sand to find something valuable. It was efficient, but sometimes it felt like I was missing something.

Reading, however, is not just about finding information. It's about engaging with the text, questioning assumptions, and thinking critically. It's about reading with and against the grain.

Reading with the grain means following the author's argument, understanding the main ideas, and agreeing with the author's perspective. It's about absorbing the text and making it your own.

Reading against the grain, on the other hand, means challenging the author's ideas, questioning their assumptions, and offering your own perspective. It's about thinking critically and finding ways to engage with the text in new and different ways.

Both approaches are important, and as a strong reader, you should be comfortable with both. Whether you're reading for pleasure or for learning, it's important to be able to read with and against the grain.

Strong readers are flexible. They can switch between both approaches depending on the situation and their goals. It's about being open-minded and willing to challenge your assumptions.

So the next time you pick up a book, remember that reading is not just about absorbing information. It's about engaging with the text and thinking critically. Whether you read with or against the grain, you're still reading, and that's a good thing.
WORKING WITH DIFFICULTY

and to be read with a difference: only is to make that difference possible

READING: WAYS OF READING

THE "BOOKMAKING" CONCEPT OF EDUCATION

When we choose the sections for this book, we choose them with the

students were not the primary audience (that is not the audience we were

We're trained to read difficult to read, and we choose them knowing that

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The important in the text.

Of what is interesting or
Help to share your sense
Where you have entered and
Once you have an entry point.

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Reading and Writing

The most important summary.

The text is a logical sequence of ideas that are developed in a clear and concise manner. The author uses specific examples and research to support their arguments, making the text easy to follow and understand. The writing is engaging and reader-friendly, with a good balance of facts and analysis. Overall, the text is well-structured and provides a comprehensive overview of the subject matter.

The text is divided into three main sections:

1. Understanding the Text
2. Reading for Information
3. Reading for Appreciation

Each section contains a series of subsections that focus on specific aspects of reading and writing. The subsections include tips and strategies for improving your skills, as well as exercises to help you practice and apply what you've learned.

The text is rich in examples and case studies, which make it easy to see how the concepts and techniques can be applied in real-world situations. The author also provides a wealth of resources, including further reading and online links, to help you deepen your understanding of the subject.

In conclusion, the text is a valuable resource for anyone looking to improve their reading and writing skills. Whether you're a student, a professional, or simply someone who wants to become a better reader and writer, this book will offer you a wealth of insights and practical advice.
Questions for Second Reading

mean you will find in the book.

I've tried to stay clear of the direct quotations
that appear in the text. The readings and
quizzes are provided for your reference.

This is not a textbook; it is a collection of articles and
essays. It is intended to be read and discussed.

The introduction to each section contains a
brief overview of the material to be covered.

It is important to read and understand the
material before moving on to the next section.

The questions at the end of each section are
designed to help you review the material and
prepare for the exam.

I hope you find this resource helpful.

Introduction: Ways of Reading

Studies of reading show that the act of reading is
more than just absorbing information. It is a
time for reflection, analysis, and critical thinking.

The key to effective reading is to engage with
the material actively. This means not just
skimming the text, but thinking deeply about
what you are reading. You should ask questions
of the text, and of yourself. Why is the author
writing this? What is the purpose of the text?

Reading should be an active and imaginative
process. It is not enough to simply read and
understand the material. You must also think
about it, and reflect on it. This is what makes
reading a valuable and rewarding experience.

I hope you find this guide helpful in your
reading and learning.
The assignment questions will have you work with two or more readings at a time and organize your thoughts. You’ll be asked to reflect on your own experience with the material, identify key themes, and draw connections between the readings. This process encourages you to think critically and engage with the content on a deeper level.

Making connections

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