Context:
I assign this in class reading activity early in the semester when my students are reading a couple of challenging articles on literacy to begin class discussion on the topic and to address the ways they need to read the materials they gather through research. The activity teaches students strategies for better interpreting (and recording those interpretations) the research materials they gather.

Students come to class having already read the articles so they are prepared to revisit them and do the following (I lead them through each prompt one at a time, giving them time to work and ask questions).

Interpreting an Article

Part 1: Students work alone

1) Underline the line or couple of lines that identifies the author’s main point.
2) Make a list of the minor claims the author uses to support the main point.
3) Make a mini-outline of how the author organizes the essay to prove/discuss the main point.
4) Jot notes in the margin to identify the different kinds of evidence -- primary and secondary -- the author uses. For instance, notes use of personal experience or observation, interviews, facts and statistics, quotations from other texts.
5) Respond to the text by jotting questions, comments, and responses to different points in the essay. Give your feedback to the essay as you read.
6) On the back of the photocopy write:
   - a summary of the article,
   - an evaluation of the article,
   - and a brief reflection on your personal response to the article.

Part 2: Students collaborate

Once students have completed their individual work, ask them to get in groups of 3-4 with other students who’ve read and made notes on the same article. Ask students to share their responses to each prompt and discuss the similarities and differences. Have them report back to the class what they noticed about their different and similar response as a way to talk about their practices of interpreting a text and the essay’s meaning.