

HOW TO READ A BOOK: THE CLASSIC GUIDE TO INTELLIGENT READING

Ask questions while you read — questions that you yourself must try to answer in the course of reading.

Any questions? No. The art of reading on any level above the elementary consists in the habit of asking the right questions in the right order. There are four main questions you must ask about any book.

1. WHAT IS THE BOOK ABOUT AS A WHOLE? You must try to discover the leading theme of the book, and how the author develops this theme in an orderly way by subdividing it into its essential subordinate themes or topics.
2. WHAT IS BEING SAID IN DETAIL, AND HOW? You must try to discover the main ideas, assertions, and arguments that constitute the author's particular message.
3. IS THE BOOK TRUE, IN WHOLE OR PART? You cannot answer this question until you have answered the first two. You have to know what is being said before you can decide whether it is true or not. When you understand a book, however, you are obligated, if you are reading seriously, to make up your own mind. Knowing the author's mind is not enough.
4. WHAT OF IT? If the book has given you information, you must ask about its significance. Why does the author think it is important to know these things? Is it important to you to know them? And if the book has not only informed you, but also enlightened you, it is necessary to seek further enlightenment by asking what else follows, what is further implied or suggested.

Reading a book on any level beyond the elementary is essentially an effort on your part to ask it questions (and to answer them to the best of your ability). That should never be forgotten. And that is why there is all the difference in the



world between the demanding and the undemanding reader. The latter asks no questions — and gets no answers.

The four questions stated above summarize the whole obligation of a reader. They apply to anything worth reading — a book or an article or even an advertisement.

Inspectional reading tends to provide more accurate answers to the first two questions than to the last two, but it nevertheless helps with those also. An analytical reading of a book has not been accomplished until you have answer to those last questions — until you have some idea of the book's truth, in whole or part, and of its significance, if only in your own scheme of things.

The last question — What of it? — is probably the most important one in syntopical reading. Naturally, you will have to answer the first three questions before attempting the final one.

Knowing what the four questions are is not enough. You must remember to ask them as you read. The *habit* of doing that is the mark of a demanding reader. More than that, you must know how to answer them precisely and accurately. The trained ability to do that is the *art* of reading.

Mortimer J. Adler & Charles Van Doren. [How to Read a Book: The Classic Guide to Intelligent Reading](#).

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QUOTES – WEEK ONE

1. It took me four years to paint like Raphael, but a lifetime to paint like a child. - Pablo Picasso
2. We are told that talent creates its own opportunities. But it sometimes seems that intense desire creates not only its own opportunities, but its own talents. - Eric Hoffer
3. Order and simplification are the first steps toward the mastery of a subject. - Thomas Mann
4. That's what all we are. Amateurs. We don't live long enough to be anything else. - Charles Spencer Chaplin
5. To do the opposite of something is also a form of imitation, namely an imitation of its opposite. - Georg Christoph Lichtenberg
6. Never trust anyone who has not brought a book with them. — Lemony Snicket
7. Easy writings curse is hard reading - Richard Brinsley Sheridan
8. It is my ambition to say in ten sentences what others say in a whole book. - Friedrich Nietzsche
9. The world has the habit of making room for the man whose actions show that he knows where he is going. - Napoleon Hill
10. There are some who speak well and write badly. For the place and the audience warm them, and draw from their minds more than they think of without that warmth. - Blaise Pascal

