

How to Read a Book by Mortimer J. Adler

Summary of Key Sections

Shafiq R, Sarawak Matriculation College

August 2024

Introduction

Elementary reading refers to the **most basic level of reading**, where the primary focus is on understanding the literal meaning of the text.

At this stage, readers learn to grasp the fundamental concepts, vocabulary, and simple structures of written language.

Adler emphasizes that elementary reading is the foundation upon which all other levels of reading are built, as it equips readers with the essential skills needed to decode and comprehend straightforward content before progressing to more advanced analytical and critical reading.

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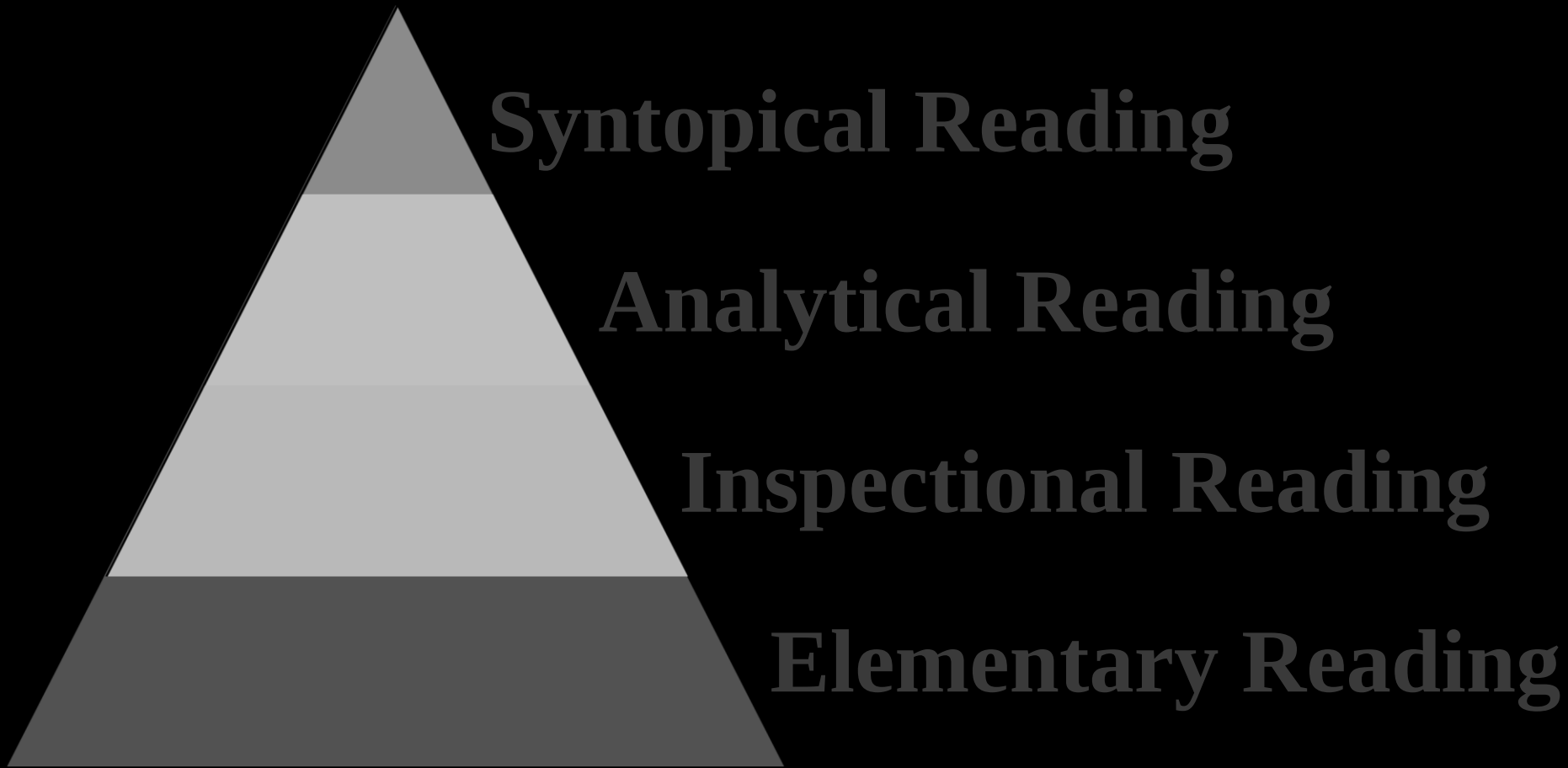
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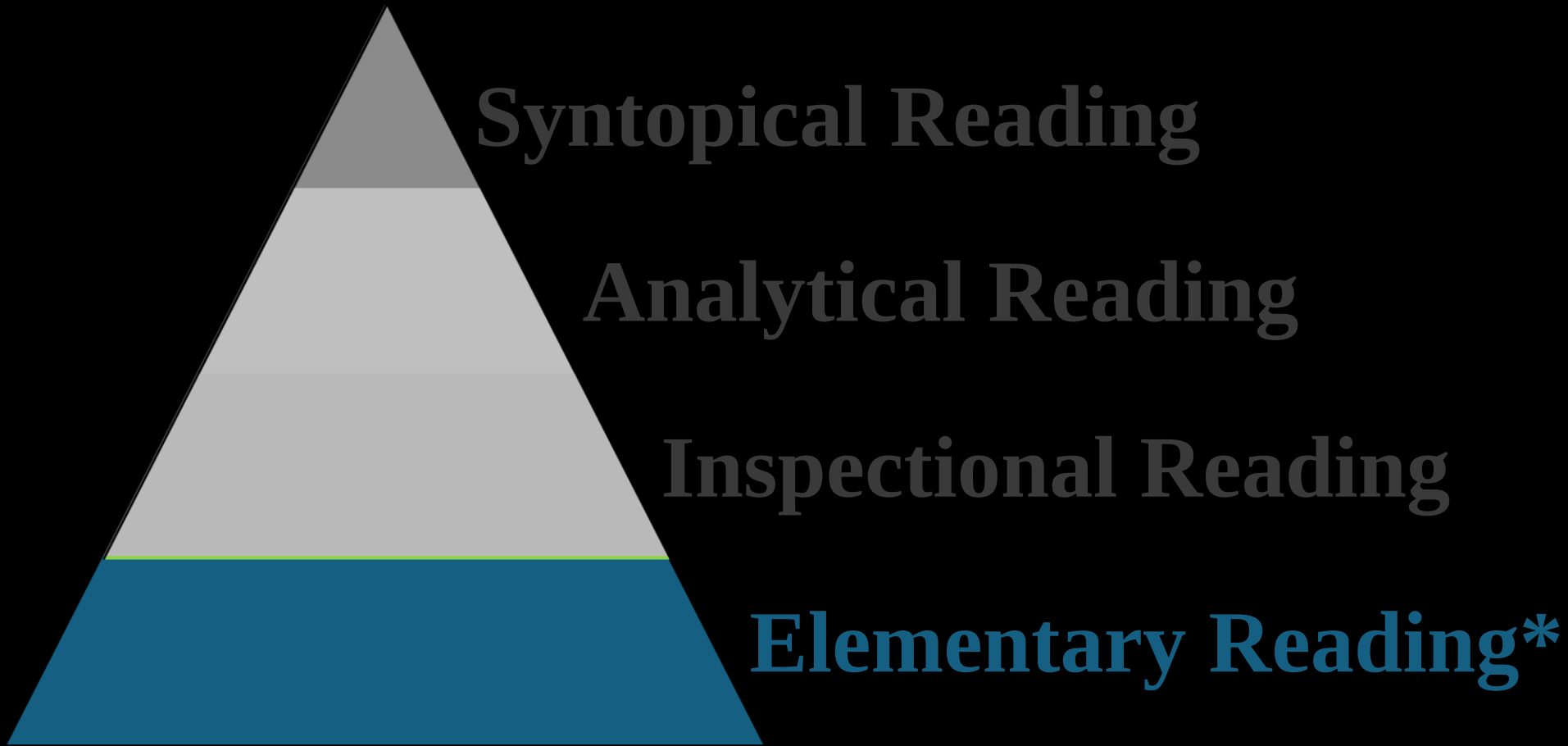
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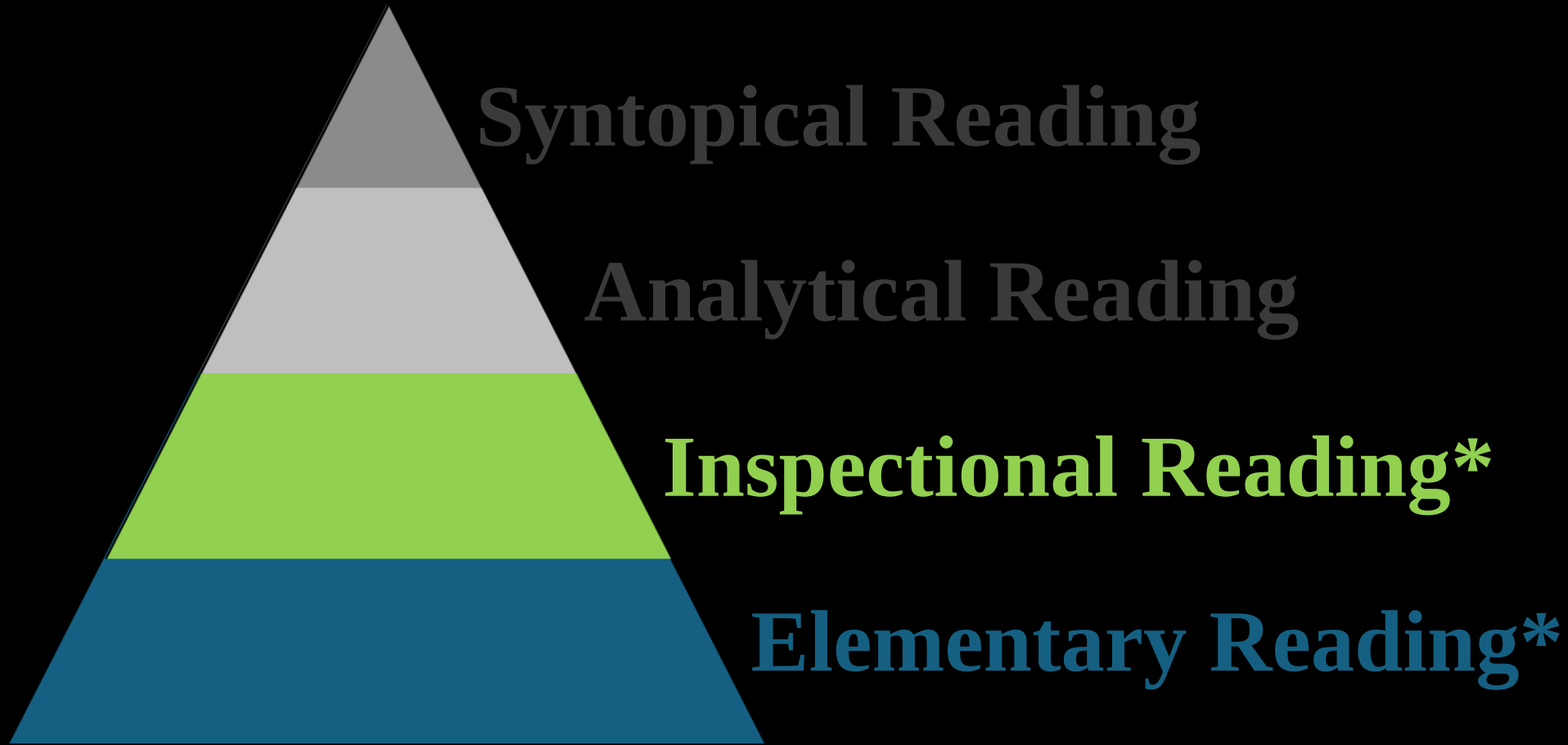
The Levels of Reading



