

Suggestions for using readings in the composition classroom

- Readings should directly relate to student writing tasks.
 - Use texts to model and practice critical reading skills.
 - Use a text for modeling purposes and have the class collaborate to write a summary, write a response, and critique a text. Use a few readings to model the synthesis paper.
 - Read and analyze the texts that students will use as sources for their individual papers.
- Have students read a text and write some kind of response for homework. Use that text in-class to model the upcoming paper. For example, students could list the material in the reading that they would include in a summary. Then, the class could work on producing a summary of this model text to prepare for the summary paper.
- Have students annotate a reading for daily grade credit to encourage them to do the required reading. Teachers can go around the class and quickly check for annotations while students do some kind of writing task at the beginning of class.
- Reading response homework could include the following: summarize a text, practice paraphrasing, come up with discussion questions for their peers, relate the text to something else they've read or heard, respond to the text with a personal experience, support a point with a quote from the text.
- Readings can help establish a class theme. The Wilhoit textbook uses readings about vocation, so you could start a class discussion about how the reading contributes to the students' understanding of a particular vocation. Students could then talk about writing strategies that help make the text effective.
- You can refer to readings to help teach students about grammar, style, and mechanics. Have them find examples of certain skills in the text. For example, you could comment on these issues in the diagnostic essays. Then, students could find examples from the readings of authors correctly using the skills that students struggled with in the diagnostic.
- When you discuss a reading, tie that discussion to how the text is written so that you don't get sidetracked by content. You shouldn't spend large amounts of class time just discussing the subject of a text. Remember that everything needs to link back to student writing. For example, students could analyze readings for ideas on how to write a good introduction or conclusion or for locating topic sentences or to see how an author uses the notion of Claim, Support, Explanation. Have students look for things like how the writer backs up claims, uses evidence, uses the rhetorical triangle, integrates quotations, transitions between paragraphs and between sentences and WITHIN sentences.
- Use readings sparingly and wisely. One reading to help model the paper task and a reading or two for students to use as source texts may be enough for a unit.