

You're having students read the book

1. Practice Discussion

Create a discussion thread on Canvas and ask students to contribute one insight and/or respond to one insight from a classmate. You could modify this by posting specific passages for students to respond to. Better still is to choose passages that connect to your course content in some way.

2. Practice Summary

Have students summarize a particular chapter to practice the kinds of skills they will need as they read your course content or work with secondary sources for research projects. Get them to compare individual summaries in pairs or small groups and collaborate to revise them into a version the whole group can agree upon. If you're going to expect them to produce abstracts for a later assignment, use this opportunity to introduce the kind of abstract they will need to produce.

3. Practice Concise Writing

Ask students to create an even shorter version of a summary mimicking the blurbs that appear on the back of a book or the sentence-length versions that are common to conference proceedings.

4. Reflect on specifics

Have students choose one sentence that stood out for them because it resonated with their own experience. Using that one sentence as a starting point, have students write a reflection explaining why the sentence stood out, how they see it as connecting to their own experience or things they've learned in courses, or how they expect the idea in the sentence will be useful to them in the future.

5. Unpack difficult texts

As an alternative, or an addition to #4 above, have students choose one sentence that seems confusing, puzzling, or just surprising. Using that one sentence, ask students to write as a way of coming to understand the sentence and its meaning. They might begin by looking up unknown words, breaking the sentence down into smaller units and considering how those units are related to one another, and move on to translating the sentence into their own words or tracing the key terms through other passages.

6. Read critically

Ask students to fact check any single claim or piece of evidence from the book. Though some of the claims and evidence come from personal experience and so are impossible to fact check, just noticing the interplay of personal experience and other kinds of data can lead to productive conversations and help students read other texts with more attention to how they are put together.

You're asking students to attend the lecture

7. Practice listening

Have students tweet key points or observations about the lecture throughout the experience. Such a real-time writing assignment will tell you whether students are really in attendance, paying attention, and thinking about the lecture.

8. Consider perspective

Ask students to talk with at least one person they don't know after the lecture and summarize that person's reactions. Complicate this assignment by having them compare their own reactions to the person they speak with and comment on the similarities or differences. Have students compare these reactions either on Canvas or in class and link key academic practices like considering multiple points of view, or the way our own prior experiences influences what and how we hear others.

9. Practice notetaking

Have students practice taking notes during the lecture. Encourage them to use visual representations of key points as well as words. Have students compare these notes, synthesize them into a single summary of the lecture, or just talk about what note taking strategies work best in which situations.

10. Synthesize and evaluate

Have students write to the Common Book Committee providing their feedback about the lecture, what they learned, or what suggestions they would make for future common book public events. If they were in charge, what would they do to make the experience more meaningful and productive for students, faculty, other members of the Auburn University, or the larger community?