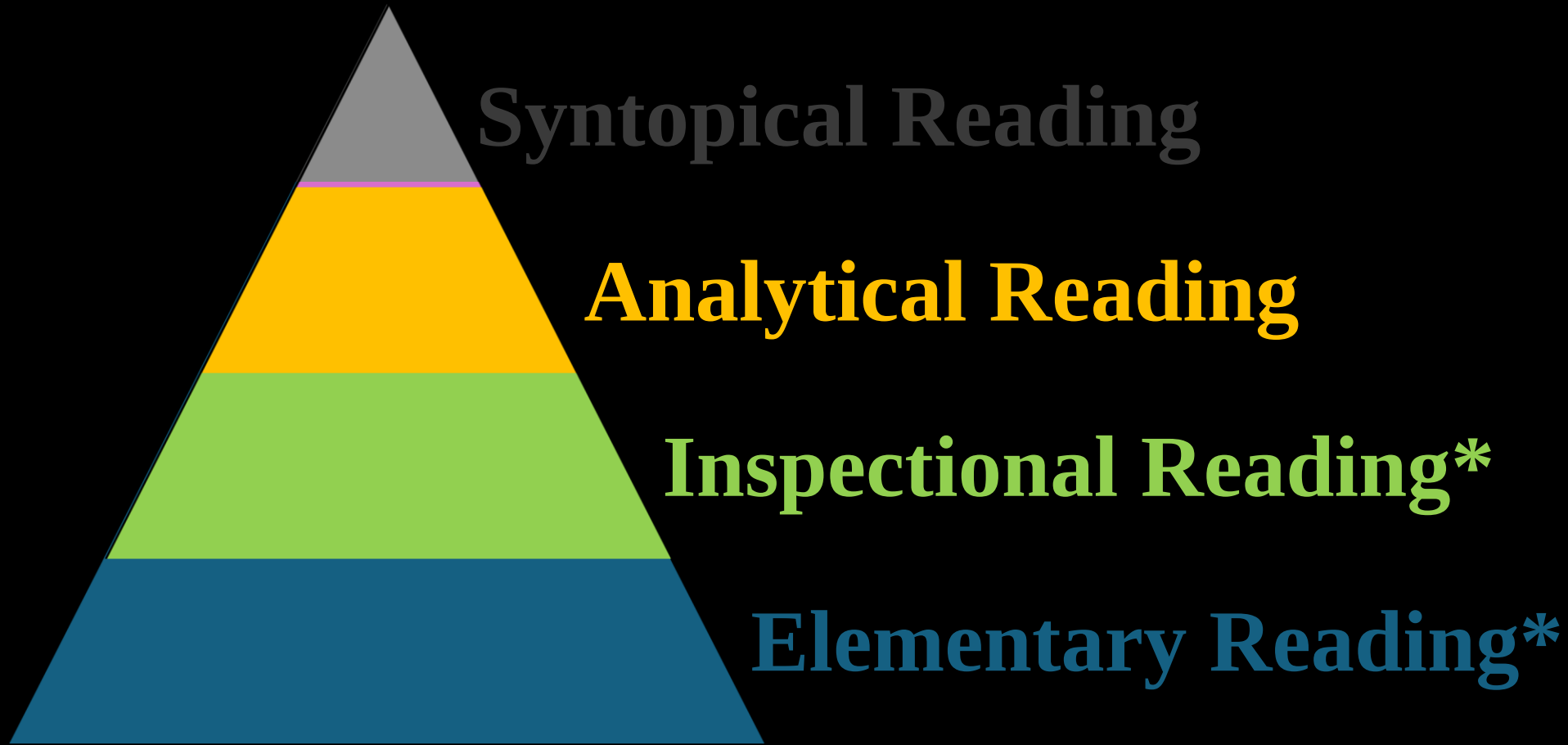
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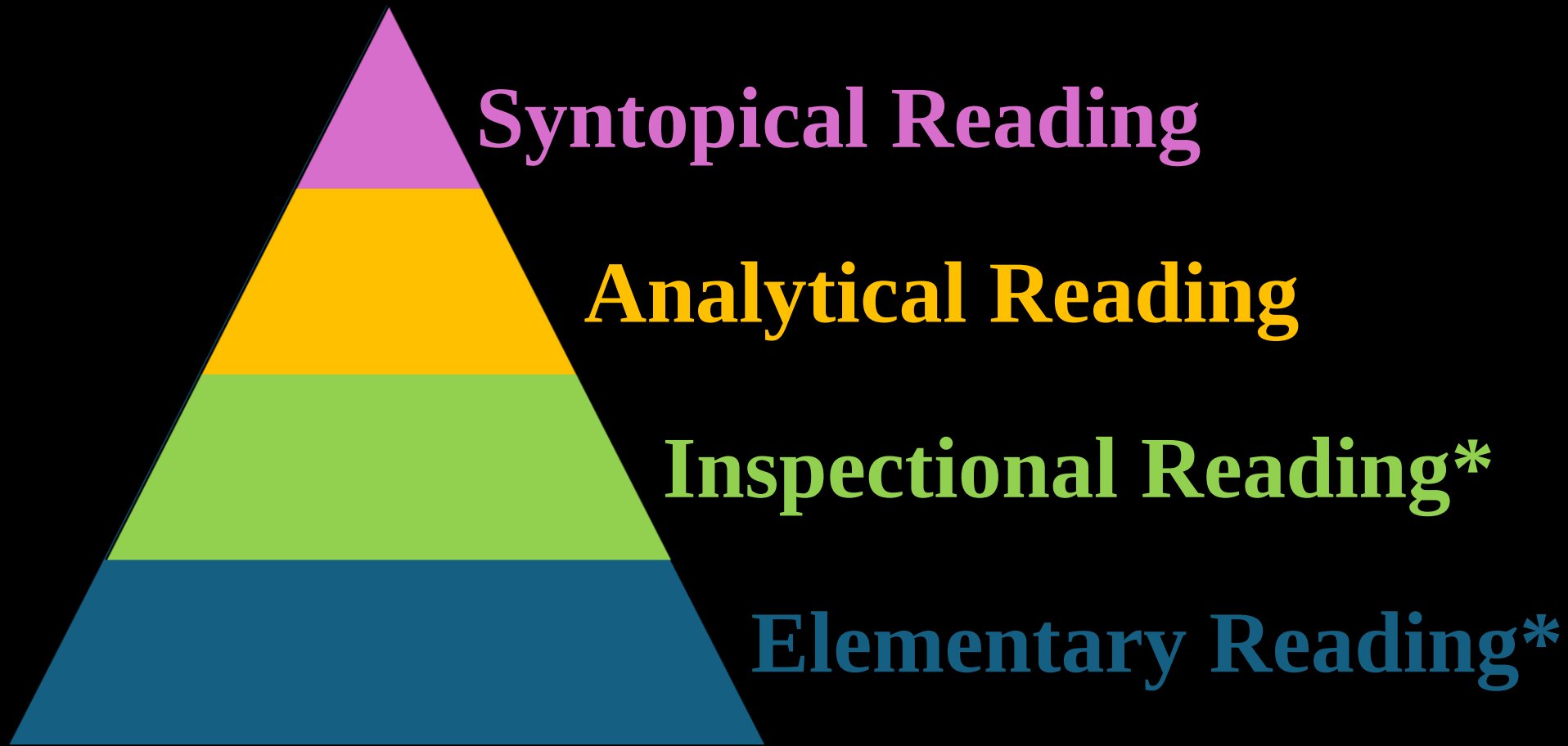
