

Writing Spaces

Assignments & Activities Archive

Reading Against the Machine

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Overview

In this activity, students practice using generative AI tools as reading partners while strengthening their metacognitive awareness through the Reading Apprenticeship framework. Reading Apprenticeship is a framework that supports students in developing expert reading habits by making thinking processes visible and shared. It integrates four key dimensions (the social, personal, cognitive, and knowledge-building) to help students collaborate, build confidence, apply strategies, and deepen their understanding of complex texts across disciplines (Greenleaf et al.). Thus, not only is the activity intended to strengthen reading transfer across assignments, but disciplines as well.

Additionally, this activity considers how the Reading Apprenticeship framework informs the three pillars of AI literacy that my research colleague, Jaclyn Hilberg, and I have developed over the last few years, which borrows from Sylvia Scribner's "Literacy in Three Metaphors" and considers AI literacy as being enacted through adaptation, personal integrity, and critical engagement.

Time Commitment

This activity would require at least one full class session to implement. It is recommended that instructors focus on the Personal and Social Dimensions the first time. However, given the interconnected nature of these questions, activities could be scaffolded out across at least four different reading discussion assignments to account for the different dimensions.

Materials

The following tables provide questions that pertain to each RA dimension and AI literacy principle. These questions can be modified to suit your needs.

Table 1: Social Dimension Discussion Questions for AI Literacy

Adaptability	Personal Integrity	Critical Engagement
<i>How does comparing AI's explanation with my peers' and my own interpretations help me adapt my reading strategies?</i>	<i>When classmates and I discuss AI's response, how do we decide what counts as original thinking versus AI-assisted insight?</i>	<i>What questions could I raise in class that challenge or extend AI's explanation, and how might peer dialogue sharpen that critique?</i>

Table 2: Personal Dimension Discussion Questions for AI Literacy

Adaptability	Personal Integrity	Critical Engagement
<i>When I used AI to clarify this text, how did I adjust my own approach to reading? Did it help me persist with a difficult passage?</i>	<i>How do I ensure that I'm using AI to support my learning without letting it replace my own ideas or voice?</i>	<i>How did comparing my own interpretation with AI's shape my confidence in evaluating, questioning, or resisting its answer?</i>

Table 3: Cognitive Dimension Discussion Questions for AI Literacy

Adaptability	Personal Integrity	Critical Engagement
<i>What strategy did I use to decide when to accept, modify, or reject AI's explanation?</i>	<i>How can I track which insights come from AI versus my own close reading so I remain transparent and honest in my work?</i>	<i>Where does AI's explanation align with or distort the author's words, tone, or argument, and how can I verify this through rereading?</i>

Table 4: Knowledge-Building Dimension Discussion Questions for AI Literacy

Adaptability	Personal Integrity	Critical Engagement
<i>How does the context AI provides help me build knowledge I can apply in other courses or readings?</i>	<i>What responsibilities do I have to double-check AI's background information before relying on it in academic work?</i>	<i>What gaps, biases, or oversights in AI's explanation do I notice, and how can I use my own research or disciplinary learning to fill them?</i>

Activity Process

- To begin, students are assigned to read and annotate a complex passage for homework. Annotations can include any of the following:
 - Questions or observations about what the text is

saying (i.e. content)

- Questions or observations about what the text is doing (i.e. rhetorical features)
 - Confusion about the text
 - Connections to any previous course content or content in another courses
- In the following class session, students return to class with their annotated texts. At the start of class, the instructor demonstrates how to prompt AI to make observations about what the assigned text is both saying *and* doing.
 - The instructor then goes through the AI responses to the text and engages the class in a quick discussion about what they notice about the AI's notes on the text (*What are the strengths of this response to the texts, if any? Does the response obviously omit or distort anything from the assigned text?*)
 - The students are then asked to individually prompt an AI tool to provide them with a similar overview of the assigned text. Students are given a few moments to independently compare the AI's response to the text with their own annotations from homework.
 - After approximately five minutes, the instructor then gives students time to independently respond in writing to the set of questions across the Personal Dimension of the RA/AI Literacy questions in the table above (*When I used AI to clarify this text, how did I adjust my own approach to reading? Did it help me persist with a difficult passage? How do I ensure that I'm using AI to support my learning without letting it replace my own ideas or voice? How did comparing my own interpretation with AI's shape my confidence in evaluating,*

questioning, or resisting its answer?)

- The instructor then asks students to arrange themselves in pairs (or small groups) to discuss responses to the set of questions. Students are asked to take notes about their classmates' experiences.
- After approximately five minutes, the instructor brings the entire group together to discuss their answers to this first group of discussion questions. Students are asked to listen and take further notes about the responses of their peers regarding their various experiences comparing notes with AI.
- The instructor then prompts students to independently respond in writing to the questions in the Social Dimension row (*How does comparing AI's explanation with my peers' and my own interpretations help me adapt my reading strategies? When classmates and I discuss AI's response, how do we decide what counts as original thinking versus AI-assisted insight? What questions could I raise in class that challenge or extend AI's explanation, and how might peer dialogue sharpen that critique?*)
- Finally, the instructor brings students back together one final time to discuss responses to these questions.
- (The questions from the other dimensions can be integrated into the activity if time permits, or at a later point in the course.)

Learning Outcomes

Students engaging in this activity will:

- Develop a stronger metacognitive awareness of their own reading habits

- Interrogate the strengths and limitations of using AI as a reading partner
- Discover the way(s) in which their own reading practices compare with that of their peers

Learning Accommodations

- All reading materials should be provided in accordance with ADA and institutional accessibility standards.
- Students with relevant accommodations should be permitted to use the text-to-speech function to engage with all AI tools.

Works Cited

Greenleaf, Cynthia, et al. *Reading for Understanding: How Reading Apprenticeship Improves Disciplinary Learning in Secondary and College Classrooms*. 3rd ed., Jossey-Bass, 2023.

Further Reading

Scribner, Sylvia. "Literacy in Three Metaphors." *American Journal of Education*, vol. 93, no. 1, 1984, pp. 6-21.