

Reading

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There's been a lot of study of the process of reading--and there's a lot of disagreement about exactly how we read.

I'm not going to try to sort through the different views, but I do want to give you a few ideas that I think can stand up to your own conscious examination.

Objectives

- To examine several reading processes
- To examine “metacognition” as it relates to reading
- To examine a method for detecting bias in writing

Here, then, are our objectives.

Hello, _____,

As you can _____, it's possible to read a _____ even with some of the words _____. This is because we _____ a lot about language patterns and how language _____.

When we _____, we are always trying to make _____; and when we have an _____ of what the main meaning is, we can _____ in missing parts, just as we are doing _____.

We also depend on the _____—the surrounding words—to help us with the meaning of _____ we don't know at first. All of this is _____ complex, but it's something we can do surprisingly _____.

Try all the blanks before you look at the next slide.

Here's something to try. Read the following and fill in the missing words.

Hello, **Readers**,

As you can **see**, it's possible to read a **text** even with some of the words **missing**. This is because we **know** a lot about language patterns and how language **works**.

When we **read**, we are always trying to make **meaning**; and when we have an **idea** of what the main meaning is, we can **fill** in missing parts, just as we are doing **here**.

We also depend on the **context**—the surrounding words—to help us with the meaning of **parts** we don't know at first. All of this is very complex, but it's something we can do surprisingly **well**.

Here are my suggestions. You might have some different ones--and if they make sense and don't contradict anything else, then they're as satisfactory as mine.

The point of this is that we can make sense of writing even when we don't know some of the words. That's because we look at the surrounding words and determine what makes sense.

How do you read?

- Letter-by-letter?
- Word-by-word?
- Idea-by-idea?
- Top down?

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I think we can see that the first three of these are involved.

But I'd like us to consider the fourth one.

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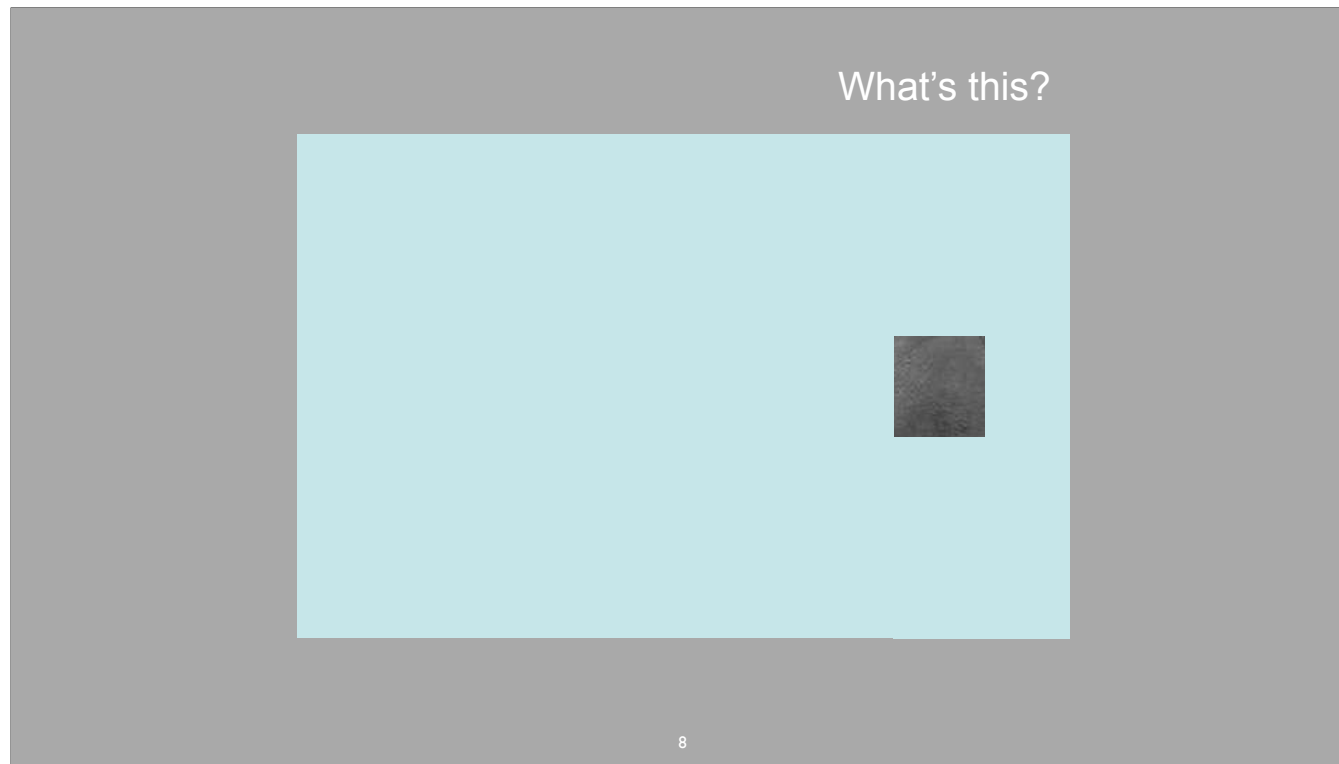
Stop the slideshow long enough to read this paragraph.

