

### Systematic Skimming

- Title page, preface (quickly). Classify.
- Table of contents, as road map.
- Index. Look up crucial terms (with many references). Crux?
- Publisher's blurb. Main points?
- Make brief notes on classification, unity, and structure.

### Systematic Skimming Proper

- Pivotal chapters, especially summary statements at start or end.
- Thumb through, listening for pulse. Look for summary at end.

### First Reading

- Read it through without stopping.
  - STORY: One sitting. Total immersion.

### I. Structure: What is the book about?

- Classify:
  - IMAGINATIVE. Conveys experience. Don't resist.
    - STORY
    - PLAY – Pretend to direct the play. Read aloud and dramatically.
    - POEM – Read aloud. Return to the poem repeatedly.
    - EPIC
  - EXPOSITORY. Conveys knowledge.
    - PRACTICAL – Action. Background info can help.
      - RULEBOOK
      - PRINCIPLES
    - THEORETICAL – Knowledge
      - HISTORY – Read multiple accounts. Read to learn how men act.
        - BIOGRAPHY – Definitive, authorized, ordinary, didactic, autobiography
      - PHILOSOPHY – Dialogue, essay, meeting of objections, systematization, aphoristic.
        - SPECULATIVE. What is.
          - METAPHYSICAL. Being.
          - NATURE. Becoming.
          - EPISTEMOLOGY. Knowledge.
        - NORMATIVE. What ought.
          - ETHICS. Individual.
          - POLITICS. Society.
      - THEOLOGY
        - NATURAL
        - DOGMATIC
      - SCIENCE

- State the unity.
  - IMAGINATIVE: Plot. In tragedy, often relates to lack of time. In a poem, look for conflict.
  - HISTORY: What limits has the author set on his scope?
- Outline major parts.
  - IMAGINATIVE: Characterization, plot development, structure, crises, climax, aftermath.
  - HISTORY: How has the historian divided the story into chapters?
- What problems/questions is the author trying to solve/answer?
  - THEORETICAL: Does something exist? What kind of thing is it? What caused it to exist, or under what conditions can it exist, or why does it exist? What purpose does it serve? What are the consequences of its existence? What are its characteristic properties? What are its relations to other things of a similar/different sort?
  - PRACTICAL: What does the author want you to do?\* What ends should be sought? What means should be chosen to a given end, and in what order? Under these conditions, what is the right thing to do, or the better rather than the worse?

## II. Interpretation: What is being said in detail?

- Interpret key words – troublesome, quoted, italicized, defined, explained, coined
  - IMAGINATIVE: Be familiar with characters, live through events.
    - POEM: Words emphasized rhetorically or syntactically
- Identify key propositions – troublesome, emphasized (with words or typography)
  - IMAGINATIVE: Become at home in this imaginary world.
- Identify arguments.
  - IMAGINATIVE: Keep your finger on the pulse of the plot.
  - SCIENCE: Inductive arguments.
  - PHILOSOPHY: Assumptions (possibly unstated), controlling principles.
- Which problems/questions did the author solve, not solve, know he did not solve? Any new ones?
  - PRACTICAL: How does the author propose that you do it\*?

## III. Is the book true?

- Do not criticize until you understand.
  - IMAGINATIVE: Do not criticize until you have experienced.
- Do not disagree contentiously.
- Give reasons for your judgment.
- Show wherein the author is uninformed, misinformed, or illogical. These are criteria for disagreement.
- Show wherein the author is incomplete. On this criterion you may suspend judgment on the whole.
- THEORETICAL: Does it match my experience?
  - HISTORY: Verisimilitude? Discussion of economics? Critical?
- PRACTICAL: Is it feasible? Are the ends good?
- IMAGINATIVE: Verisimilitude? Do we like it? Is it beautiful?

#### IV. What of it?

- THEORETICAL: Adjust your views.
  - HISTORY: Take practical, political action.
- PRACTICAL: Take action.
- IMAGINATIVE: n/a