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COLLEGE READING & STUDY SKILLS

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MERCY COLLEGE
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PREFACE

Reading is the most efficient way to process information. This book will help a student become the best reader he or she can be.

This book teaches the reading skills needed for college and teaches how to read rapidly and critically. It shows how to approach readings in the different content areas and how to take notes, prepare for examinations, and remember what has been read.

Reading is just as important a college subject as English or mathematics. In fact, reading may be the single most important factor for success in college. Even the very best student has a lot to learn about reading college-level material. We are beginning to realize that many of the problems that students encounter in college are due to a lack of appropriate reading instruction. This book responds to that need by showing how to build on the ability to read to learn the whole range of reading, studying, and analytical techniques necessary to pursue college study.

The chapters in this book can be seen in four parts. Chapters 1–9 develop basic vocabulary and reading technique. Chapters 10–14 give suggestions for reading the different content areas. Chapters 15–18 discuss critical reading and present techniques for identifying biased writing. The remaining chapters focus on note taking, study skills, and use of the library. This text can be adapted to a range of ability levels.

Each chapter begins with an explanation, along with a series of exercises or short readings. The instructor will usually review the explanation and work on most of the exercises and activities in class with the students. Some exercises and activities will be assigned for homework. Each chapter ends with a project that asks the student to apply what has been learned, usually to a longer reading. The project is usually assigned at the completion of each chapter as a homework assignment and discussed in class.

The longer readings in the text have been carefully selected. These readings have been chosen from some of the most popular college texts and range in length from 1400 words to 10,000 words. The shorter readings have also been carefully selected, and all readings represent the material that students will encounter in college.

The instructor's manual that accompanies this text contains objectives, suggestions for teaching, additional projects, and test questions and answers for each chapter. The manual also has the answers for *all* exercises, activities, and projects in the text. There are also charts and graphs to help students increase reading speed.

Preliminary versions of this text were used by scores of instructors and thousands of students at Mercy College. We owe them special thanks. Many others at Mercy College were most helpful, most notably the department secretary, Mrs. Laura Pascacello. Eben Ludlow at Macmillan, our editor, is the complete professional and was helpful throughout the development of this text. Ron Harris of Macmillan brought his special editing talents and his encyclopedic knowledge to bear on this text. This book is much more than it could have been without him.

We are most grateful to our spouses and children, Liz, Chad, Blaire, and Ryan; Richard, Kristen, and Kara; Jane, Christie, and Thomas. It is they who sustained us.

This book is dedicated to the students who use it. The skills and concepts discussed herein will lead them to successful and rewarding college careers.

R. D. P.
B. K.
P. S.

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One

UNDERSTANDING VOCABULARY

Learning new vocabulary from college texts is an important part of reading. These words are usually more difficult than the words you commonly use. In addition, most of the important ideas and concepts discussed in introductory or survey courses are actually new vocabulary words. You must master new vocabulary words before reading on.

Use the following three strategies to learn and understand new vocabulary terms.

USE THE SENTENCE TO GAIN MEANING—CONTEXT CLUES

Look at the way a term or word is used in a phrase or a sentence. Is this a different use or meaning for you? Is this a new word for you? If so, predict the meaning from its use in the sentence. This technique is called using context clues for gaining word meaning.

Example A. Defining the important vocabulary term in a sentence.

> Intelligence is sometimes defined as the ability to learn new information in a different or unique situation.

The sentence defines intelligence for us.

Example B. Synonyms are used in phrases and sentences to define the term.

> Sleep may be the most ubiquitous or pervasive characteristic common to humans which controls our physiology.

We can tell that *ubiquitous* means "pervasive."

Example C. Examples help to clarify terms.

> When writing a feature article, the journalist's whole tone becomes personal. The feature story writer concentrates on the human interest angle and treats it subjectively. For example, the seasonal story, the unusual, or a dramatic situation are common angles for feature stories.[1]

After feature articles have been described, examples of features are given.

Example D. Explanation through comparison and contrast.

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> News is said to be slanted when the facts of a story are so arranged as to lead the reader to a desired conclusion. . . . News is said to be colored when some facts are stressed and others are made inconspicuous or omitted. . . . In other words, news is slanted when the writer has attempted to influence the reader by the arrangement of facts alone and news is colored when the writer attempts to influence the reader by arrangement of facts and by choice of words.[2]

After slanted and colored news are defined, further explanation is given through comparison.

ACTIVITY I

Read the following selection, taken from the drama textbok *The Theatre: An Introduction* by Oscar Brockett. Vocabulary words are given at the end of the selection. Write a definition for each word based on the way the word is used in the sentence.

