

Reading Strategies: Noting for Gist

Reading an assigned text can often be a daunting task; thankfully, there are several strategies to help students make their way through the entirety of the piece. One such strategy is called noting for gist (Giltrow et al., 2009, p. 59). When noting for gist, readers write down key information from the text as they read. In other words, they annotate the text (Henderson, 2008, p. 59). This strategy is very beneficial as it requires the reader to engage with the reading material by regularly stopping and checking in with themselves to ensure that they understand what they have read. It also allows the reader to be able to reference key information from the reading at a later time, without having to reread the entire piece.

How it is done:

1. Read a portion of the text – the length of the portion could be a paragraph or a page depending on how content-rich the text is.
2. After reading the portion of text, identify what you think the main idea of that portion is. Ask yourself: What is important? What does the author want me to know or understand after reading this?
3. Write the main idea down ***in your own words***. Putting the information in your own words requires you to think about what you have read and how you would explain it to someone else. This deepens your understanding of the material.
4. Be sure to keep your gist concise. Try using key words and phrases rather than complete sentences. This gist can be written in the margin of the text or on sticky notes and placed over the portion of text. If you are reading your text on a screen, you can use the annotation feature to record your gists.
5. Do this for each section of the reading.

Once this has been done for the entire reading, the reader will have an outline of the text that can be quickly referenced at a later time. This can be useful for when you are writing a paper and want to use information from a reading as well as for when you are reviewing course material for an upcoming test or exam.

Here is an example of what noting for gist may look like:

The coastal nature of the province (with rivers providing coast access to those inland) made for a secure economic situation and stable life for First Nations on the Northwest Coast (McMillan 1995). Cultures and societies in this area made extensive use of the natural resources in the area, with salmon and cedar forming the essential base (McMillan, 1995). Totem poles, wooden housing structures and dug-out canoes all indicate the importance of the forests in the region, while salmon comprised both a major food source, and provided tools made from fish bones (McMillan 1995). As with First Nations peoples in other North American areas, culture and society are rooted in the place of ancestral and community experiences. The following section will explore how this anchoring in a single area and a perceived harmony with nature often attracts tourists to British Columbia.

The history of First Nations peoples in British Columbia cannot be discussed without some mention of the offences of European settlers who began to settle the area in earnest during the gold rushes of the mid 1800s. The years following were devastating to First Nations groups, who had suddenly to deal with an onslaught of Europeans bent on assimilating or banishing First Nations from their traditional lands. It is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss in detail the activities and behaviours of these Eurocentric groups, but any First Nations tourist should be aware that issues of poverty, land claims, mental health, alcoholism and culture decimation are still a very real part of life for most First Nations communities in British Columbia (for more information see for example Muckle, 2007).

Natural resources
important -
used in a variety
of ways
this use of the land
brings tourism

history of colonialism
awareness of the
effects on First
Nations peoples
imperative

References

- Giltrow, J., Gooding, R., Burgoyne, D., & Sawatsky, M. (2009). *Academic writing: An introduction*. 2nd ed. Toronto: Broadview Press.
- Henderson, E. (2008). *The active reader: Strategies for academic reading and writing*. Don Mills: Oxford University Press.