

Best Laid Plans: Lesson Planning to Support Students' Critical Reading Skills

Lana Myers

Professor of English

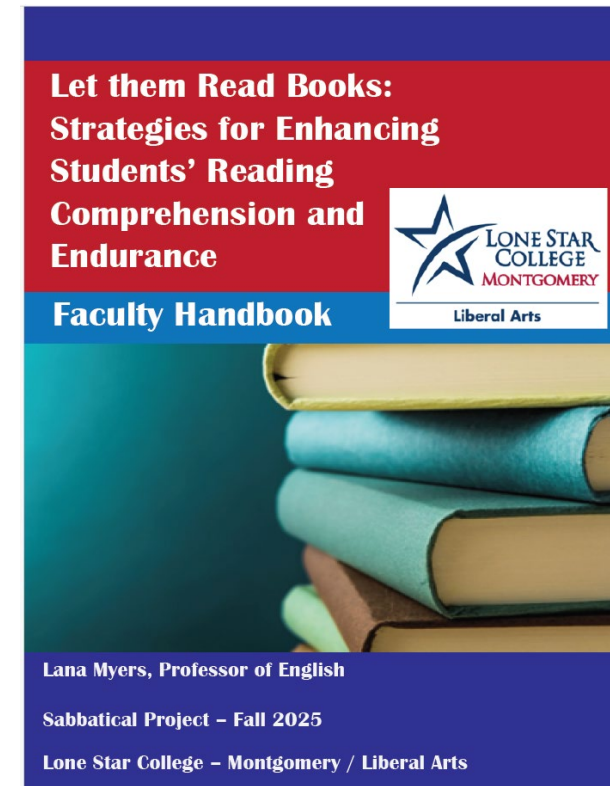
Lone Star College – Montgomery

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Context - Sabbatical Project

- **Goal 1:** Stimulate and enrich students' reading comprehension and endurance across the campus by providing faculty with a significant collection of diverse reading strategies.
- **Goal 2:** Empower faculty, who do not normally teach reading strategies, to incorporate one, or more, of the reading strategies into their current course content.
- **Goal 3:** Underscore the merits of reading comprehension and endurance in higher education.



Is academic reading a thing of the past?

- An article in Inside Higher Education entitled “True, Students are Reading Less,” suggests that professors should not cave into the pressure of assigning less reading or shorter readings.
 - **The author notes “Make big demands—smile when you do it, but ask them to do more than they want to do or even think they’re capable of” (Kirby).**
- Similarly, an article in The Atlantic entitled “Stop Meeting Students Where They Are” echoes that sentiment.
 - **Hunter explains “If we want students to keep reading books, faculty have the most important role to play—regardless of whatever new devices or platforms emerge to capture students' attention. The reaction to declining reading skills, poor comprehension, and fragmented attention spans should not be to negotiate or compromise, but to double down on the cure.”**



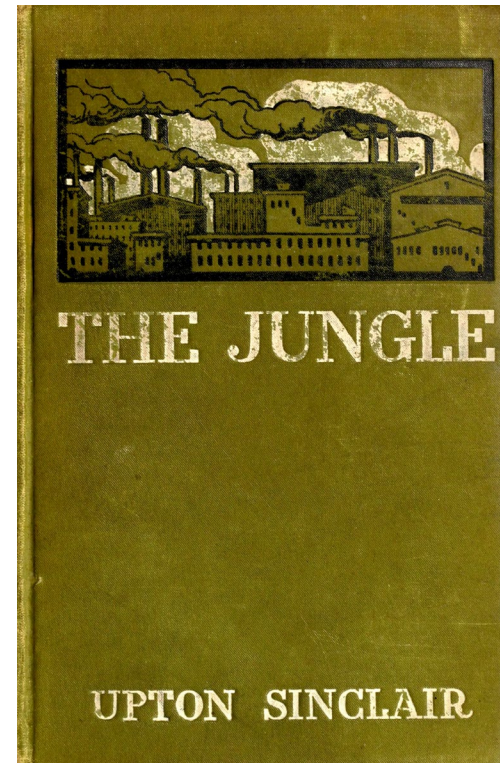
Academic Reading Transforms One's Future

- Rai explains “Reading for pleasure is the single biggest factor in success later in life, outside of an education. Study after study has shown that **those children who read for pleasure are the ones who are most likely to fulfil their ambitions**” (qtd. in Van Bergen et al.).
- Ricardson and Eccles echo the link between reading and success in their research noting “. . . **Measures of reading proficiency and literacy abilities have been shown to predict high school completion, degrees earned, adult income and occupational status**” (1).



