

How to Use this *Book of Time* Effectively

When you begin reading a new book, especially a *Great Book*, do the following:

Check the author's birth and death dates, as well as the date the work was published.

Read the chapter or section in Spielvogel's *Western Civilization* that covers the time frame of the author's life. Check out the book's companion site for helps in learning this material: http://www.wadsworth.com/cgi-wadsworth/course_products_wp.pl?fid=M20b&discipline_number=21&product_isbn_issn=0534600069.

In *Timetables of History* (or similar fold-out timeline charts), look up the year of the book's publication. Also look 10 to 50 years on either side of this date to find out what was going on in the world during this time period. Make a note of anything you feel is significant or interesting.

Read the corresponding section of the DK *History of the World*, as well as the Kingfisher *History Encyclopedia* (if the DK one is sketchy), paying particular attention to the non-western civilizations.

Then, read about the selected time period from at least one other reference work. If this is an American work or discovery, be sure to check the Carson texts and others on our shelves. (If in doubt about which, ASK!)

Write a one to two page summary of this historical information, setting the book in historical perspective. Give basic information about the author, major historical events taking place during the author's lifespan, the author's county, and the author's purposes in writing. Summarize great events going on in the rest of the world. File this page under "Context" in your notebook.

Put significant dates into this timeline book: the birth and death of the author in one color, the date of publication of the work in another color, significant dates from history in yet a third color. You may decide to use a color coding for all dates of a particular type: **political dates** in purple, **explorations** in green, **fine arts** in orange, **people** in red, **scientific discoveries** and **inventions** in blue, etc.

Determine the book's genre. From *The Well-Educated Mind*, read the history of this genre and the instructions on how to read the book in question. Take notes on this reading and keep the notes filed under "Principles of Reading" in your notebook. If *TWEM* provides a synopsis of the book, read it. Then, read through the book, pencil in hand, following the suggestions outlined in *TWEM* and *HTRAB* by Adler. File all notes you take on a book under "Book Notes" in your notebook.

Discuss the book with someone. Talk about its strengths, weaknesses, purposes. Have a conversation about the ideas and whether or not they are valid.

Finally, write about the text. This is a flexible assignment. You may write a report, a critique, an essay proving some point about the book, or an analysis of the book's ideas. See your English texts, IEW resources, and the various Rhetoric texts for help with your writing.

NOTE: Reading 8 classics in this manner each year is the minimum, 12 is better, 18 is stellar.