Amazing,
isn't it?

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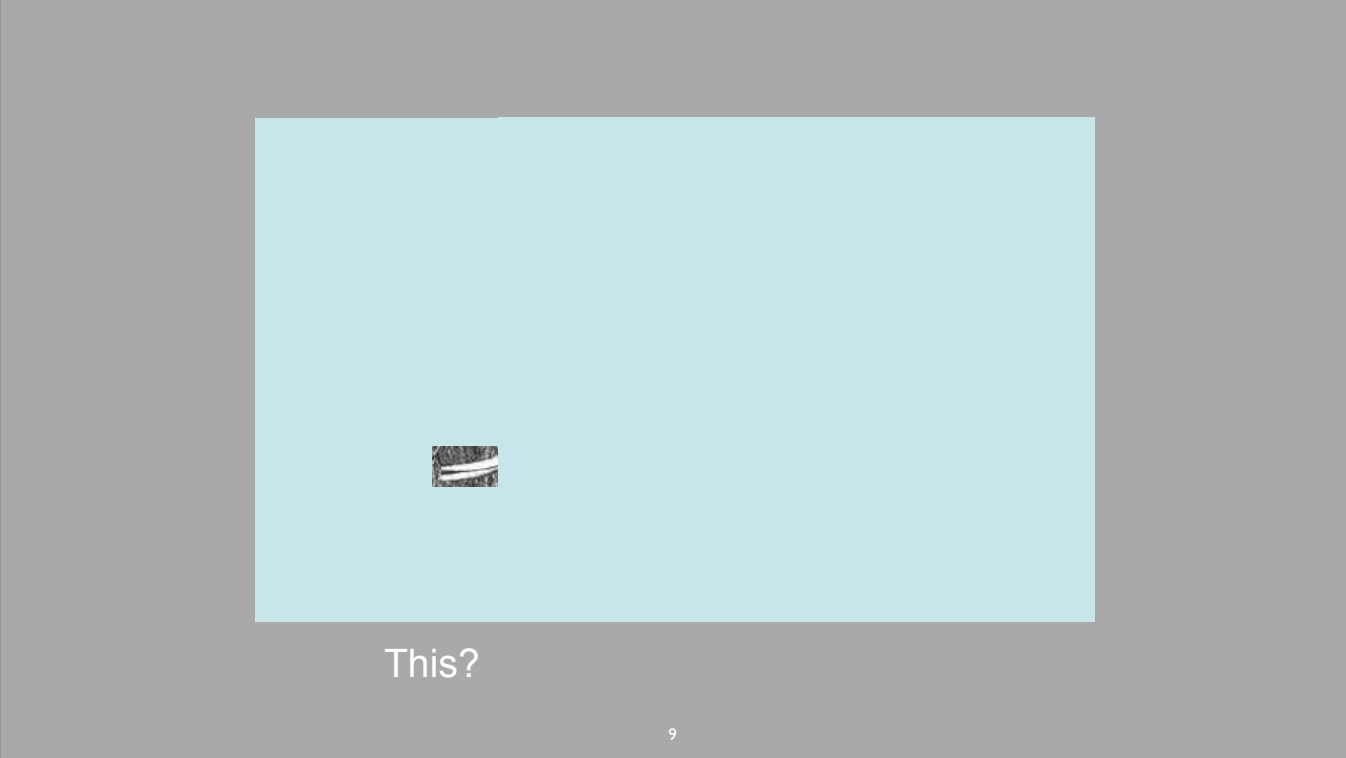