> The auditorium was the first part of the theatre to assume a permanent form. Stadiumlike seating was provided by setting stones into the hillside. This auditorium was semicircular and curved around the orchestra (which was circular). The theatre was very large—it seated about 14,000 persons—and the orchestra was approximately sixty-five feet in diameter. The auditorium and the orchestra remained relatively unchanged, and there is little disagreement today about their features.
>
> The stage house (or *skene*) was late in developing as a part of the theatre. It was the last part to be constructed in stone, and it was remodeled many times after that. For all of these reasons, it is difficult to get a clear impression of the scenic background of plays in the fifth century [B.C.].
>
> The skene (which was unknown in the sixth century) was originally constructed as a place where actors might dress and retire to change roles. Gradually this house came to be used as a background for the action of the play, and its usefulness for scenic purposes was exploited. In the late fifth century the skene was a long building which, with its projecting side wings (called *paraskene*), formed a rectangular background for the orchestra on the side away from the spectators. It was not joined to the auditorium, and the space on each side between the paraskene and the auditorium provided entrances into the orchestra. . . .
>
> The appearance of the skene is much debated. Most of the plays are set before temples or palaces, but some take place outside of caves or tents, or in wooded landscapes. There is much controversy over the extent to which the stage may have been altered to meet these differing demands. . . .
>
> Another effect frequently demanded in Greek plays is the appearance of gods. These characters may descend to the orchestra level or be lifted up from the orchestra to the roof of the stage house. For this purpose, a cranelike device called the *machina* was used. The overuse of gods to resolve difficult dramatic situations led to the expression *deus ex machina* to describe any contrived ending. The eccyclema and the machina are the only two machines which can definitely be ascribed to the fifth century, and these were not used extensively.[3]

Listed below are the important vocabulary words from the reading selection. Space is provided after each word for you to write your definition of the word according to its use in the sentence. After you have written the meanings, check them in your college dictionary. Do they match?

auditorium Your definition: _____

_____

Dictionary definition: _____

_____

orchestra Your definition: _____

_____

Dictionary definition: _____

_____

skene Your definition: _____

_____

Dictionary definition: _____

_____

paraskene Your definition: _____

_____

Dictionary definition: _____

_____

machina Your definition: _____

_____

Dictionary definition: _____

_____

deus ex machina Your definition: _____

_____

Dictionary definition: _____

_____

USE THE TEXTBOOK PRINT AIDS

Textbooks often use headings and highlighted (italic or boldface) words to mark important terms. Margin notes or footnotes can indicate important vocabulary. Write these words in your notebook.

ACTIVITY II

Read the following article from a psychology textbook. After you have read the article, write a brief definition of the words listed at the end.

Dollard and Miller's Psychodynamic Behavior Theory[4]

The most ambitious attempt at assimilation was made during the 1940s at Yale University by John Dollard and Neal Miller. Their approach is called *psychodynamic behavior theory* by some psychologists because it represents an effort to deal with the psychodynamic phenomena identified by Freud. . . .

Dollard and Miller (1950) used the term *drives,* roughly equivalent to Freud's *instincts,* to refer to the motivational basis for behavior. Like instincts, drives are states of arousal that require some satisfaction or reduction. Dollard and Miller introduced the term *response* to refer to any act or thought related to the satisfaction or reduction of a drive. Hunger, then, is a drive that is reduced by the response of eating. They used the term *cue* to refer to any feature of the environment that indicates that a particular drive can be satisfied or reduced then and there. If someone is hungry, a sign advertising a restaurant is a cue that is useful in guiding that person's behavior toward the reduction of hunger. Dollard and Miller used the term *reinforcement* to describe the strengthening of the tendency to emit a given response once it has successfully reduced or satisfied a drive. The reinforced response can thus be expected to reappear when the drive is aroused again.

These terms used by Dollard and Miller do not translate directly into Freud's concepts, but in combination they can be used to explain some of the same phenomena that Freud identified. Take, for example, displaced aggression. According to Freud the child, born with an aggressive instinct, searches for a way to release aggressive energy. But, being afraid of attacking a parent, who is often the real object of anger, the child displaces the aggression by fighting with a younger sibling or talking back to a teacher. Dollard and Miller would explain this displacement phenomenon in a somewhat different manner. According to their **frustration-aggression hypothesis,** the aggressive drive is aroused by the thwarting of progress toward some important goal. The child is therefore motivated to commit aggression against the frustrating agent. If, however, the frustrating agent is a powerful figure against whom it is dangerous to express aggression, such as a mother or father, the child will displace the aggression onto other people whose cue value is similar to that of the real target—perhaps a sibling or teacher (Dollard et al., 1939).

