**What is a good reader:**

The good reader is actively involved with the text through thinking, questioning, and evaluating. But these steps must be preceded by a more fundamental activity; decoding\_meaning the process of recognizing the individual words on the page, you must first pronounce the words as you read and if you are unsure about the meaning of any unfamiliar words, look them up in the dictionary.

Once you have decoded the words, you can begin the comprehension step. Good comprehension requires more than simply knowing what each word means. The real meaning of any text lies in the relationship that the words have with one another. First, ask yourself, what is the author saying? What is the main idea of the passage? What does he or she want me to understand about the main idea? Try to paraphrase what each sentence says. Then look at the relationship between the words and sentences. Do you see a pattern? How is the main idea supported? Once you have asked these questions, then you can begin the final step\_ evaluating what the author has said. Do the ideas seem reasonable to you ? has the writer provided sufficient support? What other information do you need before you can intelligently accept or reject the ideas? How do the author’s ideas fit with what you know about the subject? Is there any evidence of bias?

To repeat: the good reader is an active reader, thinking and questioning all the way through the text.the explanatory material and exercises in the next semester will give you ample practice with these skills.

To illustrate what the good reader does subconsciously, let us practice with a short paragraph:

***“Marriage was not designed as a mechanism for providing friendship, erotic experience, romantic love, personal fulfillment, continuous lay psychotherapy, or recreation. The western European family was not designed to carry a lifelong load of highly emotional romantic freight. Given its present structure, it simply has to fail when asked to do so. The very idea of an irrevocable contract obligating the parties concerned to a lifetime of romantic effort is utterly absurd****.”*

*Mervin Cadwallader,*

*“Marriage as a wreteched institution” Atlantic Monthly*

**STEP 1:**

As you read through the paragraph, first determine if there are any words whose meaning you are not sure of. Three words, in particular, might cause some difficulty: lay, freight, irrevocable.

Example :

1/ Which of the three adjective definitions appears to be the most appropriate for “lay psychotherapy?”

1. Pertaining to, coming from, or serving the laity; secular: a lay preacher
2. Practicing psychoanalysis but not having a medical degree: a lay analyst.
3. Of, or typical of, the average or common man: lay opinion.

**Step 2:**

The next step is to go through the passage one sentence at a time, paraphrasing each to yourself. Then, using a sheet of paper, paraphrase Cadwallader’s paragraph.

**Step 3:**

Now that you have restated the author’s ideas, you can briefly summarize the paragraph.