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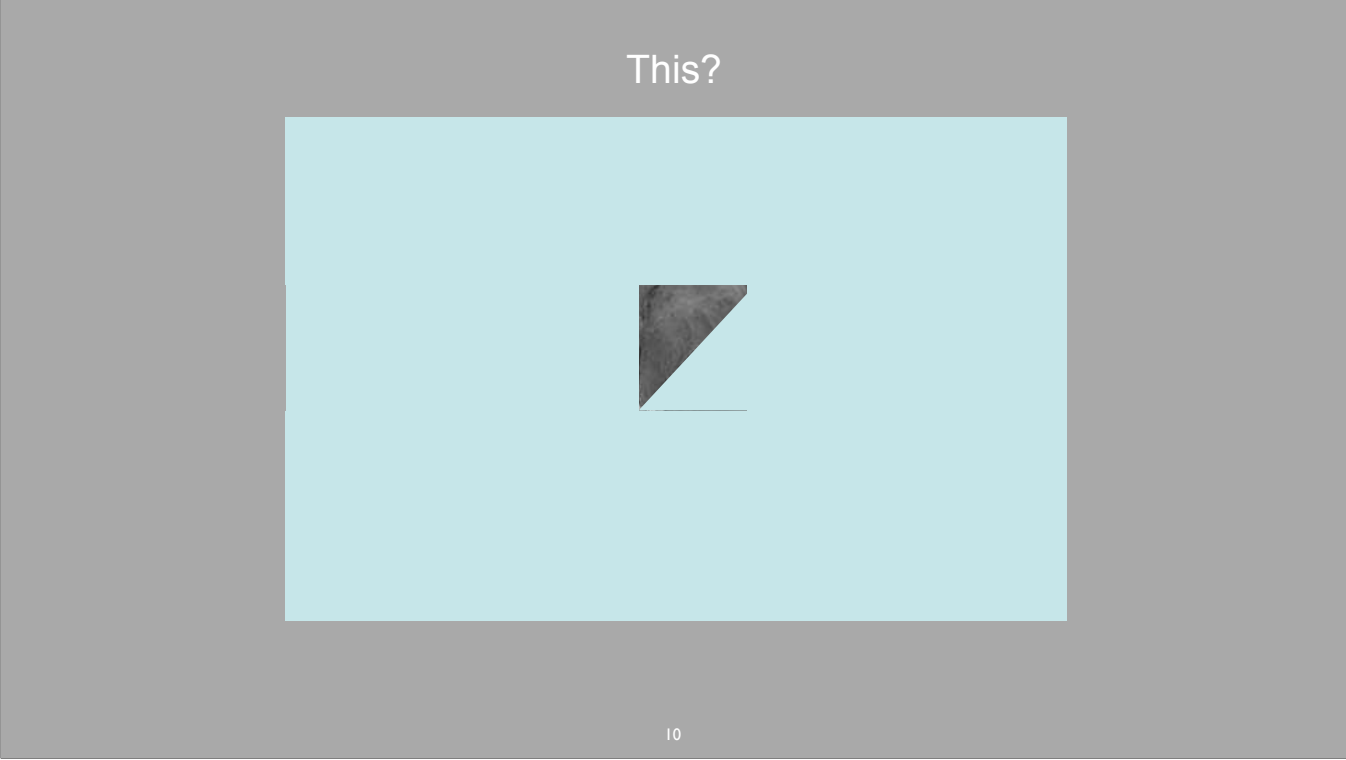


Now here are five graphics.

