

Close Reading for Literature

Critical reading goes a step beyond reading for information: it involves evaluating the information rather than simply absorbing it. When reading critically, it is more important to ask questions than to learn facts.

Preliminary Information (before you start reading)

Title:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The title may give you information about the content of the article: the themes, period, subject, etc. What does the title lead you to expect from the text? <i>Sometimes, the title will hint at the author's approach or interpretation (which may be indicated by a play on words or a question mark).</i>
Author(s):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Note the author(s) of the text.
Source:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What genre is the text part of? Where was the work published? Note its original source. When was it written? Is there anything significant about that time period or any major events or changes in society? These may be reflected or addressed in the text (either directly or indirectly).

Analysis Information (skimming quickly)

Purpose:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Why do you think the author wrote this text? Does it seem to be refuting someone else's interpretation of some event or phenomenon? Is it offering a new perspective?
Subject:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What does the text seem to be about?
Characters:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Who are the main characters in the text (don't forget the narrator, if applicable)? Who are the secondary characters?

Critical Reading Details (while you are reading)

Themes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the central/main/important themes in the text (i.e. things like "war", "racism", "love", "honour", etc.)? Are there any situations that are repeated within the text? What does the text reveal about the narrator? Is there more than one speaker/narrator? How does the text construct gender? What issues of gender identity does it make you think of?
Sentence Level:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What type of imagery is used? What are some examples? How do the images relate to the rest of the text? Look for vivid images, colours used, positive or negative descriptions of something, etc. What can these elements represent? For example, red can represent passion or anger. Are there any words or images that are repeated in the text?

Close Reading for Literature

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there any metaphors, symbols, or allusions in the text? How do they work with respect to the larger themes of the text? • Are there any words that have several different (even contradictory) meanings? How do these meanings change your interpretation of the text?
Limits:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the text you are analyzing focus on a particular event, theory, person, phenomenon, or idea? • The text may be further limited by a narrow geographic focus, a limited period, or restricted to a particular group of people.
Point of View:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who is telling the story or narrative? In some texts, the point of view may be obvious. In other cases, you will have to feel it out by looking at what things are described positively and what are described negatively. • Note what you learn or interpret about the author's point of view. Can we, as readers, believe what the narrator or writer is saying? Why or why not?

Presentation and Argumentation (while you are reading)

Concepts / Words:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Note the words or concepts you had to look up. • Did the author coin his/her own terms, or use common terms in unusual ways? • Was there anything that you didn't understand? Was there anything that seemed like it was probably significant but that you didn't know what the significance was?
Implications:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Note what the points the author has made might mean in a larger context. • What difference has the text made for you? • You may also consider why your instructor has asked you to read this text. Was it assigned because it illustrated ideas or concepts covered in the course, is it an example of a particular genre being studied, or does it have any themes that have also been discussed in other texts in the course?

Evaluation (after you have finished reading)

Personal Reaction:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What was your personal reaction to the text?
Strength of Case:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did the author persuade you that the point/argument/story that she/he was making was valid (or at least convincing)?
Evaluation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How good was this work compared to other work in the same genre or in the course? • <i>It is helpful to write page numbers of relevant passages from the text.</i>
Quality:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is your assessment of the quality of the text? • Were there any flawed/problematic parts?
Other:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Record anything else you may like to recall about the text. • What are some questions that this text makes you ask? • Where have the authors made assumptions about their ideas (i.e. what the reader may already believe or know about the subject)?

Preliminary Information

Title:	
Author(s):	
Source:	

Analysis Information

Purpose:	
Subject:	
Characters:	

Critical Reading Details

Themes:	
Sentence-Level:	
Limits:	
Point of View:	

Presentation and Argumentation

Concepts / Words:	
Implications:	

Close Reading for Literature

--	--

Evaluation

Personal Reaction:	
Strength of Case:	
Evaluation:	
Quality:	
Other:	