How to “Chunk” a Text

What is it?
Chunking is a literacy strategy to help you better understand and retain the information you read in a difficult text. Although it is a little tedious the first few times you do it, it will become an invaluable note-taking skill the more you practice it.

How do I do it?
To understand the chunking example below, open the textbook excerpt “What is Civilization?” which can be found in Blackboard under “The Historian’s Toolbox” tab in the folder labeled “Scientific Method.”

STEP ONE – Write down the main heading/title of the text.
Humans Try to Control Nature

STEP TWO – Scroll through the reading, and write down and indent all the subheadings (if available) in the text:
Humans Try to Control Nature
   A. Achievements in Technology and Art
   B. The Neolithic Revolution
   C. Villages Grow and Prosper
   (And so on and so on . . .)

STEP THREE – Scroll through the reading, and write down and double indent all the sub-subheadings in the text:
Humans Try to Control Nature
   A. Achievements in Technology and Art
      1. A New Tool Kit
      2. Paleolithic Art
   B. The Neolithic Revolution
      1. Causes of the Agricultural Revolution
      2. Early Farming Methods
      3. Domestication of Animals
      4. Revolution in Jarmo
      (And so on and so on . . .)

*Now that you’ve written down all the headings and subheadings, make some educated guesses about the content of the reading. In other words, titles and subtitles are telling you the subject matter of what you’re about to read. If you keep that in your head as you go, you’ll have a better understanding of the text.
Humans Try to Control Nature
   A. Achievements in Technology and Art
      1. A New Tool Kit
         • **Nomads** *(Underline important vocabulary words you've never seen. Don't write them down at all if you know what they mean already.)* – groups of people looking for food
         • **Hunter-gatherers** – moved to find food; learned to invent tools (ex. spears, digging sticks, etc.)
         • And so on and so on . . .

SECTION SUMMARY: Add 1-3 sentences.