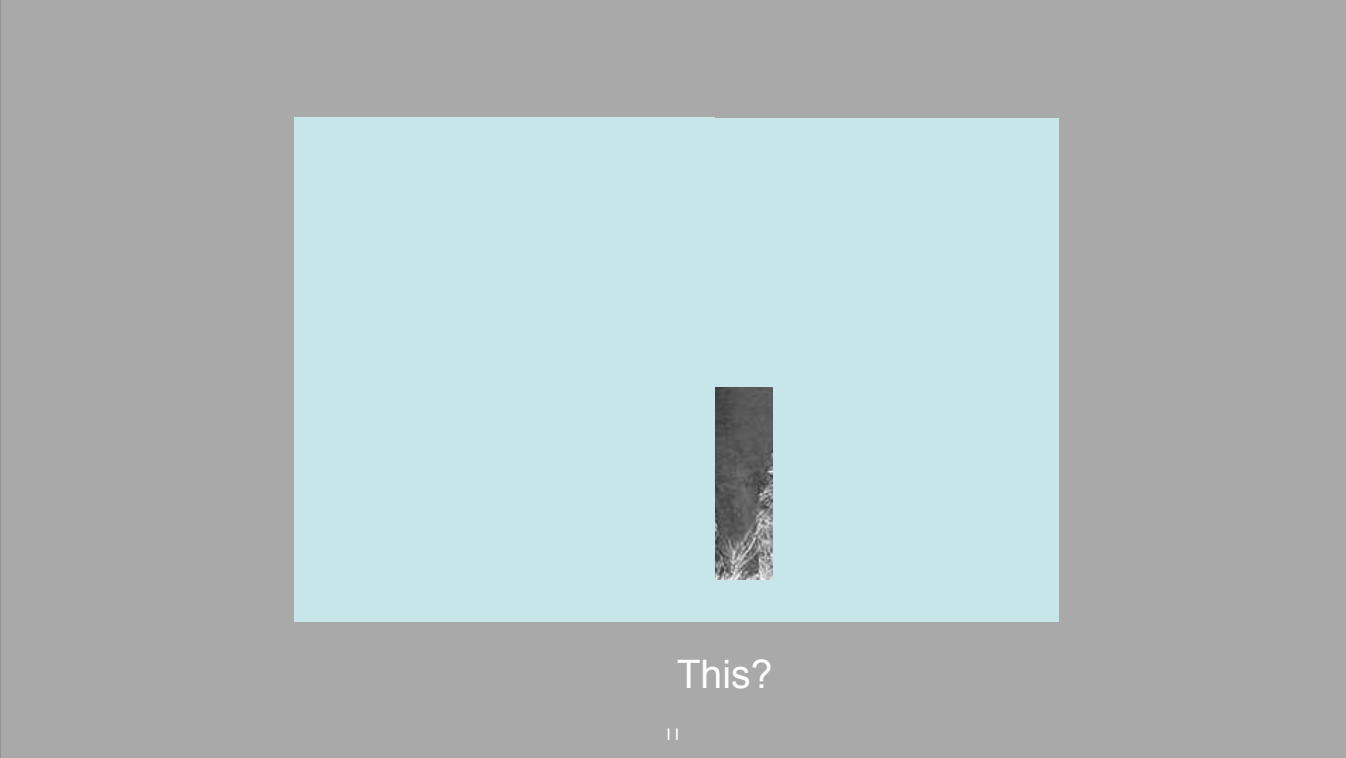
(1) Can you tell what's behind the screen?



