

CRITICAL READING: A FIVE-STEP OUTLINE OF THE PROCESS

I. PRE-READING

A. Preliminary Examination

- Examine Length
- Examine the Title
- Think about the Author
- Preview the Introduction and Conclusion of the Essay

B. Classification

- Classify the General Subject Matter in 2-3 words
- Skim the Essay and Describe What Kind of Essay It Is

C. "Seeing the Skeleton"

- Spot Subdivisions:
- Jot Down a Brief Outline of the Essay
- Think about how Parts of Outline Relate to the Whole Work
- Define the Basic Problem the Author Discusses
- Make Up a Few Questions About the Essay Before Reading

II. INTERPRETIVE READING

A. Look for the Important Words

- Locate Recurring Words
- Identify and Look-up Unknown Words
- Identify Oddly Used Words
- Identify Ambiguous Words

B. Paraphrase and Summarize

- Paraphrase as you Read
- Summarize What You've Just Read

C. Locate and Identify the Parts You Do Not Understand.

- Mark Confusing Sections
- Reread Confusing Sections
- Talk It Over with Other Readers
- Sleep on it and return later, if all else fails

III. CRITICAL READING

A. Ask Questions

- Talk Back to the Text
- Question the Text
- Question Your Own Attitude
- Examine the Context
- Look for Broader Implications
- Figure out why it is important

B. Make your Mark

- Make Notes in the Margin
- Make Notes to bring to Class

IV. SYNOPTIC READING

A. Seek Confirmation (Do other books/articles reach similar conclusions?)

B. Seek Disagreement (Do other books/articles reach different conclusions?)

C. Seek Synthesis (Could the ideas in this book be applied in some way to different subjects?)
(Could a smart reader combine or reconcile the different voices in the debate?)

V. POST-READING

A. Review Look again at the notes you took while reading

Double-check that you've answered your own questions.

B. Summarize Restate the main argument and conclusion of the essay in a single sentence.

Summarize your own reaction to the essay.

C. Explain Explain, in your own words, how the author reached the conclusion.

Explain why you found it convincing or not.