

Reading Critically

“Critically reading a source - questioning what it says and thinking about what it means - focuses your attention on determining how reliably a source presents its information and how well it meets your needs as a research writer” (Palmquist 2012)

Approach the source with the writing situation in mind

Section I Part A

Directions: Read the passage below and then respond to the following three questions.

1. Identify the main idea of the author's argument.
2. Identify the claims the author makes and explain how he uses them to establish his line of reasoning.
3. Evaluate the effectiveness of the evidence the author uses to support his argument.

Approach the source with the writing situation in mind

Section I Part B (50 minutes)

Directions: Read the following two articles carefully. Then, write an essay that evaluates the effectiveness of the two arguments, focusing on the relevance and credibility of the evidence and the validity of the lines of reasoning.

Approach the source with the writing situation in mind

Section II (90 minutes)

Directions: The following four sources present multiple perspectives on the same issue or topic. Read the sources carefully, focusing on both the thematic connection among them and the different perspectives each represents. Then, write a logically organized and well-reasoned argument that presents your own perspective on the thematic link you identified. You must incorporate at least two of the sources provided. You may also use the other provided sources or draw upon your own knowledge. In your response, refer to the provided sources as Source A, Source B, Source C, or Source D, or by the author's names.

Strategies

- Identify key information, ideas, and arguments
- Write questions in the margins
- Jot down reactions to information, ideas, arguments
- Mark quotes, paraphrase, summarize
- Mark links visually

Identify main points

- Is there a thesis statement?
- Is there an opinion?
- Is there a proposal?

What are the key reasons that support the main point?

Uses of evidence - Appeals

- Appeal to authority
- Appeal to emotion
- Appeal to (*shared*) principles, values, and beliefs
- Appeals to character (aka the “*trust me*” strategy)
- Appeals to logic
- Reasoning based on empirical evidence

Three-pass strategy

1. Skim for organization and content
 - a. What is the main point?
 - b. What are the reasons offered to support the main point?
 - c. What evidence is offered to support the reasons?
 - d. Who is the piece written for (audience)?
 - e. Why was it written?

Three-pass strategy

2. Read actively

- a. Start marking the document
- b. Underline main point
- c. Underline supporting reasons and evidence
- d. Mark key passages/quotes
- e. Mark connections visually

Three-pass strategy

3. Reread important passages
 - a. Reread passages you marked
 - b. Start to plan/draft your response
 - c. Develop your argument
 - d. Cycle back to the source(s)