

Critical Reading for Critical Writing

Don't just summarize, analyze!

Great writing starts with close reading of a text or texts. Your personal experiences and frame of reference also play a part in this process, by shaping your reactions and assumptions to the text and thereby guiding your analysis. The main goal in critical reading (close reading) is to make note of your observations and then to interpret them.

How to begin:

1. Read not only for content, but look out for structure, and patterns
Q: How do form and content interact?
Q: Why did the author choose this form versus others?
2. Take notes as you read
 - Notice repeating images or words, questions that arise, contradictions, or anything else that catches your attention
 - Write down any similarities you come across with other materials you have read, even from other disciplines!
 - These notes can eventually help you develop a thesis
3. If possible write on the text itself
 - Underline or highlight key words or phrases, make notes on the margins of questions or comments that come up as you read
 - Write down and look up every word you don't know, this will help you better understand the claim/argument, and increase your VOCABULARY

Engage with the author!

As you question the author's argument and/or statements, and as you come up with counter-arguments you are entering in dialogue with the author at that precise moment in time!