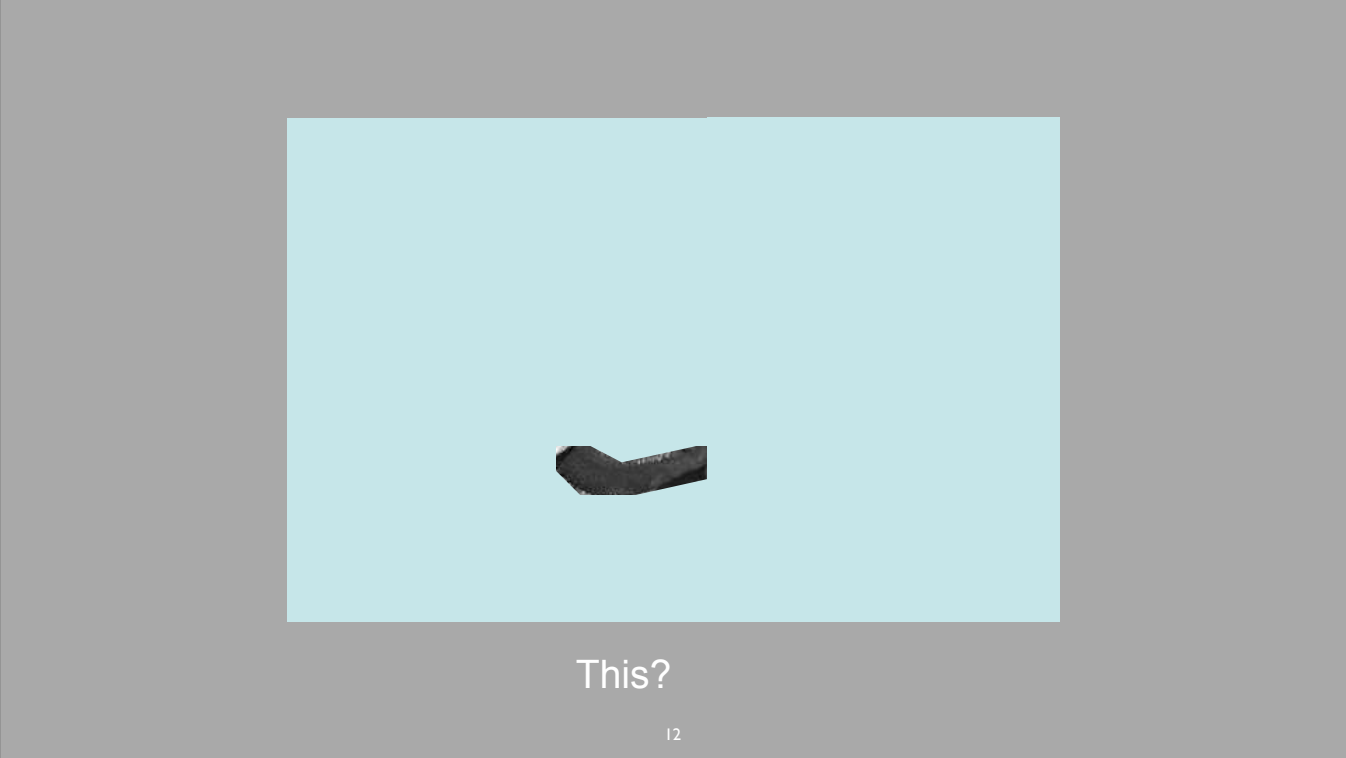
(2)



(3)



(4)



(5)



Okay, here's the story...

Seven blind men encounter an elephant for the first time, and they are able to investigate it by feel.

Each one touches it at a different spot.

Afterwards they fall into an argument about what it was they have experienced.

One has touched its flank, and is sure it was a wall.

Another has grasped the tail, and maintains that no, it was a rope.

A third, who has felt the sharp tip of the tusk, knows that it was a spear; and so on--the ear was a sail, the leg was a tree, the mouth was a bag, the trunk was a snake.

You may well have heard or read the story before. But there's a point to it.

Seven blind men encounter an elephant for the first time, and they are able to investigate it by feel.

Each one touches it at a different spot.

Afterwards they fall into an argument about what it was they have experienced.

One says, "It was like a wall."
Another says, "It was like a tree trunk."
A third says, "It was like a rope."
A fourth says, "It was like a snake."
A fifth says, "It was like a fan."
A sixth says, "It was like a mat."
A seventh says, "It was like a tree trunk."
A eighth says, "It was like a tree trunk."
A ninth says, "It was like a tree trunk."
A tenth says, "It was like a tree trunk."
A eleventh says, "It was like a tree trunk."
A twelfth says, "It was like a tree trunk."
A thirteenth says, "It was like a tree trunk."
A fourteenth says, "It was like a tree trunk."
A fifteenth says, "It was like a tree trunk."
A sixteenth says, "It was like a tree trunk."
A seventeenth says, "It was like a tree trunk."
A eighteenth says, "It was like a tree trunk."
A nineteenth says, "It was like a tree trunk."
A twentieth says, "It was like a tree trunk."