Freudian theory explains behavior as a response to internal stimuli—aggressive drives, for example—while behaviorist theory explains it in terms of external stimuli—the frustration of a goal-oriented response. Moreover, Dollard and Miller's theory has social applications that Freud's psychoanalytic theory does not. They believe that displacement can and will be learned even by large segments of a population if the response to the new target in some way satisfies or reduces the drive that underlies the response. Thus, in times of economic depression or political unrest, when the real target for the anger and aggression of the populace is unknown or too powerful to attack directly, aggression is displaced toward "outsiders" or a minority group. If this aggression is reinforced—if it satisfactorily reduces the aggressive drive—it will be continued. This kind of scapegoating becomes a learned and almost institutionalized response, as was the case with the anti-Semitism of Nazi Germany and the anticommunism of the McCarthy era in the United States during the 1950s.

drives _____

_____

instincts _____

_____

response _____

_____

cue _____

_____

reinforcement _____

_____

frustration-aggression hypothesis _____

_____

ANALYZE THE WORD TO IDENTIFY THE MEANING

Often it is helpful to look at word parts when identifying the meaning of an unknown word. Many words contain a root or base. The base has an essential meaning for many of the words in our language. Prefixes are added at the beginning of a root word and suffixes are added at the end. These prefixes and suffixes alter the essential meaning. The new meaning of the word can often be identified by combining the meaning of the root word with the prefix and suffix.

Consider the word *telegraph*. The root word for this word is *graph*. This common root word comes from the Greek word *graphein*, which means "to write." What is the prefix in *telegraph*? The common prefix *tele* means "far" or "far off." We can identify the meaning of the word *telegraph* as "writing from far off."

In a similar way, *graphologist* contains the root *graph* and the suffix *ologist*. The suffix *ology* means "study of" and the suffix *ist* means "performer of." A graphologist is a person who studies writing, specifically handwriting.

Read the following common root words and their meanings:

Root	Common Forms	Meaning	Examples
capere	cap, cept, ceive	take, seize	capture, concept, receive
legein	leg, lex, log, ology	say, words, study	Lexicon, monologue, sociology
specere	spec, spect, spic, spy	see, look	spectacle, suspicious, spy
faerce	fac, fact, fic, feat	make, do	deficient, factory, fictitious
scribere	scrib, script, scrip, scriv	write	scribe, subscribe, scribble
tangere	tang, tact, ting	touch	tactile, tangent
portare	port	carry	portage, transport
graphos	graph	drawn or written	photograph, autograph, paragraph

EXERCISE I

Listed below are common prefixes. For each a brief meaning is given. This meaning is followed by an example of the word with the prefix. In the space at the right of the page, write a brief definition for the example. The first is done for you.

Prefix	Meaning	Example	Definition
mono	one	monolingual	speaking one language
bi	two	bicycle	
deci	ten	decade	
multi	many	multilingual	
super	above	supernatural	
hyper	excessive	hypertense	
omni	all	omnipotent	
mort	death	mortified	
tele	far	telephone	
inter	between	intertwine	
trans	across	transcontinental	
trac, tract	pull	traction	
derm	skin	dermatologist	
therm	heat	thermonuclear	
pseudo	false	pseudopod	
ante	before	anteroom	
anti	against	antiviral	
cred	believe	credibility	
bibl	book	bibliography	
neo	new	Neo-Nazi	
theo	god	theologist	
in, im, ir, il, non	not	incomplete	
		irreverent	
		nonstop	
fore	before	forearm	
intra	within	intravenous	

Listed below are common suffixes. For each a brief meaning is given. This is followed by examples of words with the suffix. In the space at the right of the page, write a brief definition of one example. The first one is done for you.

Suffix	Meaning	Example	Definition
er, or, ist, ian, ar, eer, ster	performer of	reader, sailor, physicist, librarian, engineer, huckster	someone who reads, sails, ...

Suffix	Meaning	Example	Definition
ee, ite, ive	one who receives	testee, Denverite, captive	
ity, ness, ship	condition of	surety, loneliness, kinship	
ful, ous	full of	helpful, victorious	
ile, al, ic, ish, like, ive, ly, ative	relating to	infantile, comical, cryptic, ticklish, talkative	
able, ible	capable of being	returnable, sensible	
ate, ify, ize	to make or do	subjugate, specify, finalize	

USING A DICTIONARY TO LEARN VOCABULARY

When meanings are not evident from usage in a sentence or from analysis of the structure or parts of the word, a dictionary is the source you should turn to, to find the definition.

Different kinds of dictionaries can be used to identify unknown words. The glossary included at the end of many college texts is a handy specialized dictionary you can use for your subjects. The glossary will include terms from the text that are technical or unique to the subject. Sometimes, technical terms must be looked up in even more specialized dictionaries found in the reference section of the library. Scientific dictionaries, dictionaries of literary terms, and biographical dictionaries are examples of these highly specialized reference sources.

Most of the time a standard desk dictionary such as *The American College Dictionary* or *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary* can be used to identify common vocabulary terms. Successful college students learn to keep their dictionary handy and to use it often. When checking any dictionary entry, it is important to read through all of the meanings or entries listed because words have many meanings and you need to find the meaning appropriate for the subject or context you are studying. For example, the word *base* can have different meanings in different subjects or disciplines.

EXERCISE II

Listed below are several different subject areas. Write the different definitions for the word *base* in each of the subjects listed. A page from a standard desk dictionary[5] appears for help. Consult a specialized dictionary in the reference section of the library for additional help.

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