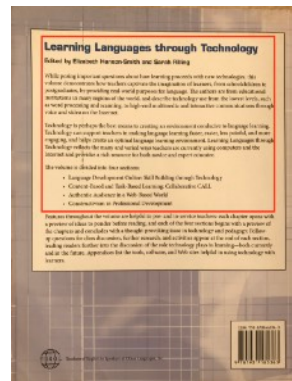
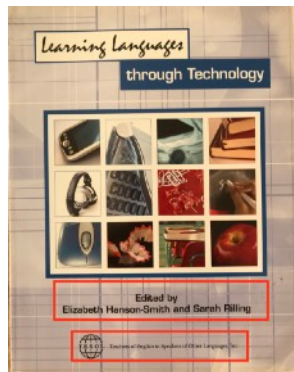


How to Read a Secondary Source

Adapted from *Reading, Writing, and Researching for History* Patrick Rael, Bowdoin College, 2004.

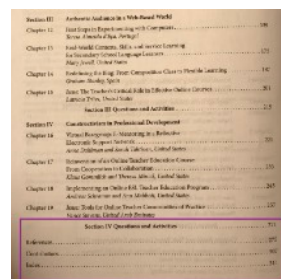
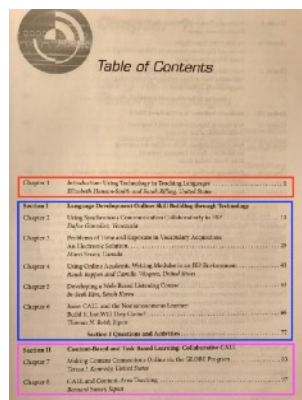
Reading secondary sources is a skill which may be acquired and must be practiced. Reading academic material well is an active process that is very different from pleasure reading.

Read the title. Define every word in the title; look up any unknown words. Think about what the title promises for the book. Look at the table of contents. This is your "menu" for the book.



Read a book from the outside in. The back cover of the book may provide you ideas or pathways on how to simplify access to the information in the books.

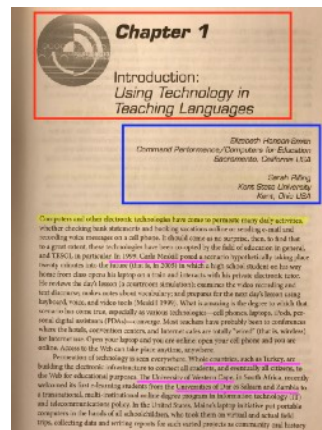
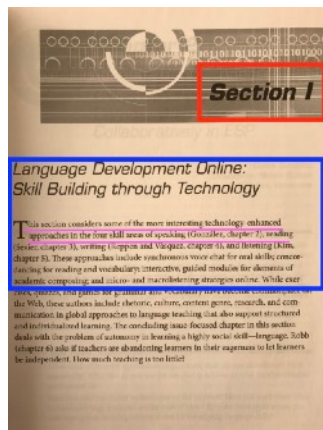
Read the table of contents. How is the book organised? If there are sections, how are themes presented? Are there conclusions and section questions? What are the topics in each section?



Pay attention to the contributors. This insight may lead you to other meaningful sources.

Treat the introduction to each section as a museum guide. **This explains to you how information was curated.**

After doing this, you should have a good idea of the section's major themes and arguments.



Read chapters from the outside in. Quickly read the first and last paragraph of each chapter. Do not miss the chance to highlight any other source of information that is cited, mentioned or addressed in the paragraphs.