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A twentieth says, "It was like a tree trunk."

A third, who has felt the sharp tip of the trunk, knows that it was a spear; and so on--the ear was a sail, the leg was a tree, the mouth was a bag, the trunk was a snake.



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See where all those small pieces came from?

Now that you know the
BIG PICTURE

Do the small pieces make sense?

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Here's the point.

Stop the slideshow and formulate your own answer to this question before looking at my answer.

Reading is a lot like that,
too:

Knowing the **BIG PICTURE** helps
you to understand the **PIECES OF
THE PICTURE**

This is called **top-down reading**

What is reading, then?

Quite simply, it's a process of
meaning making

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This, to me, is the bottom line. And whatever helps you arrive at meaning is a legitimate part of the reading process.

Effective Reading

Depends on two key elements:

- **Purpose** -- The “Why?”
- **Process** -- The “How?”

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I really want to emphasize these two key elements. They're absolutely interdependent--and my short explanation is that PURPOSE DETERMINES PROCESS.

Who sets the purpose?

You?

**Your
instructor?**


Who sets the purpose?

But...and this is crucial...even if your instructor sets the purpose initially, you need to take ownership and make it your own purpose.

The whole idea of ownership of the purpose is, as it says here, CRUCIAL. So is having a clear understanding of the purpose.

Some purposes for reading...

- To gain general information
- To gain detailed information
- To locate specific information
- To get the **gist** of a text
- To find support for an idea
- To find arguments against an idea



The main
idea

Your reading as a student will involve all of these purposes, either individually or in combination.

Key point



Purpose

determines

Process

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Which leads to what I said a moment ago: PURPOSE DETERMINES PROCESS.

And this really is KEY.

But...

- Regardless of the Purpose, the Process must be **active**
- In other words, you must be **engaged** with the text

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And notice this: THE PROCESS MUST BE ACTIVE and you MUST BE ENGAGED with the material if you're going to get the biggest payoff for your effort.

Here are a few important processes

- Close reading
- Skimming
- Scanning
- Summarizing
- Linking

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Before we look at any of these, let's examine "metacognition."

Regardless of the Process...

One Sub-Process remains constant:

- **Making Predictions & Confirming those Predictions**

And this is where **metacognition** comes in...



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We usually do this automatically. If you've ever stopped when you were reading to go back and reread something, it was because of this sub-process at work.

So, now, "metacognition." In simple terms, that's "thinking about your own thinking."

Metacognition

A four-part process of:

1. **Monitoring** your understanding as you read
2. **Identifying** where understanding breaks down

