

# How to Become a Better Reader and Thinker

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The chances are that you are not as good a reader as you should be to do well in college. If so, it's not surprising. You live in a culture where people watch an average of *over seven hours of television every day!* All that passive viewing does not allow much time for reading. Reading is a skill that must be actively practiced. The simple fact is that people who do not read very often are not likely to be strong readers.

- How much television do you watch on an average day? \_\_\_\_\_ hours

Another reason for not reading much is that you may have a lot of responsibilities. You may be going to school and working at the same time. You may have a lot of family duties as well. If you have free time, you may feel too tired to read. It might seem easier to turn on the TV than to pick up a book.

- Do you do any regular reading—for example, a daily newspaper or a weekly magazine? \_\_\_\_\_
- When are you most likely to do your reading? \_\_\_\_\_

A third reason for not reading is that reading may not have been a pleasant experience in school. You may not have been good at reading, or you may not have enjoyed what you were given to read. As a result, you may have concluded that reading in general is not for you.

- Do you think that school made you dislike reading, rather than enjoy it?
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If you feel you need to improve your reading, *Groundwork for College Reading*, Fourth Edition, should help you a lot. The book will help you build a solid foundation in the most important skills you need to become a better reader. To find out just how this book can help, read the next several pages and do the brief activities as well. The activities are easily completed and will give you a quick, helpful overview of the book.

## HOW THE BOOK IS ORGANIZED

The book is organized into three main parts:

### Part I: Ten Steps to College Reading (pages 7–332)

The ten steps to college reading are listed in the table of contents starting on page v. Turn to that page to fill in the steps missing below:

- 1 Getting Started
- 2 \_\_\_\_\_
- 3 Vocabulary in Context
- 4 \_\_\_\_\_
- 5 Supporting Details
- 6 Finding Main Ideas
- 7 Signal Words I
- 8 \_\_\_\_\_
- 9 Inferences
- 10 \_\_\_\_\_

Each chapter is developed in the same way.

**First of all**, clear explanations and examples help you *understand* the chapter. Practices then give you the “hands-on” experience needed to *learn* the content of the chapter.

- How many practices are there in the third chapter, “Vocabulary in Context” (pages 75–96)? \_\_\_\_\_

**Closing each chapter** are three review tests. The first one reviews the information presented in the chapter.

- On which page is Review Test 1 for “Vocabulary in Context”? \_\_\_\_\_

The second review test consists of activities that help you practice the skill presented in the chapter.

- On which pages is Review Test 2 for “Vocabulary in Context”? \_\_\_\_\_

The third review test centers on a reading selection that both gets you reading and gives you practice in the skill you learned in the chapter.

- What is the title of the reading selection in the “Vocabulary in Context” chapter? \_\_\_\_\_

**Following each chapter** are six mastery tests that gradually increase in difficulty.

- On what pages are the mastery tests for the “Vocabulary in Context” chapter? \_\_\_\_\_

The tests are on tear-out pages that can be easily removed and handed in to your instructor. So that you can track your progress, there is a score box at the top of the first page of each test. Your score can also be entered into the “Reading Performance Chart” on the inside back cover of the book.

## Part II: Ten Reading Selections (pages 333–441)

The ten reading selections that make up Part II are followed by activities that give you practice in all of the skills studied in Part I. Each reading begins in the same way. Look, for example, at “Rosa: A Success Story,” which starts on page 385. What are the headings of the two sections that come before the reading itself?

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

Note that the vocabulary words in “Words to Watch” are followed by the numbers of the paragraphs in which the words appear. Look at the first page of “Rosa: A Success Story” and explain how each vocabulary word is marked in the reading itself.

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### Activities Following Each Reading Selection

After each selection, there are four kinds of activities to improve the reading and thinking skills you learned in Part I of the book.