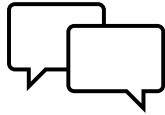
Lesson Plan for a Historical Text

- **Lesson Plan**
 - **Topic:** The working conditions of immigrants and food safety in the early 1900's in America as documented in *The Jungle* by Upton Sinclair
 - **Time:** 30 minute of in-person class-time
 - **Materials:** hard copies of the first, five pages of *The Jungle*; a highlighter; and a writing utensil
 - **Purpose:** Introduce the work to the students and engage their interest in the historical context of the work. The students will be tasked with finishing the novel outside of class time



Introduction of Lesson

- To begin, prime the topic by asking students how safe they think their food is. Discuss as a large class for a few minutes.



- Next, show a short, biographical video about Sinclair available on YouTube.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eu7RMt-X7gc> (1:36)
- Then, discuss a famous quote by Sinclair: **"I aimed at the public's heart, and by accident hit its stomach."**

Explain the significance of the quote in relation to *The Jungle*.



Pre-Reading: Previewing the Text and Mining for Details

- **Ask students to preview the text by:**
 - Contemplating the title of the text: “The Jungle” and the dedication “To the workmen of America.” Discuss as a large group.
 - Noting the year published and the author's name.
 - Reading only the first, two sentences from the first, three paragraphs from *The Jungle* and mining ONE or TWO important details from each paragraph’s first lines in the margins of their hard copies of the text.

Ask a few students to share the details they mined.



Pre-Reading: Accessing Prior Knowledge and Determining Purpose

- Ask students to respond in writing to the questions below.
- They can write on the back of the last page of the hard copy. Students should number their answers.

1) What do I already know about food safety in America? Specifically, what agency ensures that our commercial food production is safe? Why do they monitor our food production?

2) What is my purpose for reading *The Jungle*? Stated another way: why does this historical account matter? Why should we care?



During Reading: Coding

- Ask students to silently read the five page excerpt on their own while simultaneously Coding the text.
 - When they encounter any information that is confusing or unclear, ask them to highlight that text and write the letter “U” for unclear. The Jungle has Lithuanian words and phrases. Students should write “U” next to words they are unfamiliar with.
 - When they read any information that they are aware of due to prior knowledge, ask them to highlight that text in a different color and write the letters “PK” for previous knowledge.
- In whole class discussion, spend a few minutes asking students what information they highlighted and coded as “Unclear.” Also, discuss the material they marked as “Prior Knowledge.”
- As a group, resolve any questions students may have about the text’s content.



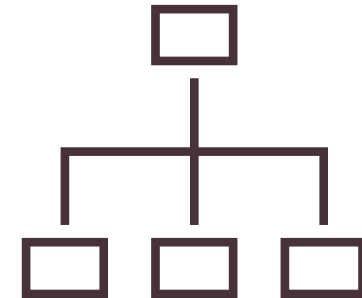
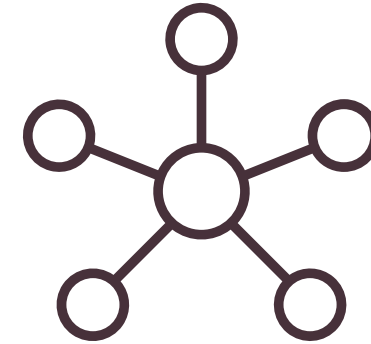
Post-Reading: Reading for Understanding

- Ask students to **write a one-minute essay** on the back of the hard copy of the *The Jungle*.
- They should identify and discuss the **five**, most important pieces of information they learned from the pages.
- The one-minute essay should be five-to-six sentences in length, at minimum.
- Once complete, ask several students to volunteer to read their one minute-essays.



Post-Reading: Concept Maps

- Ask the students to draw a concept map on any free space on their hard copies of *The Jungle*.
- The concept map can look like one of the examples to the right, or students can be creative and choose their own shapes.
- The concept map should include the following:
 - The **five pieces of information** identified in the One Minute Essay from the previous slide.
 - **Any connections among** the five pieces of information – students can draw lines or arrows.
 - A **title** for the concept map. Given the five pieces of information and the connections between them, what does the map represent? Avoid obvious titles such as: food safety, or *The Jungle*.



Concluding the Lesson and Prediction

- As the lesson concludes, ask students if the reading strategies applied helped them have a better understanding of the text, and if so, which ones.
 - Consider applying those strategies again with future reading assignments.
- In a large group discussion, ask the students what they are looking forward to knowing more about as they continue to read *The Jungle*.
- Specifically, ask the students to spend a few minutes predicting what might happen in *The Jungle*.



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Thank you for your time!

Questions? Contact me at:

Lana.c.myers@lonestar.edu

Bldg. G, Room 221G