

# PRECISION INSTRUCTION FOR POSTREADING

## SCHEMA BUILDING: REAP

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Students must assimilate the information read into their own schemata to facilitate long-term memory. Isolated and unconnected pieces of information easily fade from memory, but postreading activities provide the glue to make a cohesive picture of what is read. Read-Encode-Annotate-Ponder, REAP, is one of the most basic ways to facilitate higher-order thinking through reading, writing, and thinking.

### ***Read-Encode-Annotate-Ponder (REAP)***

REAP is designed to improve *thinking*, the underlying musculature for active reading and meaningful writing. The idea for this reader-writer exchange system was proposed some time ago (Manzo, 1975) as a means of improving and supporting a national content area reading and writing project essentially for urban schools. Shortly afterwards it was collected into a teaching-learning approach called REAP—Read-Encode-Annotate-Ponder (Eanet & Manzo, 1976; Eanet, 1978, 1983). The REAP system for responding to text has been in use in elementary through college classrooms for two decades. It is based on a scaffold form of writing that invites creativity, much as does *haiku*, or any other disciplined form of art (Manzo, Manzo, & Albee, 2002).

REAP primarily is a cognitive-enrichment approach that teaches students to think more precisely and deeply about what they read, by following the four-step strategy symbolized by its title:

READ	to get the writer's basic message;
ENCODE	the message into your own words while reading;
ANNOTATE	your analysis of the message by writing responses from several perspectives, and;
PONDER	what you have read and written—first by reviewing it yourself, then by sharing and discussing it with others, and finally by reading and discussing the responses of others.

After students have had some practice writing various types of annotations, these can be used and reinforced in a variety of ways. A few are listed below:

- 1.** When giving a reading assignment, specify three annotation types for students to write and turn in.
- 2.** As students become more skilled at annotation writing, they can be given the option of selecting from three annotation types the one that they would like to write in response to a reading assignment.
- 3.** Assign each cooperative group member to write a different annotation type in response to a reading assignment. When students have finished reading and writing, they move to their assigned groups to

**SAMPLE READING SELECTION WITH EXAMPLES OF REAP ANNOTATION TYPES**

**“Travelers and the Plane-Tree”**

Two travelers were walking along a bare and dusty road in the heat of a midsummer’s day. Coming upon a large shade tree, they happily stopped to shelter themselves from the burning sun in the shade of its spreading branches. While they rested, looking up into the tree, one of them said to his companion, “What a useless tree this is! It makes no flowers and bears no fruit. Of what use is it to anyone?” The tree itself replied indignantly, “You ungrateful people! You take shelter under me from the scorching sun, and then, in the very act of enjoying the cool shade of my leaves, you abuse me and call me good for nothing!”

**Reconstructive Annotations**

**SUMMARY:** states the basic message in brief form  
*Travelers take shelter from the sun under a large tree. They criticize the tree for not making flowers or fruit. The tree speaks, and tells them that they are ungrateful people for taking shelter under her leaves and then criticizing her.*

**TELEGRAM:** briefly states the author’s basic theme with all unnecessary words removed—a crisp, telegram-like message  
*Travelers stop for rest and shade under big tree. Travelers say tree is useless. Tree tells them off.*

**HEURISTIC:** restates an attention-getting portion of the selection that makes the reader want to respond  
*In this story, a tree talks back to people. The tree says, “You ungrateful people! You come and take shelter under me... and then... abuse me and call me good for nothing!”*

**QUESTION:** turns the main point into an organization question that the selection answers  
*What if the things we use could talk back?*

**Constructive Annotations**

**PERSONAL VIEW:** answers the question, “How do your views and feelings compare with what the author says?”  
*We use resources like coal without thinking. Then we criticize it for damaging our lungs and dirtying our air. I guess kids sometimes use their parents the way the travelers used the tree, and then criticize them without thinking about their feelings.*

**HUMOROUS:** can vary from bringing a slight smile, usually by flirting with a naughty suggestion, to using jest to bring enlightenment

*I can just see that poor tree thinking, “I hope they’re about to stop here to seek shelter and not relief.”*

**CRITICAL:** begins by stating the author’s main point, then states whether the reader agrees, disagrees, or agrees in part with the author, and then briefly explains why  
*Not every word spoken in criticism is meant that way. The travelers were just grumpy from the trip. The tree is too sensitive.*

**CONTRARY:** states a logical alternative position, even though it may not be the one the student supports  
*The travelers could be right, a better tree could produce something and also give shade.*

**INTENTION:** states and briefly explains what the reader thinks was the author’s intention, plan, and purpose for writing the selection  
*The author wants us to be more sensitive to the people and things we depend on—especially those we see and use often.*

**MOTIVATION:** states what may have caused the author to have written the selection—the author’s personal agenda  
*It sounds like the author may have felt used, after having a bad experience with friends or family.*

**DISCOVERY:** states one or more practical questions that need to be answered before the selection can be judged for accuracy or worth  
*I wonder how many of us know when we are being “users.” We could take an anonymous poll to see how many class members secretly feel that they have been used and how many see themselves as users.*

**CREATIVE:** suggests different and perhaps better solutions or views and/or connections and applications to prior learning and experiences

\_\_\_\_\_ *This fable made me think that teachers are sometimes used unfairly. They give us so much, and then we put them down if they make a little mistake. They’re only human.*

\_\_\_\_\_ *We should put this fable on the bulletin board where it will remind us not to be ungrateful “users.”*

\_\_\_\_\_ [How would you re-title this fable if you were writing it?] *I’d call it “Travelers in the Dark,” to show that we go through life without knowing how many small “gifts” come to us along our way.*

share the annotations they have written and to offer constructive suggestions to one another on ways to clarify the response. Extra-credit points can be offered to the group with the best annotation of each type as judged by the teacher or the class as a whole.

**4.** Introduce a new reading assignment by having students read annotations written by students in previous years' classes or from a different section at the same grade level.

**5.** Provide incentive to read and write reflectively by posting exemplary annotations, signed by the author, on a bulletin board or Web page, including some from different age-grade levels; in other words, raise some higher targets.

**6.** Use REAP annotation types as a guide for phrasing postreading discussion questions. Encourage students to do the same.

**7.** From time to time, use the REAP annotations to guide students' responses to nontext learning experiences: a video, a laboratory procedure, a piece of music or art, or others.