

CRITICAL READING: Posing Questions and Examining Language

By asking questions of yourself and of the text, you will develop both your reading efficiency and analytic ability.

Goals:

To analyze a text instead of taking it at face value
To assess the accuracy and relevance of a text
To clarify hidden assumptions
To identify propaganda and rhetorical techniques
To distinguish between facts and opinions

Questions:

Who is the author? What do you know about the author? What is the author's status: expert? politician? someone with vested interest?

What is the author's purpose? To share information? To persuade? To advocate? To develop an argument? To propagandize?

What connotations are triggered by the author's word choice? Are there "buzz" or "shock" words (value-laden terms) that indicate biases?

Who is the author's intended audience? (For example, members of the same group as the author? critics? opponents?)

What reactions do words and statements evoke in you? Why?

Was the author successful in reaching the intended audience? How? To what extent? At which points in the reading?

What kind of information does the author use as "evidence": reasoning? statistics? quotations? government documents? studies? material from websites? interviews? personal observations? What are the sources of the evidence?

What ideas or information are excluded or minimized by the author? How do these omissions present clues about the author's value system?