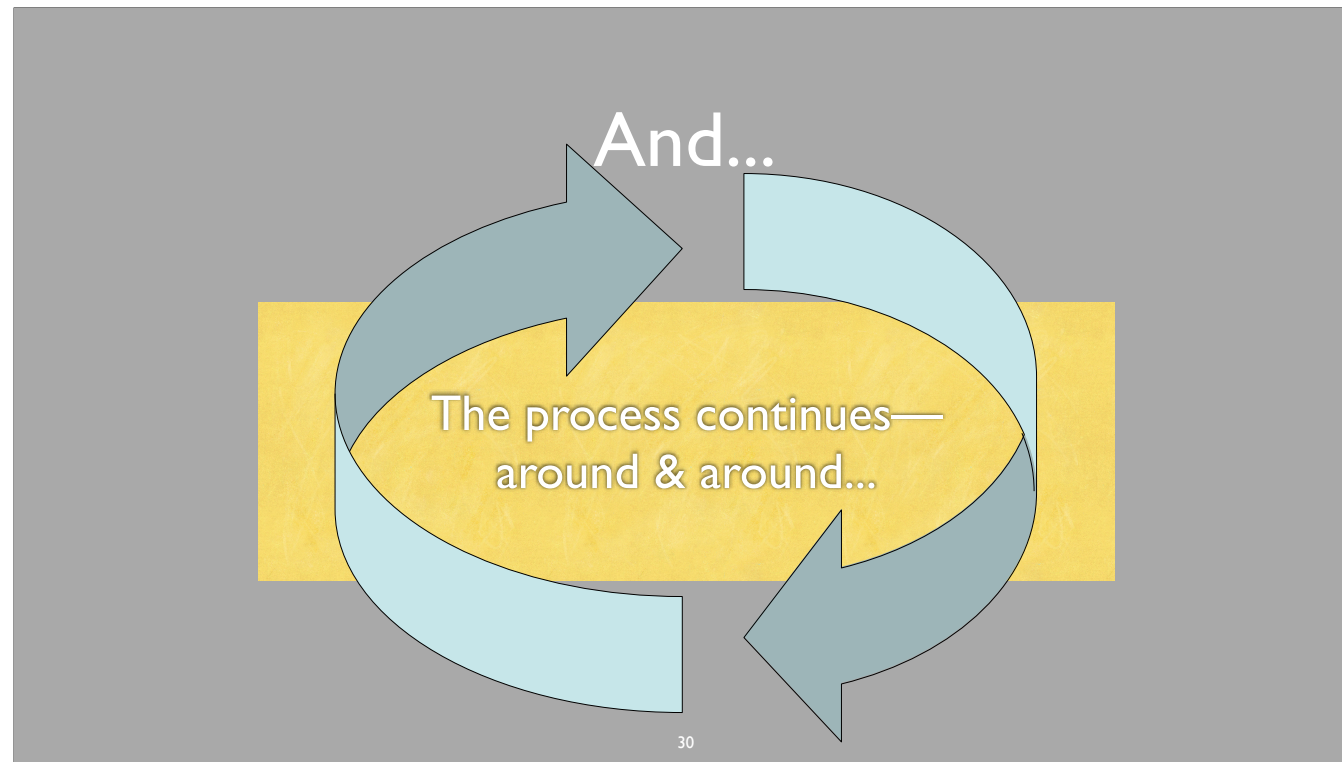


Here are the four parts of the process:

And...

3. **Implementing** a 'fix-up strategy'

4. **Evaluating** the success of the strategy



And this is important--it doesn't end at step four.

The **Key Metacognitive Question**
that you should be asking yourself
constantly as you read:



Does this make sense?

We said earlier that reading is a “meaning making process,” so this question gets to the very heart of the metacognitive activity.

Now, let's look at the Process of Close Reading

- This is the kind of reading most often used in education
- It's reading to gather as much information as possible



This next part will undoubtedly be very familiar to you.

Close Reading...

Involves:

- Examining **every sentence**
- Examining **all new vocabulary**

Is usually “bottom-up reading”



Notice, it’s “bottom up.” It doesn’t start with identifying the “big picture,” but instead starts with the little pieces and puts them together to see what emerges.

Close Reading...

Should involve:

- Constant prediction & confirmation
- Constant metacognitive activity
- Constant and systematic linking of new information to prior knowledge
- Constant sifting of important from unimportant information
- Clear understanding of all new vocabulary in context

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This is a very important list. It applies to all reading, not just close reading. It's just that with close reading, it's possible to be so focused on the individual words and sentences that the metacognitive awareness doesn't get a chance to be as active as it needs to be.

However...

Close Reading may **NOT** always be
your best choice

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Remember, purpose determines process.

For example

You may have to “read” visual displays of information, such as tables, charts, or graphs

- First, you need to understand the “key”
- Then, you need to examine the display closely

You might want to pause the slideshow fairly often as you go over the next few frames. The ideas need to be absorbed and contextualized in terms of your own experience.

Back to other strategies...

- **Skimming** or **scanning** may be the approach that best suits your purpose



Which should you use?

If your PURPOSE is to find the answer to a simple question...

- You should **Scan** to find what you need

If your PURPOSE is to get the main idea (gist)...

- You should **Skim**



Or...

If your Purpose is to identify the key points

- You should **Skim** to identify key ideas and then create a summary

If your Purpose is to link new information to what you already know

- You should **Scan** to identify specific information



How do you “skim” text?

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So, first, skimming.

