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# SQ3R: One Way to be a Critical and Better Reader

By Nelly Martin

**SQ3R? What is that?** It sounds familiar for some people, but for others do not. It is used to boost the reading ability and to make students become critical readers. This technique is specially designed for reading for information. It is reading for the texts or books consisting of so much knowledge and sometimes complicated structure that often makes the students get difficulties in comprehending it. It is because the activities involved in this skill are encoding and decoding the data in order to comprehend the whole text.

It does take a valuable effort to apprehend the message conveyed by the writer. So, it can be concluded beyond any doubt that reading requires strategy in order to comprehend the text. As approved by Johnson (WPC, 1990) that defines reading as a complex behavior involving conscious and unconscious use of strategies, including problem solving strategies to build a model of the meaning, which the writer is assumed to have attended.

Adam (Longman, 1991) endorsed that reading is a complex process in which the recognition and comprehension of written symbols are influenced by readers' perceptual skills, decoding skills, experiences, language background, mind sets and reasoning abilities as they anticipate meaning on the basis of what has been said.

SQ3R is one of the strategies due to the fact it is very useful to absorb the text. It will help readers have mental framework towards the text. Having the mental framework will

assist them in comprehending the text. Readers will have the schemata by which it will facilitate them during their reading process. As the psychological research stated that people tend to remember more if the learning and absorbing process are connected to their emotions. It will facilitate them to get the most out of their reading. Another advantage offered by this technique is the time span of reading can be reduced.

## An Up-Close and in Detail of SQ3R

SQ3R stands for *Survey, Question, Read, Recite/Recall, and Review*.

The first technique is survey in which the readers gather the information necessary to focus and formulate goals. It also can be viewed as previewing activity. This stage helps the reader to prepare their mind about the subject they are about to have. They prepare their mindset and activate their schemata so that it will be very helpful to grasp the information.

In this stage, readers are to do some following activities: first, they are asked to look at the title and guess what article they are going to read. Then, they have to look at all the chapters and the titles, the headings, sub-headings. The steps done are to prepare their mindset to get the general impression of the text. Afterwards, they pay attention to the charts, diagrams and pictures, the italics and bold words. Next, they scan the information in the introduction and conclusion parts. The last

*Siapa yang luput belajar pada waktu muda, takbirkan saja empat kali sebagai tanda kematiannya sia-sia.—Imam Syafi'i*



step is they skim the first and the last paragraphs in order to get the general knowledge which will build the mental framework.

The activity the readers should do in this stage is to read swiftly and glance the information of the whole stuff of the books or the texts. This stage only takes 5-10 minutes.

The purpose of the stage is to prepare the readers to the subject so that they know what materials they are going to read and it also helps the memory retain in their mind.

The second technique is question helping the readers' mind engage and concentrate. Reading with purpose will ease the reading process. Having questions whilst reading will have readers set the purpose in reading.

Here are some tips of setting the questions. First, they are to use the blank space of the book page to write down the questions. Then, they are to ask some questions while they are surveying and then they jot them down in the blank space of the books. They are also to question the title and what the purpose of the chapter. This step helps them to set the purpose in reading. For instance, the title of an article is Testing Spoken English as A Second Language. The question risen is "What is Testing Spoken English?", "How to Test Spoken English?". The next questions are upon the headings and subheadings and then they ask some questions on the last and the first sentence.

This technique helps the mind engage with the text. Their mind will actively search for the information they need. The active process will make the mind engage with the text.

In conclusion, the process happened is not only reading the WORDS but is more likely finding the answer they need for their questions.

The activity happened in their brain is looking for the information needed rather than simply looking at words.

The third one is to read meaning to fill in the information around the mental structures the readers have been building. In this process, the readers are going to seek for the answers of the earlier-made questions. They try to find the answer by focusing on the information, they require to answer. They try to scan and skim the information and also can skip the less significant information. They are highly suggested not to read word by word. In so doing, they are not expected to know every word as long as the difficult words don't impede their comprehension. Consequently, they are expected to be able to deduce and guess the meaning from the context.

The purpose is they are able to know which the main ideas are and can identify and separate them from supporting details - both the major and the minor ones. Besides, they may add some questions towards the text, if there are some additional ones that they acquire whilst reading.

The fourth step is to recite or recall. This step is used to retrain the readers mind to concentrate and learn as it reads. After reading for one chapter, they are to recite and recall the information they get either by speaking or by writing. In this step, they are going to respond to the questions created earlier. The most important thing that they have to remember is they have to do it by using their own words, not the author's.

The last one is to review in which the readers refine their mental organization and begin building memory. This last technique is a compulsory thing to do. It requires them to review the whole chapter by answering the whole questions using their own words. This

*Not what I have but what I do is my kingdom.—Thomas Carlyle*

technique should be done regularly. It can be done immediately after reading, then done hourly, daily and weekly or even monthly and yearly. It really helps them retain the information.

### **Application of SQ3R in the classroom**

This technique can be applied for reading for information, but never for reading for pleasure. It is significantly useful for reading the texts containing a large number of facts and details (specifics). This kind of reading requires an overall understanding of the information presented in order to process details. Therefore, SQ3R is highly recommended to be applied for.

I once used it to my class- an advanced class consisting of about 15 students. I found that my students most of the time find reading for information is difficult. It can be shown from their reading results. As it has been aforementioned, it does take an effortful skill to read for information. I then concluded that reading English texts are profoundly hard for them. As a proof, the problem that I often encounter is the students can not fully comprehend the text. They read; however, they can't fully understand the text.

Then, I applied the technique. The following is the procedure I did in my class.

### **Activities and Procedures**

1. I distributed the reading text. It was a two-page article entitled Manolo Blahnik - a biography.
2. I asked the students to look at the titles/ headings, sub-titles/sub-headings.
3. After that, I demanded that they made some queries regarding the text such as, what are they going to have? Who is Manolo Blahnik? What is so special

about him? And other questions which were created by them.

4. Students were asked to write down some question on the blank space of the article as they were surveying or after doing it.
5. Then, they were asked to read and find the information needed to answer the questions.
6. I asked the students to recall the information they get once they had finished reading a section by answering the questions using their own words.
7. Then, I asked my students to review all the information they got after they had finished reading the text.
8. Finally, I gave them some questions to test their comprehension of the reading text.

The results turned out to be very good. They almost could answer the questions given. For me, it was a success. However, I only asked them a two-page article as the way to train them of the technique. At the end of the lesson, I informed them that it will be very useful and beneficial if it is applied to some thicker articles, texts and books. As mentioned earlier that it will be very advantageous for reading the texts containing a large number of facts and details (specifics).

From the aforementioned explanation, it can be surmised that reading can be difficult for some students, especially for those who speak English as foreign language. However, there are some techniques that are able to overcome it and one of which is SQ3R. The technique is simply applicable. It is able to boost the understanding toward reading. [ ]

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*The basic idea behind teaching is to teach people what they need to know.—Carl Rogers*