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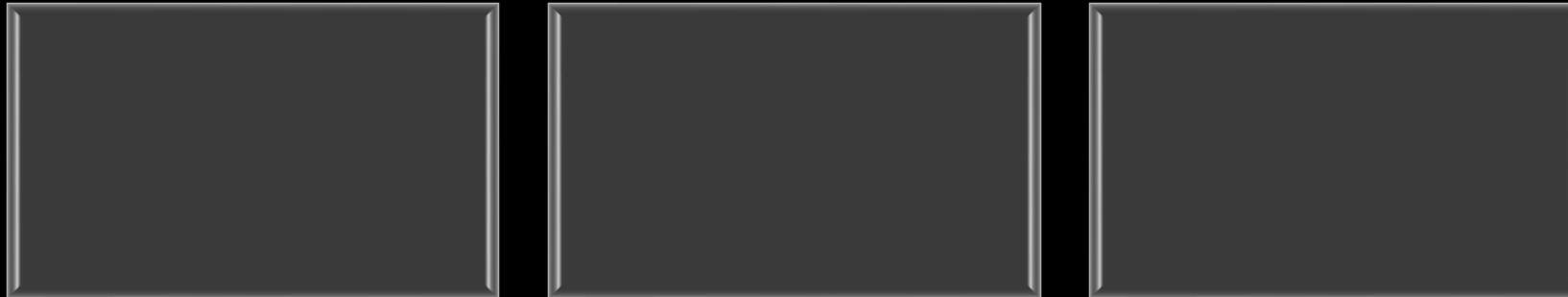