- 1 The first activity consists of **vocabulary questions**—questions involving vocabulary in context as well as “Words to Watch.”
  - Look at the vocabulary questions for “Rosa: A Success Story” on pages 388–390. The first five questions deal with understanding vocabulary in context. How many questions then help you learn words taken from “Words to Watch”? \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 The second activity consists of ten **reading comprehension questions**—questions involving vocabulary in context, main ideas, supporting details, signal words, inferences, and argument.
  - Look at the questions for “Rosa: A Success Story” on pages 390–392. Note that the questions are labeled so you know which skill you are practicing in each case. How many questions deal with the central point and main ideas? \_\_\_\_\_
- 3 The third activity involves **outlining, mapping, or summarizing**. Each of these activities will sharpen your ability to get to the heart of a selection and to think logically and clearly about what you read.
  - What kind of activity is provided for “Rosa: A Success Story” on pages 392–393? \_\_\_\_\_
  - What kind of activity is provided for “The Fist, the Clay, and the Rock” on page 363? \_\_\_\_\_
  - What kind of activity is provided for “The Lady, or the Tiger?” on pages 402–403? \_\_\_\_\_

Note that a **map**, or diagram, is a visual way of organizing material. Like an outline, it shows at a glance the main parts of a selection.

- 4 The fourth activity consists of **discussion questions**. These questions provide a chance for you to deepen your understanding of each selection.
  - How many discussion questions are there for “Rosa: A Success Story” (page 393)—and for every other reading? \_\_\_\_\_

### Part III: Combined-Skills Tests (pages 443–469)

This part of the book provides a series of combined-skills tests that help you practice a number of the skills in the book.

- How many “Combined-Skills Tests” are there on pages 443–469? \_\_\_\_\_

These tests are made up of short passages that closely resemble the ones typically found in standardized tests.

### Appendixes (pages 471–494)

The first section in the “Appendixes” is a pronunciation guide. It tells you how to use the information provided for pronouncing the vocabulary words in this book.

The second section is “Writing Assignments.” Reading and writing are closely connected skills, and writing practice will improve your ability to read closely and think carefully.

- How many assignments are offered for each reading? \_\_\_\_\_

Also included in the appendixes is a limited answer key.

## HELPFUL FEATURES OF THE BOOK

- 1 The book centers on *what you really need to know* to become a better reader and thinker. It presents key comprehension skills and explains the most important points about each one.
- 2 The book gives you *lots of practice*. We seldom learn a skill only by hearing or reading about it; we make it part of us by repeated practice. There are, then, many activities in the text. They are not “busywork” but carefully designed materials that should help you truly learn each skill.

Notice that after you learn each skill in Part I, you go on to the next step: review tests and mastery tests that ask you to apply the skill. And as you move from one skill to the next, you continue to practice and reinforce the ones already learned.
- 3 The selections throughout the book are *lively and appealing*. Dull and unvaried readings work against learning, so subjects have been carefully chosen for their high interest level. All the selections here are good examples of how what we read can capture our attention. For example, start reading “One Less Sucker Lives” (page 91) or the timeless short story “The Lady, or the Tiger?” (page 395) or the account, with photographs, of an abused woman (page 405)—and try to *stop* reading.

## HOW TO USE THE BOOK

- 1 A good way to proceed is to read—and reread—the explanations and examples in a chapter in Part I until you feel you understand the ideas presented. Then carefully work through the practices. As you finish each one, check your answers with the “Limited Answer Key” that starts on page 489.

For your own sake, *don't just copy in the answers without trying to do the practices!* The only way to learn a skill is to practice it first and then use the answer key to give yourself feedback. Also, take whatever time is needed to figure out just why you got some answers wrong. By using the answer key to help teach yourself the skills, you will prepare yourself for the review and mastery tests at the end of each chapter as well as the other reading tests in the book. Your instructor can supply you with answers to those tests.

If you have trouble catching on to a particular skill, stick with it. In time, you will learn each skill.

- 2 Read the selections first with the intent of simply enjoying them. There will be time afterward for rereading each selection and using it to develop your comprehension skills.
- 3 Keep track of your progress. Fill in the charts at the end of each chapter in Part I and each reading in Part II. And in the “Reading Performance Chart” on the inside back cover, enter your scores for the review tests and mastery tests as well as the reading selections. These scores can give you a good view of your overall performance as you work through the book.

In summary, *Groundwork for College Reading, Fourth Edition*, has been designed to interest and benefit you as much as possible. Its format is straightforward, its explanations are clear, its readings are appealing, and its many practices will help you learn through doing. *It is a book that has been created to reward effort*, and if you provide that effort, you will make yourself a better reader and a stronger thinker. I wish you success.

**John Langan**