

Instructions for a Reading Reduction Script

Read this carefully; you are responsible for this information!

- A. **The script should reflect YOUR OWN observations of detail and significance. It should include your own thoughtful and thoroughly explained conclusions supported by the text and never anyone else's.**
- B. This script will be used for all outside reading and often for those works we read together as a class.
- C. You will be required to annotate the work as you read, either with post-its or within the book itself (preferred). This annotation will be checked and will be checked against your own handwriting.
- D. The reduction script will be due on or before the day of the in-class free-response essay or at a time specified in your syllabus. (When possible, it will due about one week prior so I can grade it and provide feedback for you before you take the essay test.)
- E. Annotation will be checked during reading checks of the work and is due on the day of the free-response essay for final checking.
- F. You will be given a form for the reduction script. Everything must fit on that form, so be clear and concise. **Be sure you include significances on the RRS. How does each aid interpretation?** You may use bullets and fragments as needed, but you must always include significance. Write your name, the title, the author and the 9-weeks period where indicated.

SUGGESTIONS: Read these questions carefully BEFORE you annotate so you know what to look for when reading. Annotation should provide answers to these questions.

Of course, read the reduction script over the night before the in-class free-response essay. These “threads” will be helpful in addressing those questions. (You will be given a choice of approximately 5 A.P. open-ended questions from which to choose on that day.)

- 1. **Summary:** Summarize the work by choosing 5-10 key events and listing them in bullet style. Choose events based on your identified theme.
- 2. **First Chapter or Scene:** What do you learn? What does the author/playwright want you to know right away? How is what the author presents here significant to the interpretation of the work?
- 3. **Pattern:** What seems to be a pattern throughout the work? This could be a recurring phrase, gesture, word, sentence, object or image (a motif). What is its purpose?
- 4. **Point of View:** Identify the most specific term for the point of view the author employs and explain how this point of view affects the reader's interpretation of the work. If you are reading a play, use 3rd Person Objective (AKA Third Person Dramatic), because the absence of a narrator in a play serves the same function at the objective narrator.
- 5. **Important Scene:** What scene seems important and why? This may be a violent, a descriptive, a thematic, or a climactic scene, etc. Show its significance to the work as a whole.
- 6. **Character Analysis:** Choose one character of major importance. What is this character all about? Identify key character traits. What drives him/her? Look especially at internal conflicts. How does this character change, what does he/she learn? If the character does not change, then what is the character's

- function? (Think character foil, a role in an allegory or a symbolic abstraction, for instance.)
7. **Representative Quotes and Significances:** Choose three quotations from the work that most comprehensively represent its essence, and cite them in MLA Style. Be sure to explain their significances.
 8. **Theme:** What is the theme or message of the work? What is the author's purpose for writing the work? Keep in mind the difference between plot and theme... *plot* summary tells who, what, when - the events of the work. A *theme* of a work of literary merit is **a general statement about life that is applicable from time immemorial to time unimaginable for most people**. In longer works, several themes inevitably emerge. Always look for the overriding theme that will generally encompass the more "stock" themes. For instance, Ellison clearly shows that racism is detrimental to individuals and to society. He says the same about sexism. However, his key theme is more substantial and encompasses his social criticism of racism, sexism, Communism, etc.
 9. **Symbol:** Identify an important object, action, person, appearance, etc., and show how it represents a larger issue in the work. Explain its significance in the work as a whole.
 10. **Archetype:** Choose one or two archetypal characters, symbols or situations found in the work and explain their significance.
 11. **Ending:** What "ends"? Is it an appropriate ending? What purpose does it serve?
 12. **Title:** What is the significance of the title? (Be careful! It's never so simple as it might seem... If the book is titled *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, and you say it's titled that because it's about a boy named Huck Finn, you're not looking deep enough. What does Twain teach through this character? Why "Adventures"? Hint: Think about literary and biblical allusions. These are frequent, though certainly not guaranteed...)
 13. **Key Issues:** List the topics addressed in the work, such as "racism," "women's rights," "tragic hero," "Victorian roles and mores," etc.
 14. **Structure:** Identify the primary structural organization of the work. For instance, *Invisible Man* is structured by means of three consecutive literary styles; *The Mayor of Casterbridge* is structured like a Greek Tragedy, etc.
 15. **Literary Styles:** Identify the major literary styles in which the work is written. For instance, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is written in a regional style that has elements of both Romanticism and Realism, with Realism predominating.
 16. **Key Techniques:** What literary techniques are notable in the work? For instance, *A Doll's House* relies heavily on symbolism; *Invisible Man* relies heavily on motif.
 17. **Powerful Descriptors:** For the opening and closing scenes and for the one character you have chosen, find three really strong adjectives that can be used when writing about the work. Do not include everyday words you already know! Get out the dictionary of synonyms and antonyms and find the exact meaning and connotation needed. This is a chance to enlarge your vocabulary and provide the strong, mature voice you are building in your personal writing style.

KEEP IN MIND AS YOU ANNOTATE AND WRITE THAT YOU SHOULD BE ASKING YOURSELF AT ALL TIMES AND EVENTUALLY ANSWERING FOR EACH: HOW DOES THIS CONNECT TO THE WORK AS A WHOLE? (That's another way of saying, "How does this support or contribute to the theme?")