

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Listening Passage**  
**Speech by Dr. Mortimer Adler**

You know you have to read “between the lines” to get the most out of anything. I want to persuade you to do something equally important in the course of your reading. I want to persuade you to “write between the lines.” Unless you do, you are not likely to do the most efficient land of reading.

I contend, quite bluntly, that marking up a book is not an act of mutilation but of love.

You shouldn't mark up a book which isn't yours. Librarians (or your friends) who lend you books expect you to keep them clean, and you should. If you decide that I am right about the usefulness of marking books, you will have to buy them.

There are two ways in which you can own a book. The first is the property right you establish by paying for it, just as you pay for clothes and furniture. But this act of purchase is only the prelude to possession. Full ownership comes only when you have made it a part of yourself, and the best way to make yourself a part of it is by writing in it. An illustration may make the point clear. You buy a beefsteak and transfer it from the butcher's icebox to your own. But you do not own the beefsteak in the most important sense until you consume it and get it into your bloodstream. I am arguing that books, too, must be absorbed in your bloodstream to do you any good.

There are three kinds of book owners. The first has all the standard sets and best-sellers—unread, untouched. (This deluded individual owns woodpulp and ink, not books.) The second has a great many books—a few of them read through, most of them dipped into, but all of them as clean and shiny as the day they were bought. (This person would probably like to make books his own, but is restrained by a false respect for their physical appearance.) The third has a few books or many—every one of them dog-eared and dilapidated, shaken and loosened by continual use, marked and scribbled in from front to back. (This person owns books.)

Is it false respect, you may ask, to preserve intact and unblemished a beautifully printed book, an elegantly bound edition? Of course not. I'd no more scribble all over a first edition of *Paradise Lost* than I'd give my baby a set of crayons and an original Rembrandt! I wouldn't mark up a painting or a statue. And the beauty of a rare edition or of a richly manufactured volume is like that of a painting or a statue.

Why is marking up a book indispensable to reading? First, it keeps you awake. (And I don't mean merely conscious; I mean wide awake.) In the second place, reading, if it is active, is thinking, and thinking tends to express itself in words, spoken or written. The marked book is usually the thought-through book. Finally, writing helps you remember the thoughts you had, or the thoughts the author expressed. Let me develop these three points.

If reading is to accomplish anything more than passing time, it must be active. You can't let your eyes glide across the lines of a book and come up with an understanding of what you have read. Now an ordinary piece of light fiction, like say, *Gone with the Wind*, doesn't require the most active kind of reading. The books you read for pleasure can be read in a state of relaxation, and nothing is lost. But a great book, rich in ideas and beauty, a book that raises and tries to answer great fundamental questions, demands the most active reading of which you are capable.

But, you may ask, why is writing necessary? Well, the physical act of writing, with your own hand, brings words and sentences more sharply before your mind and preserves them better in your memory. To set down your reaction to important words and sentences you have read, and the questions they have raised in your mind, is to preserve those reactions and sharpen those questions.

Even if you wrote on a scratch pad, and threw the paper away when you had finished writing, your grasp of the book would be surer. But you don't have to throw the paper away. The margins (top and bottom, as well as side), the end-papers, the very space between the lines, are all available. They aren't sacred. And, best of all, your marks and notes become an integral part of the book and stay there forever. You can pick up the book the following week or year, and there are all your points of agreement, disagreement, doubt, and inquiry. It's like resuming an interrupted conversation with the advantage of being able to pick up where you left off.

And that is exactly what reading a book should be: a conversation between you and the author. Presumably she knows more about the subject than you do; naturally, you'll have the proper humility as you approach her. But don't let anybody tell you that a reader is supposed to be solely on the receiving end. Understanding is a two-way operation; learning doesn't consist in being an empty receptacle. The learner has to question himself and question the teacher. He even has to argue with the teacher, once he understands what the teacher is saying. And marking a book is literally an expression of your differences, or agreements of opinion, with the author.

There are all kinds of devices for marking a book intelligently and fruitfully. Here's the way I do it:

1. *Underlining*: of major points, of important or forceful statements.
2. *Vertical lines at the margin*: to emphasize a statement already underlined.
3. *Star, asterisk, or other doo-dad at the margin*: to be used sparingly, to emphasize the ten or twenty most important statements in the book.
4. *Numbers in the margin*: to indicate the sequence of points the author makes in developing a single argument.
5. *Numbers of other pages in the margin*: to indicate where else in the book the author made points relevant to the point marked; to tie up the ideas in a book, which, though they may be separated by many pages, belong together.
6. *Circling of key words or phrases*.
7. *Writing in the margin, or at the top or bottom of the page, for the sake of*: recording questions (and perhaps answers) which a passage raised in your mind; reducing a complicated discussion to a simple statement; recording the sequence of major points right through the books. I use the end-papers at the back of the book to make a personal index of the author's points in the order of their appearance.

The front end-papers are, to me, the most important. Some people reserve them for a fancy bookplate. I reserve them for fancy thinking. After I have finished reading the book and making my personal index on the back end-papers, I turn to the front and try to outline the book, not page by page, or point by point (I've already done that at the back), but as an integrated structure, with a basic unity and an order of parts. This outline is, to me, the measure of my understanding of the work.

You may say that this business of marking books is going to slow up your reading. It probably will. That's one of the reasons for doing it. Most of us have been taken in by the notion that speed of reading is a measure of our intelligence. There is no such thing as the right speed for intelligent reading. Some things should be read quickly and effortlessly, and some should be read slowly and even laboriously. The sign of intelligence in reading is the ability to read different things differently according to their worth. In the case of good books, the point is not to see how many of them you can get through, but rather how many can get through you-how many you can make your own. A few friends are better than a thousand acquaintances.

1.

**The Situation:** The Board of Education for your school district is considering a proposal to provide personal copies of assigned novels for students to keep. You have been asked to prepare a presentation, to be delivered at the next board meeting, in favor of this proposal. In preparation for writing your presentation, listen to a speech given in 1940 by noted philosopher and educator, Dr. Mortimer Adler. Then use relevant information from the speech to write your presentation.

**Your Task:** Write a presentation persuading your local Board of Education to provide personal copies of assigned novels for students to keep.

**Guidelines:**

**Be sure to**

- Tell your audience what they need to know to persuade them of the value of book ownership
- Use specific, accurate, and relevant information from the speech to support your argument
- Use a tone and level of language appropriate for a presentation to the Board of Education
- Organize your ideas in a logical and coherent manner
- Indicate any words taken directly from the speech by using quotation marks or referring to the speaker
- Follow the conventions of standard written English

2. Which action does the speaker consider to be the *first* step toward full possession of a book?  
A. talking about it      B. marking in it  
C. reading it              D. buying it
3. The condition of the books that belong to the true book owner is best described as  
A. intact    B. worn    C. clean    D. drab
4. According to the speaker, what is required for reading to result in learning?  
A. active engagement    B. strong motivation  
C. a relaxed attitude      D. a slow pace
5. In describing the empty space in a book as “not sacred,” the speaker most likely means that the space is  
A. abundant                      B. necessary  
C. usable                          D. permanent

6. The speaker's devices for marking a book serve as both a stimulus and a

- A. record
- B. comfort
- C. distraction
- D. decoration

7. The use of the word "you" throughout the speech has the effect of

- A. stressing the speaker's importance
- B. appealing directly to the audience
- C. creating a humorous tone
- D. establishing a parallel structure

1.  
Answer:
2.  
Answer: D
3.  
Answer: B
4.  
Answer: A
5.  
Answer: C
6.  
Answer: A
7.  
Answer: B