General Rules of Notice

**Direct Statements**

- Explicit statements of meaning or principle
- Explicit generalizations
- Explicit judgments or evaluations
- Explicit indications of text structure (e.g., “In comparison . . .,” “Now we’ll compare this to . . .”)
- Direct statements of theme, application, or of takeaway
- Direct statements of command; imperatives
- Explicit questions—especially bringing the status quo into question
- A definite article and an intensifier or judgment/evaluation (e.g., The Great Fire)

**Ruptures**

**Surprises/Shifts**

- Surprises/shifts in topic or text structure
- Events or ideas that change relationships
- Events/ideas that offer different perspectives on a topic
- Ruptures of trajectory, continuity, expectations
- Instances when the author uses a specific detail when you expected another
- Discoveries and revelations
- Deviations from any norm—cultural, social, individual, textual
- Events that change relationships—between people, ideas, events, and so on
- Emotional charges, outliers, coincidences
- Inappropriate behaviors and responses on the part of characters (especially narrative nonfiction)

**Rules of Problems**

- Tensions or Problems/trouble
  - Contact zones—points of disagreement; where multiple perspectives meet
- Moral choices

**Rules of Tropes That Surprise or Shock**

- Silences—when you expect to hear or find out something but don’t, or expect to hear from a character or perspective but don’t (especially with narrative nonfiction)
- Exaggeration and understatement
- Blatantly irrelevant/that which is mentioned seems irrelevant or off-point
- Undue attention—what seems like undue attention is given to something, markedly long descriptions
- Plot direction changes (especially with narrative nonfiction)
- Shifts in point of view
- Significant changes in perspective of narrator or character
- Ruptures in time—flashbacks, fastforwards, collapsed or exploded moments, reflections and memories
• Shifts in tone, style, or pacing
• Unexpected authorial choices and moves
• Unreliable narrator (especially with narrative nonfiction)
• Irony (especially with narrative nonfiction)

Rules of Wordplay/Sound Devices
• Use of rhyme
• Neologisms
• Wordplay/double entendre—words or phrases with double or multiple meanings
• Sound devices
• Shifts from standard English—foreign words, dialect

Rules of Shifts in Length
• A short paragraph or sentence among longer ones, or vice versa
• Movement from a close-up to a wide-angle lens, or vice versa, giving a new view or angle on the topic
• Exploded moments (long descriptions that may give a sense of undue attention) that are typically about the topic
• Close-ups or wide-angle descriptions that shift focus and pacing

Calls to Attention

Rules of Positioning
• Introductions
• Introductions of new characters (especially when extended, using comparison/contrast, etc.), of new situations, of ideas, of new withheld details, and so on
• Conclusions—of sections, of chapters, of the whole
  o The difference between the beginning and end is a powerful indicator of theme, of the ultimate conclusion the details add up to
• Titles, subtitles, and Headings
• Epigraphs
• Callouts
• Book covers—commentary on back, book flaps

Rules of Print Features
• Illustrations, photos, and graphics
• Bolding, highlights, or italics

Rules of Questions
• Questions in a title, near the beginning or the end of a text or section
• All explicit questions
• Details that implicitly or explicitly address these questions

For more Rules of Notice, check out *Diving Deep Into Nonfiction: Transferable Tools for Reading ANY Nonfiction Text.*