

How to mark a book by mortimer j adler essay example

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Mortimer Jerome Adler through his essay, “ How to Mark a Book” is trying to convey the message that real owners of books are the ones who utilize a variety of bookmarks that help develop a better insight of the book. He explains that competent reading is done when one is able to “ read and write between the lines”. Moreover, Adler emphasizes on the point that books in your possession should be used entirely, but if they are borrowed instead of purchased should be kept clean and unmarked. Merely purchasing does not show full possession of the book, or having a library at home does not show that you are a book lover.

Adler defines three kinds of book owners, the first who merely purchase best sellers for decorating on their shelves, second who purchase books and read only a few of them where as the others remain new, and third kind of owners may have few or many books but each book is marked all over and tattered and decrepitude due to frequent use. These are the real owners of books. People purchase books to keep it as a piece of decoration like a statue or a painting, this is disagreeable as books are meant to be read thoroughly.

Marking a book and making notes of the ideas written in it keeps one awake and conscious towards what is being read. Thinking that by keeping a book clean means paying respect to the author is incorrect because what the author has written is more important than merely the binding and the typing. Adler proposes that active reading is necessary in order to understand the content, and by marking a book and noting responses makes you understand and remember what you read. Furthermore, he says books that are read for pleasure can be studied in a relaxed and more comfortable environment,

whereas a book which imparts knowledge needs to be read actively so as to remember the concepts. According to him it is considered important to seek a deep understanding of the authors words and clearing of your mind from any questions or confusions, and also disagreements with the author's ideas. This can help one develop an improved conception of the text and also will help in recalling when reading was interrupted.

Mortimer recommends a number of ways to mark a book in order to review it later on. For instance, text can be underlined or highlighted, vertical lines and asterisks or stars can be used, numbers, circling and writing notes next to the points also helps in marking a book. The blank pages in the front and back of the book can be used for developing a key or an index or for summarizing the main points made in the book. Inserting separate pages into the book is another way to placing your ideas in the book, which could not be written due to lack of space.

Alders' advice that grasping the content of the book is more important than the time consumed in reading it is worth mentioning. He describes that active reading will slow down the reading process but improve grasping power. These books with your notes act as intellectual diaries and hence cannot be lent to friends because it will give away all your thoughts.

After reading the essay by Adler I understood that marking a book is essential while reading because it keeps you awake, conscious and active, in thinking. Your thinking is expressed in words and finally writing develops your thoughts on the ideas expressed by the author. As portrayed by Adler

an active reader is “ having a conversation with the author”. Eye opening statements in the essay remind me that my books are not a show piece to be kept on the book shelf and set aside for their beautiful cover page rather are something to be read and understood in order to pay respect to the author for his efforts and also to gain immeasurable knowledge from them.

This essay by Adler clarifies the difference between pleasure reading and reading for comprehension. It made me realize that I mostly do pleasure reading and seldom active reading as proposed by him. He has changed the views of how to read by persuading the readers to change their style and slow down and make notes for a better insight. A good reader actually understands and owns a book, whereas, one who reads fast does not necessarily make a good reader. I have read many books just for the sake of reading, but cannot recall the important points now because I just read through them without marking.

I disagree with his point of using books without considering their neatness. My books are not “ dog eared and dilapidated”, “ shaken and loosen by continual use” because I believe in the thought that if you own a book and love it you will take care of it and make sure it is not ruined. Books are precious as jewels and the knowledge given by them are as worthy as diamonds. However, you wear the jewels but not destroy them; similarly use the information given in the book by making notes on separate papers and inserting in between the pages, as suggested by Adler.

His description of the different types of book owners seems like an eye opener for the readers of this essay because after reading it I have realized that I have a few books lying on my bookshelf which I did buy but have not read them. I do clean them from dust and set them up just to keep the bookshelf well organized and did not realize that it was more important to read them than just using them to fill my bookshelf.

His ideas of marking a book through a variety of techniques are very helpful. I also highlight and use asterisks and stars and I also use post-its on the pages as a mark and refer to it later to recall the important points that I came across in my book. These act as an index too because I write the key words on it, and moreover; this also does not destroy the book that I own.

Overall, the essay by Mortimer Jerome Adler “ How to Mark a Book” has helped improve reading skills. Reading any text requires concentration in order to read between the lines. Adler suggests that active reading is similar to conversing with the author. After reading the essay when I went back to a book which I had read sometime back I found out that I do not know the main points in the book because I never marked any. Now I have started reading it again by following his simple steps for marking while reading I have surely modified my reading to active reading and discussion and hence developed a fascinating and knowledgeable experience.

Adler’s essay provides information on how to read a book so thoroughly that it “ flows in your blood streams” teaches us to completely consume the book. Utilizing some of his techniques myself I can guarantee that they are

successful, however, scribbling notes all over the pages might be a little too much for the book. I just insert a paper in the book with my notes.