Key Components of Elementary Reading

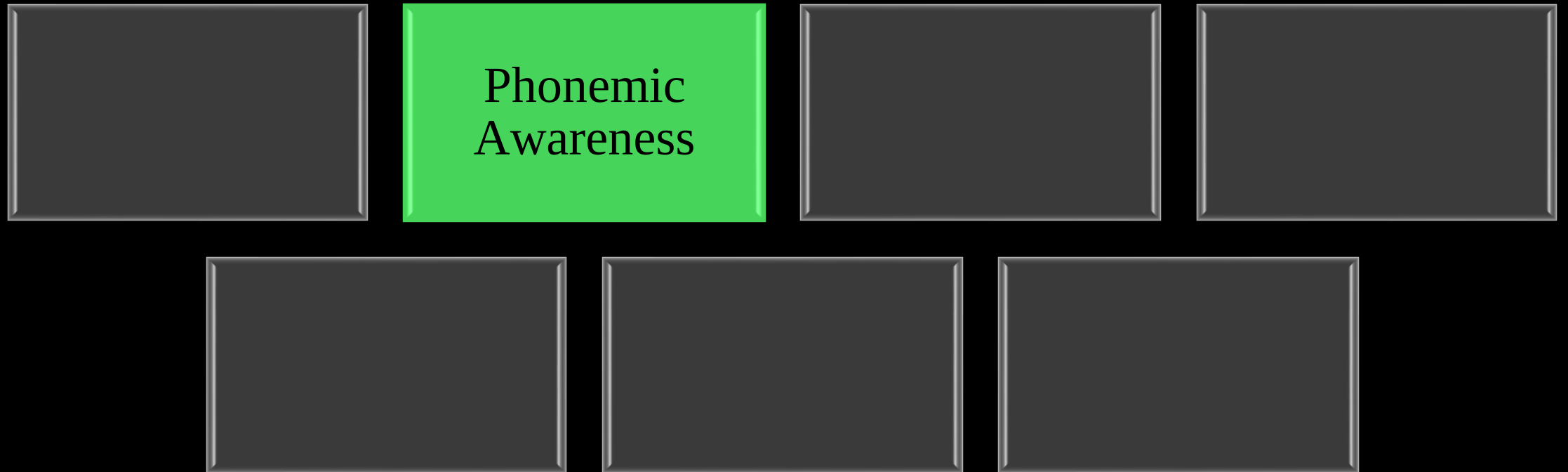


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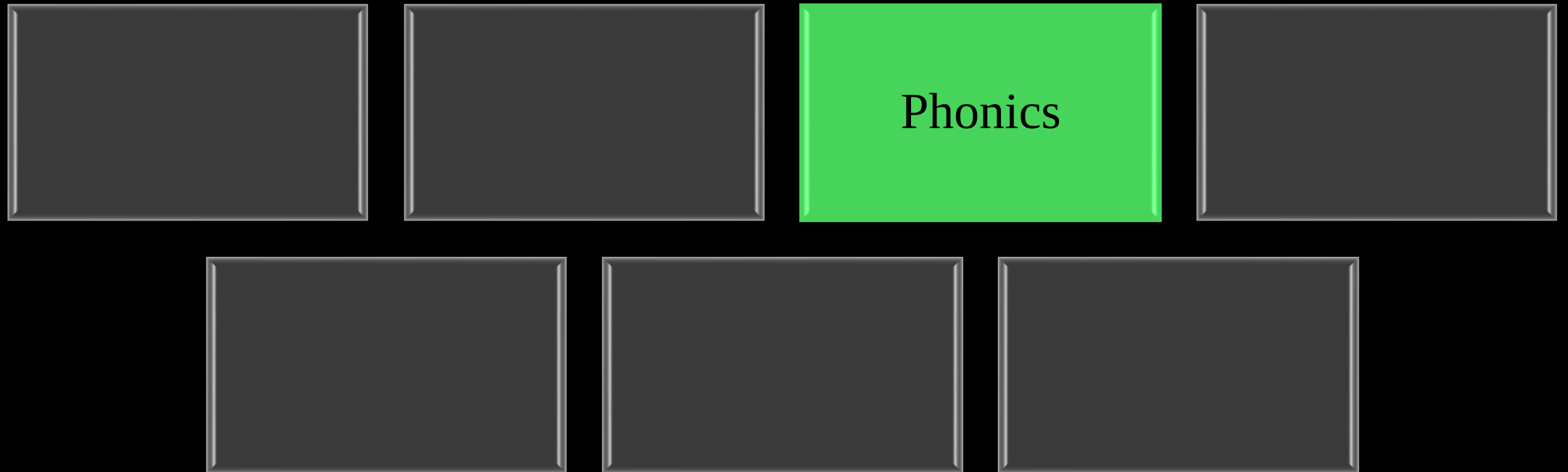
Letter
Recognition