Skim by...

moving your eyes quickly over written
text to get the main idea (the gist)



Gist -- the *main idea*

Example:

- The **gist** may be clear from the first sentence
- In such a case, the remainder of the paragraph should give information to support the main idea
- Sometimes, you have to identify the **gist** of a text by drawing inferences (also called "reading between the lines")



Skimming

- In **skimming** you don't know what you are looking for
- Prepare yourself by reading the title, source, author, and pictures, if any
- Then predict by questioning yourself: **who, what, when, where** is this likely to be mainly about?



Skimming

- With the questions in mind, move your eyes down the column of print or, if the lines are quite long, with a slight back-and-forth movement
- Look for exact names of people, places, things, ideas, numbers, and words like **therefore, whenever, until, because, and instead** that suggest how and why



Skimming

- You should **skim** everything in mass media after reading the title and first paragraph
- **Skim** everything you are planning to read before you make a final decision to read, discard, or study the material

How do you “scan” text?



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And, now, scanning.

Scan by...

moving your eyes quickly over written text to find information that you think is there



Scanning

- A preliminary **scan** of the text will alert you to the new terms and concepts and their sequence
- When you locate a new term, try to find its definition



Scanning

- If you are not able to figure out the meaning, then look it up in the glossary or dictionary
- Record the term and its definition or the page number where the definition is located
- This is useful for reviewing



Scanning

Scanning is useful for locating statements, definitions, formulas, and other specific information that you need to remember completely and precisely

Remember...

All these reading processes involve:

**Constant prediction
&
confirmation**

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Again, that metacognitive activity that is fundamental.

Bias

Which
is...?



Bias

- Incomplete information presented as if it were complete
- May be conscious or unconscious on the part of the language user



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Bias, of one sort or another, is widespread. You don't have to look at very many websites, for example, to realize that people want to persuade you of something--maybe something as simple as how you should spend your money, or maybe how to cast your vote in the next election.

And, of course, bias isn't restricted to the Internet. It's everywhere there's a message.

To be a successful reader, you need to detect bias, analyze it for the hidden message, and treat it accordingly.

Detecting bias in texts

Bias is often persuasive because:

- We're taught to trust what we read in print—e.g., textbooks, newspapers



As a student, you may be exposed to very subtle bias that isn't always easy to detect. In some cases, it isn't even intentional on the part of the writer--the bias of theory, for example--but it's just as real and presents a very real challenge for the student who wants to get at the underlying truth, insofar as that's possible.

Detecting bias in texts

Some “tests” we can apply to texts to help us to detect bias:

- The test of “reasonableness”
- The test of “word choice”
- The test of “emotion/reason”
- The test of “proof”
- The test of “balanced representation”

So, here are some tests that you can use to help you detect bias.

Detecting bias in texts

One of the surest ways to detect bias is to:

- (a) Consult multiple sources
and
- (b) Apply the “tests” to all of them

Consultation of multiple sources is a basic approach that you should always take--particularly when you are writing academic papers.

Detecting bias in texts

Above all...

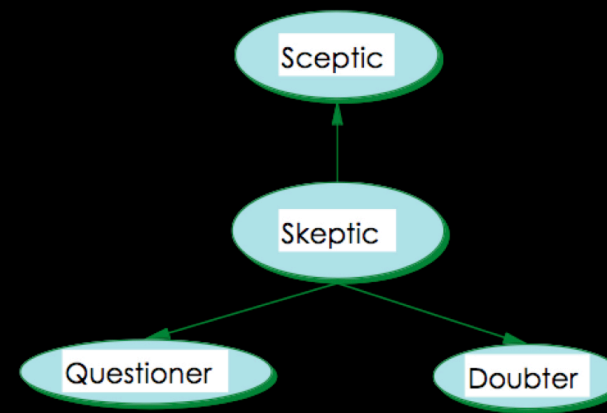
As a reader, you need to be a skeptic



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This is crucial for anyone dealing with information, particularly if it has been organized by others.

Skeptic?



In other words...

Don't believe anything you read until
you get acceptable proof

In other words...

Don't ' until
you g' So, the next step is to
test what we've been
saying in this video

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Here's the challenge for you.

Summary

In this video, we looked briefly at:

- Several reading processes
- “Metacognition” as it relates to reading
- A method for detecting bias in writing

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In summary, we looked briefly at the reading process, the importance of metacognition, and detecting bias in writing.

The End