**Reading Like a Writer**

“Man, sometimes it takes you a long time
to sound like yourself.” Miles Davis

“Writing is an exploration.
You start from nothing and learn as you go.” E. L. Doctorow

One of the most important things you can learn this semester is to read like a writer. Each and every piece of writing you encounter can be treated as a one-on-one class with that author. It can inform you as to the format, style, and expectations of a given genre. How do we do that?

**Strong writers read and read and read:**

* Read *critically*. Your goal is not to criticize a given work, but to perform a careful, analytical evaluation of the text.
* Read *slowly*. You cannot skim once and evaluate fairly. Spend some time with a work. Skim initially, but then re-read with care to gain everything you can.
* Read *good* writing. Garbage in=garbage out. Consider, if everything you are currently reading is at or below where you are already writing, what can you learn?
* Read *outside* your field. You may find surprising connections and will learn from a variety of styles and genres.
* Read *in* your field. Read what the leaders in your discipline are writing and reading. Look for interviews or essays to find out who influenced them.
* Read *what* you want to write, not *about* what you want to write. How to essays can inform to a degree—the absolute best way to get to know a genre is to dive right in and read the genre.

Reading like a writer means you read not only for what the work contains but also to examine the form & structure of the work.

If it’s difficult to understand, translate it (paraphrase or summarize). If the structure is difficult to see, create a reverse outline.

* What was said & how it was said.
* Keep asking why? Why did the author use this order? These supporting details? Why include that event? Why didn’t the author include…? You have permission to be four years old again. Why? Why? Why?

**We are more likely to remember what we discover than what we are told.**