Key Components of Elementary Reading



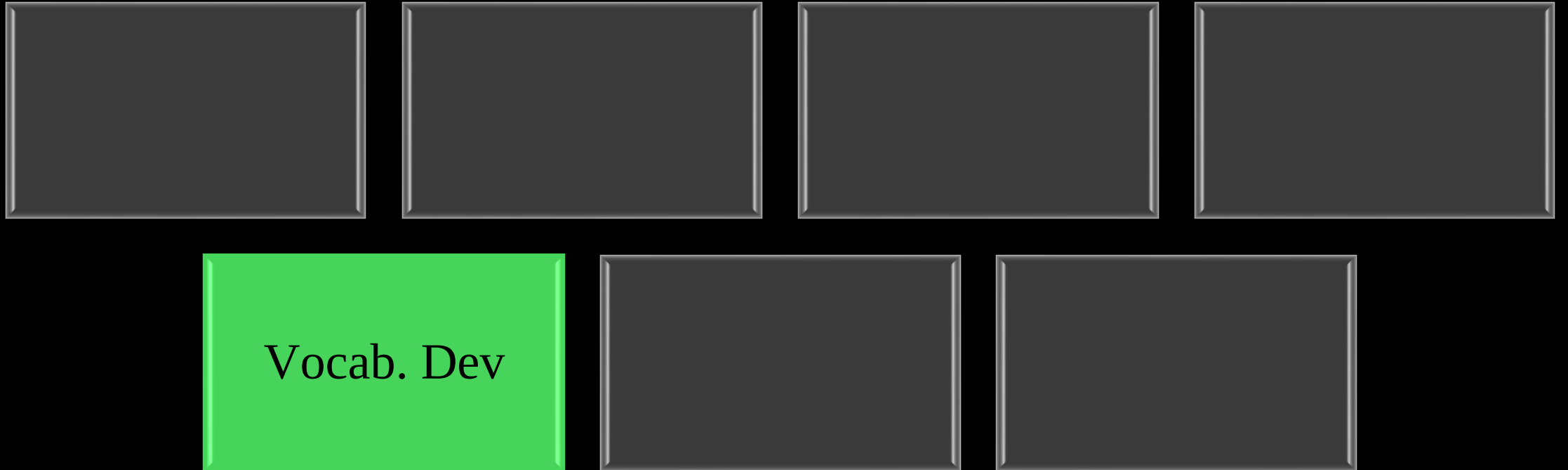
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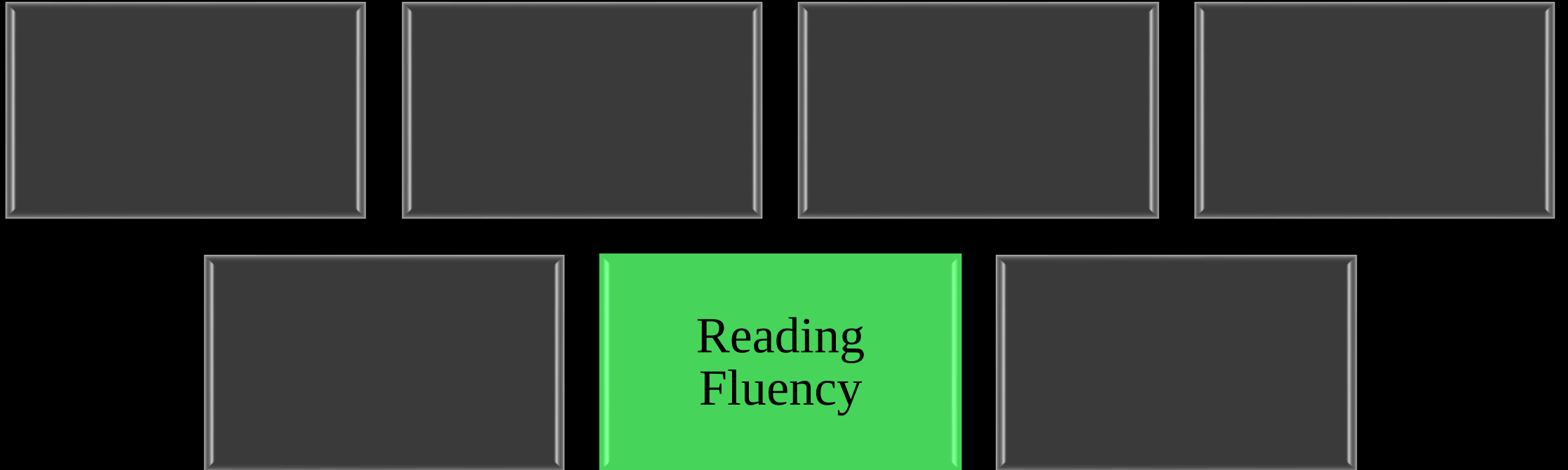
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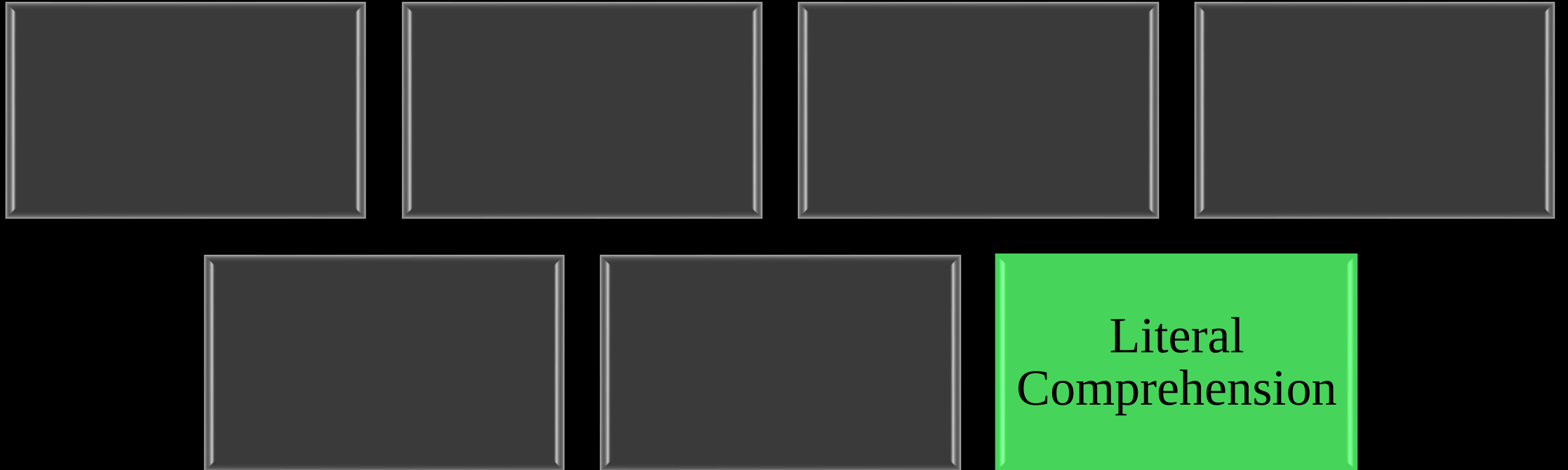
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Key Components of Elementary Reading

