

# Reader response how to mark a book essay

[Literature](#), [Russian Literature](#)



In Mortimer Adler's essay "How to Mark a Book," he makes some incredibly compelling arguments for writing in a book as you read and understand it. In his mind, marking books is a way to interact more with the text and be a part of it, instead of just letting it pass over you. By marking your book, you are forcing yourself to pay attention to the work and permitting its ideas to invade your mind. This makes it more than just a piece of trifle that you are reading in order to waste time – it is something that will actually enrich your life.

As I read it, I could not help but be completely wrapped up in his arguments – he presents them sensibly and without an ounce of irony. Adler states that "if reading is to accomplish anything more than passing time, it must be active"; this statement stuck out at me as the ultimate point of the essay.

The overall goal of marking a book is to take a more active interest in what it has to say. This is the aim of reading itself; to actually absorb the information and let it shape and alter your understanding of the world around you. "The point is not to see how many of them you can get through, but rather how many can get through you -- how many you can make your own," says Adler, which is a powerful statement to me, as it makes me consider just how much I have taken from the books I have read, as I would just read them and move on to the next.

I can also understand the virtue of using writing as the means by which to absorb yourself more fully in the work - "the physical act of writing, with your own hand, brings words and sentences more sharply before your mind and preserves them better in your memory." It creates a closer connection in your memory if you have that tactile sensation to work from. It's almost as if

you are telling your brain to retain the idea or concept that interested you by virtue of the act of marking itself.

Adler finishes the essay with a phrase that affected me very deeply – “ your books are as much a part of you as your head or your heart.” Especially when marking your books, you are bringing yourself closer to them, getting to an intimate level with books that you would be hard pressed to find with other possessions. Books engage your mind when you allow them to, and this is what Adler seems to want to say to the reader with this essay.

Marking is just a means by which to give the brain that call to action, making it pay attention to what the book has to contribute to your life and your understanding of the world.

This essay made me think a lot about the role of books in my life. As he implies, there is often far too much of an emphasis on being able to read books as quickly as possible, as if to say that reading is an experience that needs to ‘ be done with’. This treats reading like a chore, when it should be the opposite of that – it should be enjoyable, thrilling, enlightening, entertaining, and moving. In this way, it is vital that we maintain a relationship with our books, marking being one interesting and effective means of doing so.