Article of the Week
Guidelines & Rubric

Why Articles of the Week?

One of the reasons that we sometimes struggle when reading a new text is that we don't understand the related concepts. For example, how could I understand a book about a stockbroker on Wall Street if I don't know what a stock is, where Wall Street is, or what happens there? What if I don't know that a broker is someone who sells things? Understanding the concepts that are related to a text is called background knowledge. Having a broad array of background knowledge is imperative in being successful in school. By making connections between what we already know and what we are trying to learn, we build our understanding of a concept.

But background knowledge isn't just important in school. In *Building Background Knowledge for Academic Achievement*, author Robert Marzano states, "Academic background knowledge affects more than just 'school learning.' Studies have also shown its relation to occupation and status in life. . . . One study interviewed 538 randomly selected adults and gave them a test of basic academic information and terminology. They found a significant relationship between knowledge of this academic information and type of occupation and overall income" (Marzano 4).

So if background knowledge is so important, how do we improve or increase it? Reading. Reading is the best, most lasting way to build background knowledge. In order to build background knowledge, we must read from a variety of sources and a diverse array of texts.

In order to build our background knowledge, each week students will read and annotate an article of the week. After reading and annotating, students will compose a written response to the article based on a selection of prompts.

Your Annotations

In class, begin by following the steps on the "How to Annotate" handout. Read and annotate the article carefully. Your annotations are part of your summative grade on the articles of the week and will be scored using the attached rubric.

Your Written Response

Once you've read and annotated the article of the week, you will compose a written response. Your written response should follow the guidelines below, and will be scored according to the attached rubric.

Guidelines:
- Begin your response with a sentence that includes language from the prompt. For example, if the prompt says, "Does the NSA's spying ability worry you?" then your first sentence might say, "The NSA's spying ability worries me because . . . "
- Organize your ideas into paragraphs. Do not write one long paragraph.
- Do NOT write a summary of the article. Respond to a prompt using your annotations as a tool for organizing your ideas and providing supporting details.
- Your response should be about one full page, typed and double-spaced.
- Proofread and edit carefully.

Your Grade

Every four weeks, you will turn in a packet of four written responses (with the annotations attached) with your best written response on top. Your teacher will grade the written response you selected as your best, plus one other, selected randomly by the teacher. All four written responses with annotations must be completed and included in the packet in order for it to be graded. No incomplete packets will be accepted. Your summative grade for Article of the Week (AoW) is a composite of the annotation score and the written response score. Consult the rubric on the back of this handout; it will be used to score your work.

Article of the Week – Rubric

Name: Date: Hour:

AoW #s:

	A	B	C	D	IE (F)
Annotations	At least six quality annotations are present, including notation of the author's thesis and supporting ideas. The annotations demonstrate close reading and meaningful interaction with the text. Annotations are insightful and focused on understanding the text.	At least five quality annotations are present, including notation of the author's thesis and supporting ideas. Annotations demonstrate close reading and meaningful interaction with the text. Annotations are somewhat insightful and focused on understanding the text, but may lack depth.	At least five quality annotations are present, including the author's thesis. Supporting ideas are not consistently identified. Annotations demonstrate an attempt at close reading and meaningful interaction with the text, but may be inconsistent.	Three or four quality annotations are present, but the author's thesis and supporting ideas may not be noted. The annotations do not consistently demonstrate close reading and meaningful interaction with the text. Annotations lack depth and do not reflect an effort to understand the text.	Fewer than three quality annotations are present. Little to no interaction with the text does not demonstrate close reading.
Written Response	Written response answers the prompt and includes specific details from the text. The response clearly reflects meaningful use of annotations as a tool for organization and composition of ideas. The response is one full page, typed and double-spaced, of well-written analysis and reflection organized into paragraphs.	Written response answers the prompt and includes some specific details from the text. The response summarizes the annotations. The response is one full page, typed and double-spaced, of mostly well-written analysis. Response may need organizational tweaking.	Written response addresses the prompt but may include some summary of annotations. The response is one full page, typed and double-spaced, and does not include any errors that interfere with reader understanding. An attempt at organization is made.	Written response summarizes annotations but does not answer the prompt. No details from the text. Response is one long paragraph, or shorter than one full page, typed and double-spaced. No analysis or attempt at organization.	Written response summarizes the article or is grossly off-topic. No connection to annotations. No organization of ideas.

Grade:

Comments:

How to Annotate

While reading and analyzing an assigned text, some readers may highlight passages they think are significant. Highlighting a text is a passive interaction with a text, and often leads to pages of blinding stripes of color that have no real meaning. As a strategy of close reading, annotating is a far more active, meaningful, lasting interaction with a text. Rather than just highlighting passages, annotating requires the writer to read the text actively, to think about and analyze what has been said, and to make specific notes (annotations) in the margins of the text. In short, annotating is like having a dialogue or conversation with the author. The writer creates this conversation in the margins of the text by summarizing, asking questions, expressing confusion or ambiguity, and evaluating content.

Annotating has several benefits for the reader:

> it helps the reader to stay actively focused and involved with the text
> it helps the reader to monitor and improve comprehension
> it helps the reader to compose potential content for a writing assignment
> it helps the reader to locate significant quotes and ideas for organization

How to Annotate While Reading

Before Reading:
- If you are reading a book, examine the front and back cover.
- Read the title and any subtitles.
- Examine illustrations.
- Scan for bold, italics, or bullet points.
- Determine the format of the text (book, short story, diary, article, play, poem, etc.)
- As you examine each element, write questions or make predictions near these parts of the text. Make logical inferences and note them.

During Reading:
- Locate and mark the thesis, supporting points (assertions), and significant ideas.
- Look carefully at the first and last lines of paragraphs. These often contain key points.
- Underline important terms or definitions.
- Mark, circle, or write key words, meanings, or definitions in the margin for terms with which you are unfamiliar. Look up words you don't know or can't decipher from context clues.
- Mark only words or phrases, not entire sentences, and then make notes in the margin telling how or why the passage is important.
- Don't get distracted by interesting details. Most important information in texts is ideas, not facts.
- Pay attention when an author uses a signal word. Signal words are like stop signs, telling the reader to slow down and pay attention. Examples of signal words: for example, therefore, for instance, in fact, on the other hand . . .
- Identify portions of the text that challenge your prior knowledge, beliefs, or attitudes. Respond.
- Identify and note any connections you can make to other reading or learning.
- Add annotations in layers. Good readers often read a text two or three times, depending on the complexity of the reading material.

After Reading:
- Reread annotations and draw conclusions. Write your conclusions at the end of the text.
- Look for patterns or themes in your annotations.
- Re-examine the title and look for significance or meaning.
- Re-examine the questions or inferences you made while pre-reading. Comment or answer questions.