

Note: Brooke Notes pair appropriately with any reading assignment in ENGL1105 or ENGL1106, but they are especially well-matched with the reading in ENGL1106 that builds up to research writing informed by secondary sources. Brooke Notes can also serve as the basis for in-class discussion; they can accumulate into individual or team collections, and they can easily be shared to foster collaborative reading and resource sharing, particularly during the early, exploratory stages of a project's development.

## Brooke Notes Overview

*If it's worth reading, it's worth annotating.*

Research involves continuous, immersive reading and writing. Often, when we collect an article and begin to read it, we find usable snippets that we want to keep and comment upon for future returns. Some of these notes will expand to become cornerstones in your larger written research project. Others will turn out to be peripheral to your account. In both cases, the practice of selective excerpting and annotation is a vital complement to successful research writing.

Brooke Notes are a note-keeping system designed to be routine, generative, usable, and accumulative throughout and beyond your undergraduate studies. The notes fortify the practice of self-selected reading appropriate for research writing. This approach to note-keeping, which I credit to Collin Brooke, takes as its first principle that if it is worth reading, it is worth annotating. Even more, reading as a part of research writing means that the notes should be *right-sized* (i.e., neither excessively thorough nor too thin to be useful later on) and *built-up* in a database that you can search later on. You will post your notes below and also save them in your Google Folder, accordingly.

Think of these notes as a space for drafting, for provisional thinking, for posing questions, and for exploring possibilities at the edge of your work-in-progress. In this sense, by note-keeping regularly, you will create an additional layer useful for revisiting as you refine your thinking and as you revisit key readings you gathered along the way. You may self-select reading from all variety of sources: books, scholarly journals, specialized encyclopedias, library databases, news outlets, blogs, and so on. The process of identifying the readings is, of course, part of the challenge with this work. Which sources will you choose? How will you locate them? How exploratory or how focused are you inclined to be when beginning a research project? In discerning what to read, you are welcome to consult with Newman librarians, with your professor (or with other professors you have worked with in previous courses), or with peers as you self-select materials to account for here.

Here are a few general provisions for Brooke Notes:

- Develop your notes entry while the reading is reasonably fresh, preferably within a few hours of reading and never more than a day later.
- Set a timer. Try to keep the development of your notes entry to under an hour.
- One Brooke Notes entry should be between 400-1000 words. Longer entries make sense for complex or inspirational articles and book-length works. Briefer entries are appropriate for most academic articles.
- Such note-keeping practices are habitual and accumulative; they will over time amount to a personal archive invaluable to the development of lit reviews and a reliable, lasting resource of personal knowledge.

Learn more about the rationale for this approach and the basic guidelines for developing a Brooke Notes entry over here: <http://www.cgbrooke.net/2014/01/16/reading-notes/>. Each entry should—at a minimum—include the following:

- **A title.** Lastname, Firstname. Title of article, abbreviated, if necessary.
- **A full citation adhering to MLA or APA style.** This should be complete and correct, ready to copy into a bibliography, references list, or works cited.
- **A 3-5 sentence summary, or an abstract.** This should capture concisely what is the focus of the reading. If an abstract is already available, it is fine to copy/paste it into your notes. But writing your own abstract is excellent practice, too, as such summaries are challenging and require a thorough sense of the reading.
- **Keywords/tags.** A list of 5-10 keywords or phrases that index the entry in terms of important words and phrases, approaches it takes to research, sites/materials/objects of analysis (i.e., what it is about), and prominent names or topics.
- **2-3 citations.** These are sources cited in the reading that you consider especially important, insightful, and possibly worthy of your tracking them down as reading cascades into further reading. Include the full citation information.
- **2-3 quotations.** These are gem passages, either for the ways they capture striking ideas, pose questions, or connect with things you are thinking about, working on, or considering important. Include a parenthetical page or paragraph number to make the quotation easy to locate later on.
- **1-2 questions.** These are questions you formulate that articulate the edges of wonder and prime further exploration.

This approach offers a method and well-defined structure for note-keeping. While this format is not intended to be prohibitive or excessively strict, it is set up to get you accustomed to a note-keeping regimen that will run parallel to your researched project. Furthermore, because your entry will be posted in this space where your peers can read it, your work with sources may enrich their research efforts, as well. Through the first part of the semester, individual Brooke Notes will also have an accumulative effect, pooling into a resource that might be useful to your peers with interests related to yours.