

Black Studies 11
Reading Form

Name:

Date:

Book:

This form presents you with a series of questions to ask while you are doing your reading. It will take you through three levels of the reading process: pre-reading, analytic reading, and critical reading. **Answer the questions in your best, most concise prose.** Do not skip questions and follow directions precisely.

Part I /Pre-reading:

Take thirty minutes to skim around your reading assignment and use the information you gather to answer the following questions. Remember to use your imagination and all of your knowledge in developing your answers. Think hard about each question. Also remember that your answers should reflect your hypothesis about the book before you read it analytically. Here, the ability to recognize the major themes and the general structure of a book matter more than specific knowledge of its contents.

1. What does the title tell you about the book?
2. Do you know anything about the author? What?
3. How about the publisher's blurb? Does it tell you anything?
4. Who published this book? Do you know anything about this publisher? Did it publish any other books that you know about?
5. When was the book published? How many times? Do you see any significance in this (these) date(s)?
6. Is the book dedicated? To whom? Does this tell you anything?
7. How is the book organized? Do the names of the chapters tell you anything? Is there a logic connecting the chapters? What is it? Does a particular chapter look like it might be the most important? Why?
8. Is there a foreword? Who is the author? What does it say?

9. Is there a preface? What does it say?
10. Is there an introduction? What does it say? What does it tell you about the way the book is organized?
11. Is there a conclusion or an epilogue? What does it say?
12. Go to the end of the book and look at the index. Are there any subjects or thinkers in it that you are familiar with? Write down three. Look up what the author has to say about them. What does this tell you about the book?
13. Do you recognize any of the names on the acknowledgment page? Do they tell you anything about the author's intellectual circle?

Part II/ Analytical Reading:

Now give the book a close reading and use the information you gather to answer the following questions. If you are confused concerning what the questions mean, look back at the relevant sections of *How to Read a Book*:

14. What kind of book is this? (Please be as specific as you can about the category that this book fits into: Intellectual History, Philosophy, Lyric Poetry, etc. If it fits into more than one category name each one)
15. Please state as briefly as possible what the book is about. (Here you are describing the "unity" of the book. In a novel, this corresponds to the plot.)
16. What are the major parts of the book? (Here you should divide #16, what the book is about, into its major parts.)
17. What is the book's main question? (What problem is the author trying to solve? In fiction: Is there a central issue or question that drives the plot?)
18. Name three terms that are indispensable to the meaning of the book and define them. (We have moved to the conceptual level of the book. Look for important words and use them to locate the terms. In fiction, terms correspond to episodes, incidents, the characters, their thoughts, speeches, and feelings.)

19. Please state three propositions that are central to the argument. (Propositions are sub-arguments. To believe the larger argument, you need to believe the sub-arguments. Locate the important sentences and use them to name the main propositions. In a piece of fiction, propositions correspond to the background or social setting that connects terms to one another.)
20. Please state the main argument as briefly as possible. Does the author state the argument? Where? (In a piece of fiction, the argument corresponds to the fundamental logic that moves the action from scene to scene.)
21. Name the three most compelling pieces of proof the author uses to support his thesis. Name also the specific sub-argument supported by each piece of proof that you cite. For a piece of fiction name the three most compelling incidents, passages, or scenes. (Here you should cite specific facts or incidents, not arguments or general propositions)
22. Are images central to the meaning of the book? If so, name the most important image and briefly describe its role in advancing an argument or sub-argument. (Remember that here you are looking for major tropes such as metaphors, similes, metonymies, and synecdoches.)
23. Quote three phrases that are crucial to the meaning of the book and give their location in the text. (Here you should choose the most outstanding phrases, the ones that come closest to making you want to memorize them.)

Part III/ Critical Reading:

Please answer each of the following questions in a single concise paragraph.

24. What do you find most convincing about this book? Why? (For a literary text change "convincing" to "compelling.")
25. What do you find least convincing about this book? Why? (For a literary text change "convincing" to "compelling.")