

# Reading Like A Writer Summary

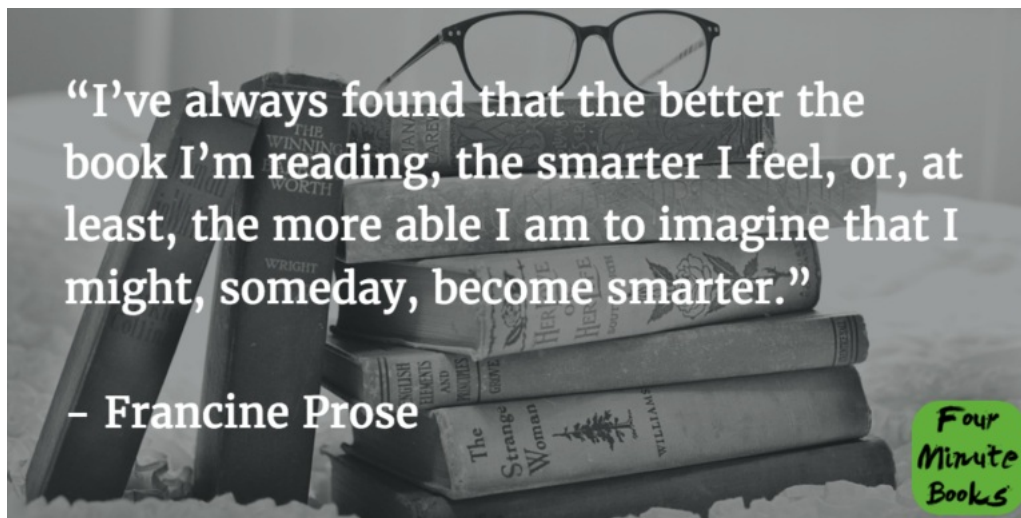
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 [fourminutebooks.com/reading-like-a-writer-summary](https://fourminutebooks.com/reading-like-a-writer-summary)

**1-Sentence-Summary:** *Reading Like A Writer* takes you through the various elements of world-famous literature and shows you how, by paying close attention to how great authors employ them, you can not only get a lot more from your reading, but also learn to be a better writer yourself.

**Read in:** 4 minutes

**Favorite quote from the author:**



Lately, I've been fascinated with the metaphysics of reading and writing, for example speed reading and analytical reading. Although the title of this book suggests it's aimed at people, who want to write literature themselves, it's also beneficial for readers, since it can help you understand the stuff you're reading a lot better.

Published in 2006 by Francine Prose, who's published over 30 books in both fiction and non-fiction, together with Harper Collins, *Reading Like A Writer* takes examples from over 100 pieces of tried and true literary classics and shows you how to make sense of them.

Here are 3 lessons to help you become a better reader (and writer):

1. Think of possible synonyms to understand the author's point.
2. Pause after paragraphs, because they're the most personal element of writing.
3. Pay attention to action, thoughts and dialogue, since one of them will dominate the others.

Ready to read in the big leagues? Here comes the pep talk you need!

**Lesson 1:** Try to think of synonyms the author could've used to understand more.

According to the Oxford Dictionary, there are around 170,000 words, currently used in the English language. . It of course depends on what counts as a word and what is commonly used (as opposed to just being mentioned a few times in a narrow context).

Regardless, choosing words is hard, and it's what authors spend most, if not all of their time on. Therefore, **you can bet there's a reason behind every single one they chose** .

Take the first sentence of The Alchemist, for example:

| “The boy’s name was Santiago.” – Paulo Coelho, The Alchemist

Coelho didn't say “There was a boy named Santiago.” or “Santiago was a boy.” He said “The boy’s name...”, which instantly tells you something about the perspective of the book and narrator: she’s someone with a lot of information to share, but is in a position somewhat distant to the book’s events. Using “The” also indicates that Santiago will be a piece in a big puzzle, more likely to be reacting to what’s going to happen, as opposed to proactively doing things on his own accord.

A great exercise is to **try and think of synonyms the author could've used**, for example why someone would say treasure instead of gold, creature instead of bird or hasten instead of rush.

This will help you understand the point the writer is trying to make and get in his head as to why he made the word choices he did.

## Lesson 2: Take a breath after each paragraph to learn more about the writer's personality.

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If you're Sherlock Holmes, trying to unravel the mystery of three novels by three authors, which sound awkwardly familiar, and are the cause of a copyright lawsuit, here's where you should start looking at: **paragraphs**.

Why paragraphs?

In a paragraph, all the emphasis lies on the first and last few words. Therefore, **every paragraph instantly tells you what the author thinks is important**. It's like listening to someone talk and paying attention to which words they pronounce more clearly, slowly, and maybe even repeat for emphasis.

The best way to catch these accents of importance and reflect on them is to **think of paragraphs as literary breathing guides**. When you start a new one, you slowly breathe in and then gradually exhale as you read on and on, before coming to a full exhale upon the last word.

Breathing in sync with paragraphs will give your reading a nice rhythm, and also show you what makes a good paragraph: too many one-liners and you'll feel hectic and breathe shallowly, too many drawn out walls of text and you'll hardly be able to catch your breath.

Pretty cool, huh?

## Lesson 3: Actions, thoughts and dialogue reveal characters' intentions, but one will likely overshadow the others.

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What makes characters in books come alive are the same things that determine how our own lives unfold: **what we think, what we say and what we do.**

You might think that having to pay attention to what characters think about, how they talk and which words they choose and how they handle their lives and the book's events might be obvious, but it reveals a lot about how writers approach writing stories and telling their message.

For example, *The Little Prince* is based almost entirely on dialogue. The prince has encountered many strange people on his journey, and talking to them has led him to new insights. As the prince then recounts his own story to the man in the desert, the latter again draws conclusions based on those, which he shares with the reader, also by directly talking to him.

Other books, like *Harry Potter*, focus a lot more on the main character's thoughts and internal workings and the actions that they take based on them.

Look at the mix of actions, thoughts and dialogues in the books you read, and you'll see beneath the characters' and author's surface – maybe it'll inspire you to write your own.

## Reading Like A Writer Review

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Totally fascinated by this stuff. Can't wait to learn more about it. The cool thing about improving even just one tiny thing in how you read is that it lasts forever and makes *all* your future reading better because of it. I highly recommend learning more about these topics, and *Reading Like A Writer* is a great place to start!

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## What else can you learn from the blinks?

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- When skim-reading is the right thing to do, and why it's most often not
- The four quantities of great sentences

- What else you can imagine paragraphs as to get the most of them
- The two kinds of narrators all great books rely on and how they work
- Why being a good writer means being a good liar

## **Who would I recommend the Reading Like A Writer summary to?**

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The 16 year old with a knack for English literature, the 52 year old housewife, who eats novels for breakfast, and anyone who wants to read to improve their skills at work.