

- In the history of education, men have often distinguished between learning by instruction and learning by discovery. Instruction occurs when one person teaches another through speech or writing. We can, however, gain knowledge without being taught. If this were not the case, and every teacher had to be taught what he in turn teaches others, there would be no beginning in the acquisition of knowledge. Hence, there must be discovery—the process of learning something by research, by investigation, or by reflection, without being taught.

- STUDY THE TABLE OF CONTENTS to obtain a general sense of the book's structure; use it as you would a road map before taking a trip. It is astonishing how many people never even glance at a book's table of contents unless they wish to look something up in it. In fact, many authors spend a considerable amount of time in creating the table of contents, and it is sad to think their efforts are often wasted.

- CHECK THE INDEX if the book has one—most expository works do. Make a quick estimate of the range of topics covered and of the kinds of books and authors referred to. When you see terms listed that seem crucial, look up at least some of the passages cited. (We will have much more to say about crucial terms in Part Two. Here you must make your judgment of their importance on the basis of your general sense of the book, as obtained from steps 1 and 2.) The passages you read may contain the crux—the point on which the book hinges—or the new departure which is the key to the author's approach and attitude.

- LOOK NOW AT THE CHAPTERS THAT SEEM TO BE PIVOTAL TO ITS ARGUMENT.

- TURN THE PAGES, DIPPING IN HERE AND THERE, READING A PARAGRAPH OR TWO, SOMETIMES SEVERAL PAGES IN SEQUENCE, NEVER MORE THAN THAT.

- In tackling a difficult book for the first time, read it through without ever stopping to look up or ponder the things you do not understand right away.

- Every book should be read no more slowly than it deserves, and no more quickly than you can read it with satisfaction and comprehension.

- WHAT IS THE BOOK ABOUT AS A WHOLE? You must try to discover the leading theme of the book, and how the author develops this theme in an orderly way by subdividing it into its essential subordinate themes or topics. 2. WHAT IS BEING SAID IN DETAIL, AND HOW? You must try to discover the main ideas, assertions, and arguments that constitute the author's particular message. 3. IS THE BOOK TRUE, IN WHOLE OR PART? You cannot answer this question until you have answered the first two. You have to know what is being said before you can decide whether it is true or not. When you understand a book, however, you are obligated, if you are reading seriously, to make up your own mind. Knowing the author's mind is not enough. 4. WHAT OF IT? If the book has given you information, you must ask about its significance. Why does the author think it is important to know these things? Is it important to you to know them? And if the book has not only informed you, but also enlightened you, it is necessary to seek further enlightenment by asking what else follows, what is further implied or suggested.

- The last question—What of it?—is probably the most important one in syntopical reading.

- Good books are over your head; they would not be good for you if they were not. And books that are over your head weary you unless you can reach up to them and pull yourself up to their level. It is not the stretching that tires you, but the frustration of stretching unsuccessfully because you lack the skill to stretch effectively.

- Why is marking a book indispensable to reading it? First, it keeps you awake—not merely conscious, but wide awake. Second, reading, if it is active, is thinking, and thinking tends to express itself in words, spoken or written.

- Reading a book should be a conversation between you and the author. Presumably he knows more about the subject than you do; if not, you probably should not be bothering with his book. But understanding is a two-way operation; the learner has to question himself and question the teacher. He even has to be willing to argue with the teacher, once he understands what the teacher is saying.

- Knowing the rules of an art is not the same as having the habit. When we speak of a man as skilled in any way, we do not mean that he knows the rules of making or doing something, but that he possesses the habit of making or doing it.

- The second rule of analytical reading can be expressed as follows: RULE 2. STATE THE UNITY OF THE WHOLE BOOK IN A SINGLE SENTENCE, OR AT MOST A FEW SENTENCES (A SHORT PARAGRAPH).

- The third rule can be expressed as follows: RULE 3. SET FORTH THE MAJOR PARTS OF THE BOOK, AND SHOW HOW THESE ARE ORGANIZED INTO A WHOLE, BY BEING ORDERED TO ONE ANOTHER AND TO THE UNITY OF THE WHOLE.

- The reader tries to uncover the skeleton that the book conceals. The author starts with the skeleton and tries to cover it up.

- THE FIRST STAGE OF ANALYTICAL READING, OR RULES FOR FINDING WHAT A BOOK IS ABOUT
1. Classify the book according to kind and subject matter. 2. State what the whole book is about with the utmost brevity. 3. Enumerate its major parts in their order and relation, and outline these parts as you have outlined the whole. 4. Define the problem or problems the author is trying to solve.

- RULE 8. FIND OUT WHAT THE AUTHOR'S SOLUTIONS ARE.

- How do you know whether you are making proper use of your experience to help you understand a book? The surest test is one we have already recommended as a test of understanding: ask yourself whether you can give a concrete example of a point that you feel you understand.

- the rule in the case of extrinsic reading is that you should not read a commentary by someone else until after you have read the book. This applies particularly to scholarly and critical introductions.

- The most important thing to remember about any practical book is that it can never solve the practical problems with which it is concerned. A theoretical book can solve its own problems. But a practical problem can only be solved by action itself.

- A work of fine art is “fine” not because it is “refined” or “finished,” but because it is an end (finis, Latin, means end) in itself.