Letter
Recognition

Phonemic
Awareness

Phonics

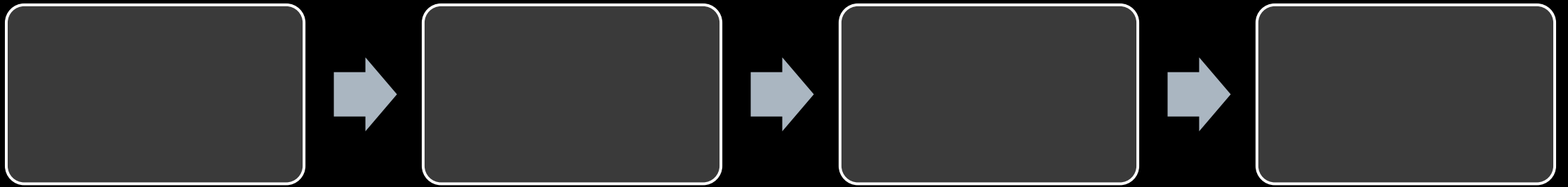
Word
Recognition

Vocab. Dev

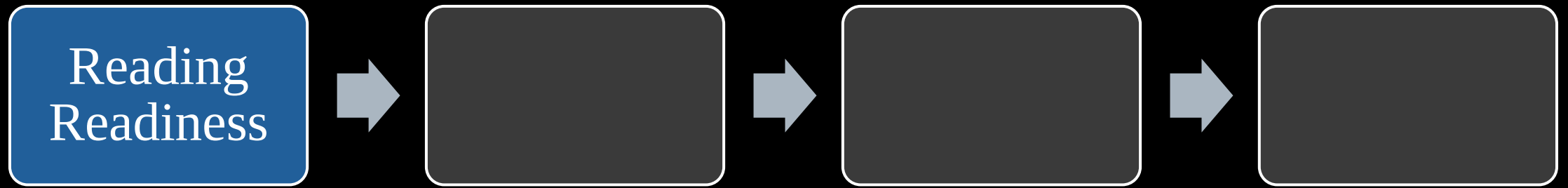
Reading
Fluency

Literal
Comprehension

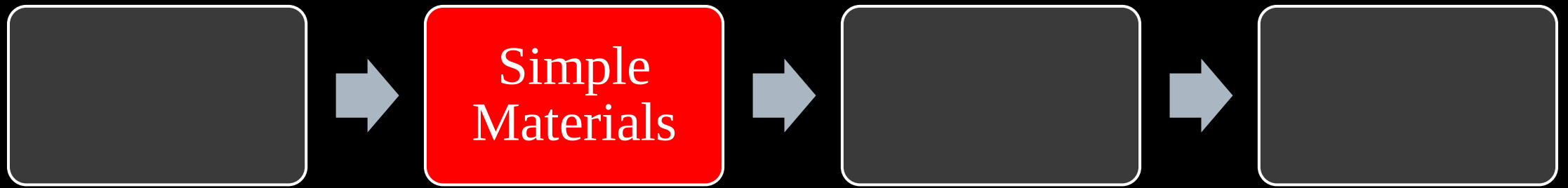
Stages of Learning to Read



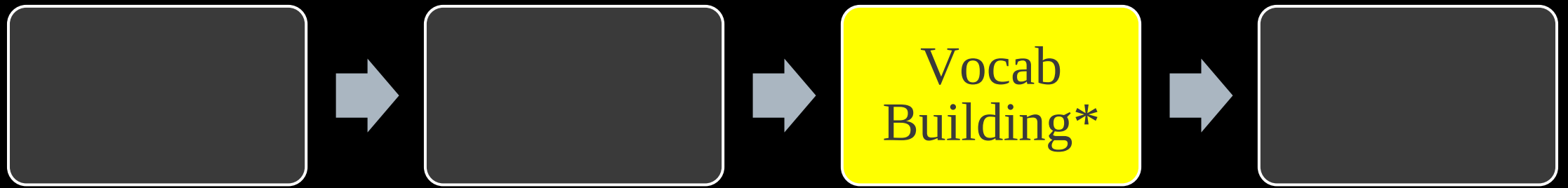
Stages of Learning to Read



Stages of Learning to Read

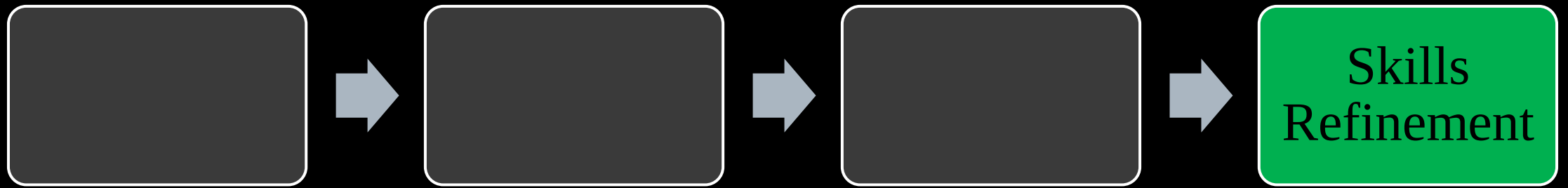


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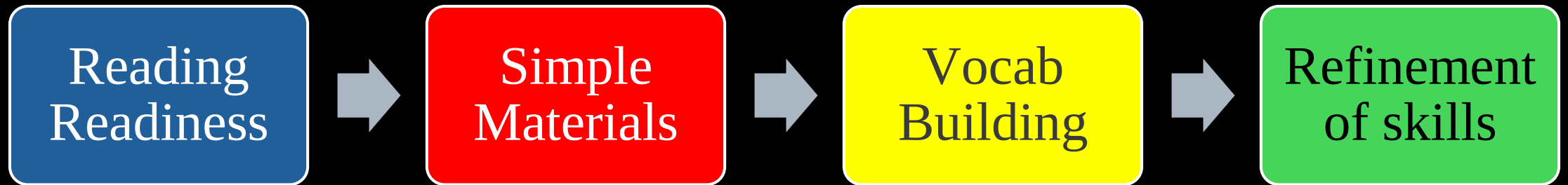


Refer to slide
on “Stages of
Learning to
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Introduction to Inspectional Reading

Inspectional reading, according to Mortimer Adler in *How to Read a Book*, is a method of quickly gaining an overview of a text.

It involves skimming key sections like the title, table of contents, and introduction, followed by a swift read-through to grasp the main ideas.

This approach helps readers determine whether a book is worth a deeper reading and allows them to understand the gist of the content in a limited time.

