**3. Fast Reading Strategies in Literature:**

Engaging with literature is not a passive activity; it demands active participation and a strategic approach to reading. The principles of effective reading, previously discussed in a general context, become even more crucial when applied to the study of literature. This section explores how the strategies of surveying, skimming, scanning, and intensive reading can transform students into active readers, enabling them to unlock the layers of meaning within literary texts and engage with the critical conversations that surround them. From quickly assessing the relevance of a scholarly article to meticulously analyzing the nuances of poetic language, these techniques empower students to become more discerning and insightful readers of literature.

* **Surveying:**
  + **Critical editions:** Survey the table of contents, editor's introduction, and any appendices in critical editions of literary texts.
  + **Scholarly books:** Survey the table of contents, introduction, and index of books of literary criticism.
  + **Journal articles:** Survey the abstract, introduction, and conclusion.
* **Skimming:**
  + **Critical essays:** Skim to get an overview of the critic's argument and determine if the essay is relevant to your research.
  + **Biographies:** Skim to get a sense of the author's life and major influences.
  + **Historical background:** Skim to get a general understanding of the literary period or relevant historical events.
  + **Technique:** Read the first and last paragraphs, the first sentence of each paragraph, and look for signposting words.
* **Scanning:**
  + **Finding specific quotations:** Scan a literary text to find a particular phrase or passage.
  + **Locating critical interpretations:** Scan a critical essay to find a specific argument or idea.
  + **Checking biographical details:** Scan an author's biography to find a specific date or event.
  + **Technique:** Skim first to locate the relevant section, then run your eyes over the text, looking for keywords.

**2. Intensive Reading Strategies in Literature:**

* **Multiple Readings:**
  + **First reading:** Focus on understanding the basic plot, characters, and setting of a literary work.
  + **Second reading:** Pay attention to language, imagery, symbolism, and other literary devices.
  + **Third reading:** Analyze the text through a specific theoretical lens (e.g., feminism, Marxism, postcolonialism).
* **Vocabulary:**
  + **Archaic language:** Literary texts often use archaic language. Use dictionaries, glossaries, and annotations to understand unfamiliar words.
  + **Figurative language:** Pay close attention to metaphors, similes, and other figures of speech. Consider their connotations and how they contribute to the text's meaning.
* **Concepts:**
  + **Literary theory:** You may need to research literary theories and critical approaches to fully understand a critical essay or apply a particular lens to a literary text.
  + **Historical context:** Understanding the historical, social, and cultural context of a literary work can be crucial to interpreting its meaning.
  + **Author's biography:** Biographical information can shed light on an author's intentions and influences.
* **Complex Sentences:**
  + **Literary texts:** Pay attention to sentence structure in poetry and prose. Long, complex sentences can be used for stylistic effect or to convey complex ideas. Breaking them down can aid comprehension.
  + **Critical essays:** Literary critics often use complex sentences to develop nuanced arguments. Identifying the main clause and then adding in modifying phrases can help you follow their line of reasoning.

**Active Reading Techniques:**

* **Annotating:** Underline key passages, write notes in the margins, and record your thoughts and questions.
* **Summarizing:** After reading a section of a text, summarize the main points in your own words.
* **Diagramming:** Create diagrams to represent relationships between characters, themes, or ideas.
* **Note-taking:** Take detailed notes on your reading, including key quotations, critical arguments, and your own reflections.

**Example: Applying Strategies to Shakespeare's *Hamlet***

* **Fast Reading:**
  + **Survey:** Examine the table of contents and editor's introduction in a critical edition of *Hamlet*.
  + **Skim:** Read summaries of the play online or in a study guide to get a basic understanding of the plot. Skim critical essays to find those relevant to your chosen topic (e.g., revenge, madness, or gender).
  + **Scan:** Locate specific quotations from the play that you want to analyze. Scan critical essays to find discussions of those quotations.
* **Intensive Reading:**
  + **Multiple readings:** Read the play multiple times, focusing on different aspects each time (e.g., plot, character, language, imagery, themes).
  + **Vocabulary:** Use a glossary or footnotes to understand archaic words and phrases.
  + **Concepts:** Research Elizabethan drama, revenge tragedy, and any relevant critical theories (e.g., psychoanalytic criticism, feminist criticism).
  + **Complex sentences:** Break down long speeches into smaller units to understand their meaning.

**Key Takeaways for Literature:**

* **Reading strategies are essential for both primary and secondary sources in literature.**
* **Adapt fast reading strategies to quickly assess relevance and gain an overview.**
* **Use intensive reading strategies to engage deeply with complex literary texts and critical essays.**
* **Combine close reading of primary texts with careful analysis of secondary sources.**
* **Practice active reading techniques to enhance comprehension and retention.**
* **Be patient and persistent. Literary research takes time and effort.**

By applying these reading strategies, you can become a more effective and insightful reader of literature, leading to stronger analyses and a deeper appreciation of the works you study.