- The skillful inspectional reader does more than classify a book in his mental card catalogue, and achieve a superficial knowledge of its contents. He also discovers, in the very short time it takes him to inspect it, whether the book says something important about his subject or not.

- STEP 1 IN SYNTOPICAL READING: FINDING THE RELEVANT PASSAGES.

- In syntopical reading, it is you and your concerns that are primarily to be served, not the books that you read.

- STEP 2 IN SYNTOPICAL READING: BRINGING THE AUTHORS TO TERMS.

- What is needed, therefore, is a reference book that tells you where to go to find the relevant passages on a large number of subjects of interest, without at the same time saying how the passages should be read—without prejudging their meaning or significance.

- II. SYNTOPICAL READING OF THE BIBLIOGRAPHY AMASSED IN STAGE I

1. Inspect the books already identified as relevant to your subject in Stage I in order to find the most relevant passages.
2. Bring the authors to terms by constructing a neutral terminology of the subject that all, or the great majority, of the authors can be interpreted as employing, whether they actually employ the words or not.
3. Establish a set of neutral propositions for all of the authors by framing a set of questions to which all or most of the authors can be interpreted as giving answers, whether they actually treat the questions explicitly or not.
4. Define the issues, both major and minor ones, by ranging the opposing answers of authors to the various questions on one side of an issue or another. You should remember that an issue does not always exist explicitly between or among authors, but that it sometimes has to be constructed by interpretation of the authors’ views on matters that may not have been their primary concern.
5. Analyze the discussion by ordering the questions and issues in such a way as to throw maximum light on the subject. More general issues should precede less general ones, and relations among issues should be clearly indicated.

- Titles included in Great Books of the Western World are identified by a single asterisk; authors represented in Gateway to the Great Books are identified by a double asterisk.

1. Homer (9th century B.C.?) * Iliad * Odyssey
2. The Old Testament
3. Aeschylus (c. 525–456 B.C.) * Tragedies
4. Sophocles (c. 495–406 B.C.) * Tragedies
5. Herodotus (c. 484–425 B.C.) * History (of the Persian Wars)
6. Euripides (c. 485–406 B.C.) * Tragedies (esp. Medea, Hippolytus, The Bacchae)
7. Thucydides (c. 460–400 B.C.) * History of the Peloponnesian War
8. Hippocrates (c. 460–377? B.C.) * Medical writings
9. Aristophanes (c. 448–380 B.C.) * Comedies (esp. The Clouds, The Birds, The Frogs)
10. Plato (c. 427–347 B.C.) * Dialogues (esp. The Republic, Symposium, Phaedo, Meno, Apology, Phaedrus, Protagoras, Gorgias, Sophist, Theaetetus)
11. Aristotle (384–322 B.C.) * Works (esp. Organon, Physics, Metaphysics, On the Soul, The Nichomachean Ethics, Politics, Rhetoric, Poetics)
12. ** Epicurus (c. 341–270 B.C.)

Letter to Herodotus Letter to Menoeceus 13. Euclid (fl.c. 300 B.C.) * Elements (of Geometry) 14. Archimedes (c. 287–212 B.C.) * Works (esp. On the Equilibrium of Planes, On Floating Bodies, The Sand-Reckoner) 15. Apollonius of Perga (fl.c. 240 B.C.) * On Conic Sections 16. ** Cicero (106–43 B.C.) Works (esp. Orations, On Friendship, On Old Age) 17. Lucretius (c. 95–55 B.C.) * On the Nature of Things 18. Virgil (70–19 B.C.) * Works 19. Horace (65–8 B.C.) Works (esp. Odes and Epodes, The Art of Poetry) 20. Livy (59 B.C.–A.D. 17) History of Rome 21. Ovid (43 B.C.–A.D. 17) Works (esp. Metamorphoses) 22. ** Plutarch (c. 45–120) * Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans Moralia 23. ** Tacitus (c. 55–117) * Histories * Annals Agricola Germania 24. Nicomachus of Gerasa (fl.c. 100 A.D.) * Introduction to Arithmetic 25. ** Epictetus (c. 60–120) * Discourses Encheiridion (Handbook) 26. Ptolemy (c. 100–178; fl. 127–151) * Almagest 27. ** Lucian (c. 120–c. 190) Works (esp. The Way to Write History, The True History, The Sale of Creeds) 28. Marcus Aurelius (121–180) * Meditations 29. Galen (c. 130–200) * On the Natural Faculties 30. The New Testament 31. Plotinus (205–270) * The Enneads 32. St. Augustine (354–430) Works (esp. On the Teacher, * Confessions, * The City of God, * Christian Doctrine) 33. The Song of Roland (12th century?) 34. The Nibelungenlied (13th century) (The Völsunga Saga is the Scandinavian version of the same legend.) 35. The Saga of Burnt Njal 36. St. Thomas Aquinas (c. 1225–1274) * Summa Theologica 37. ** Dante Alighieri (1265–1321) Works (esp. The New Life, On Monarchy, * The Divine Comedy) 38. Geoffrey Chaucer (c. 1340–1400) Works esp. * Troilus and Criseyde, * Canterbury Tales) 39. Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519) Notebooks 40. Niccolò Machiavelli (1469–1527) * The Prince Discourses on the First Ten Books of Livy 41. Desiderius Erasmus (c. 1469–1536) The Praise of Folly 42. Nicolaus Copernicus (1473–1543) * On the Revolutions of the Heavenly Spheres 43. Sir...