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Inspectional Reading



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graph TD; A[Inspectional Reading] --> B[Systematic Skimming]; A --> C[Superficial Reading];
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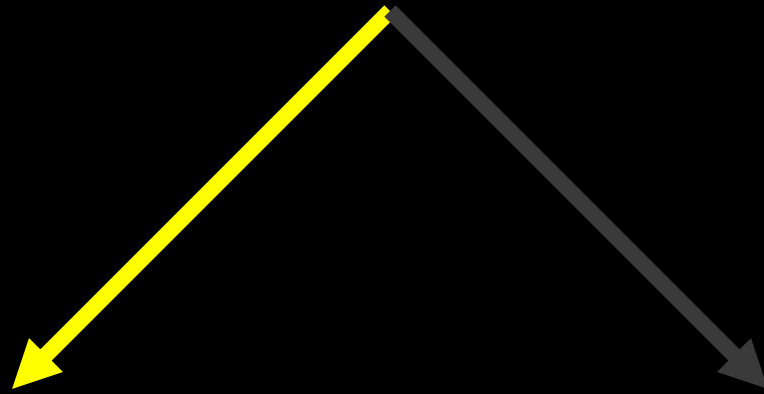
Systematic
Skimming

Superficial
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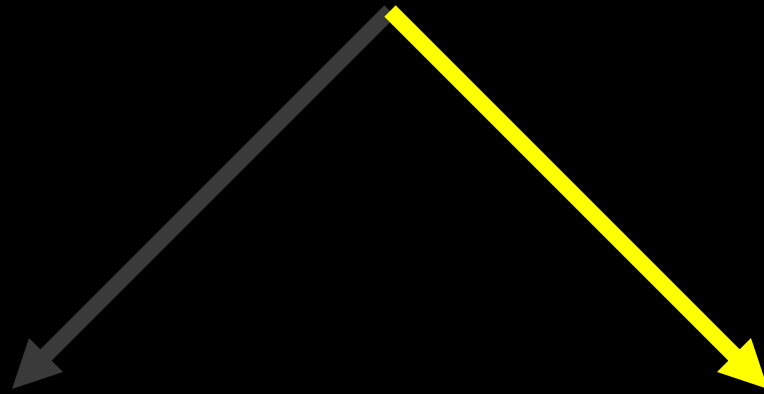
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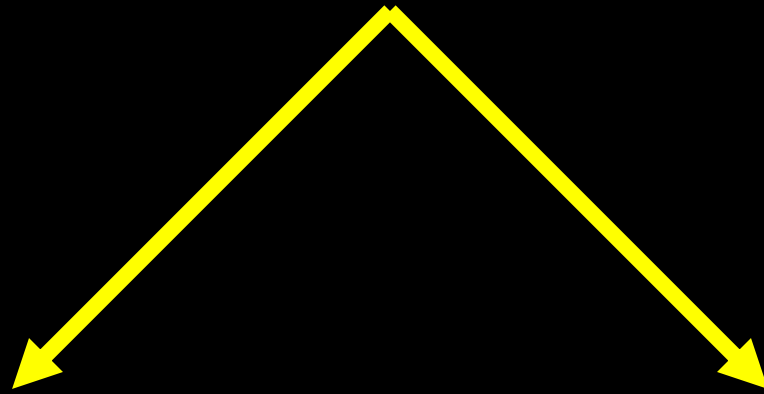
Inspectional Reading



Systematic
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Superficial
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Inspectional Reading



**Systematic
Skimming**

**Superficial
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When to perform inspectional reading?

You don't know if the book is worth spending so much time on. But what if it's a good book?



Systematic Skimming

Steps:

1. Read the title and preface
2. Study the table of contents
3. Check the index
4. Read the publisher's blurb
5. Look for pivotal chapters
6. Turn pages and read paragraphs

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Superficial Reading

Steps:

1. Read straight through
2. Resist the urge to stop
3. Don't worry about full comprehension
4. Prepare for deeper analysis

Strategies:

- Set a Time Limit
- Focus on Structure
- Look for Signposts

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Speed Reading

In *How to Read a Book*, Mortimer Adler views speed reading with caution, emphasizing that while reading faster can be useful, it should not come at the expense of comprehension.

Adler argues that true understanding requires careful, thoughtful reading, especially when engaging with complex or challenging texts.

Speed reading techniques might be helpful for simple material or when doing an initial skim, but Adler stresses that deeper, more analytical reading demands a slower pace to fully grasp the ideas and arguments presented.

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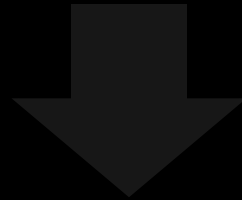
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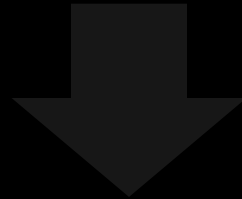
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Fixations & Regressions

Weak Readers' eyes tend to go back to previous words/ phrases! Oh nooooo!



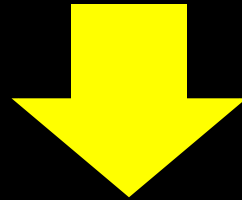
Use finger to point at words on page!



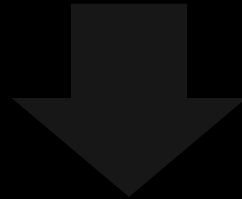
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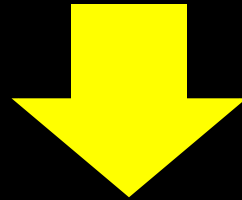
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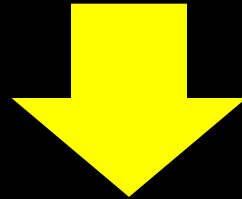
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Use finger to point at words on page!



Problem Solved.

A demanding reader....

A good reader is an active reader.

An active reader is one who consistently ask questions when they read.

What questions to ask?

1. What is the book about as a whole?
2. What is being said in detail, and how?
3. Is the book true, in whole or part?
4. (Significance)What of it?

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- Underline key sentences
- Use vertical lines in the margins
- Star or asterisk in the margin
- Write numbers in the margin
- Write in the margins or at the top/bottom of the page
- Circle or box key words or phrases
- Use the index for personal annotations
- Fold corners of pages

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Purpose and Benefits of Marking a Book

- Encourages critical thinking
- Aids in retaining information
- Makes the reading experience more meaningful

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Note Taking

- Inspectional Note Taking (Structural)
- Conceptual Note Taking (Between author & reader)
- Shape of Discussion (Several Books)

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