

What is a Critique?

- Goes beyond simple summary
- Analysis of a source in terms of a specific purpose
 - as regular information source
 - as a research source
 - as entertainment

What is a Critique?

- intended to go beyond objective description
 - MUST include assessment of value
 - opinion of writer is the POINT

Writing a Critique

Read the original source carefully

You **HAVE** to understand the source to properly critique it

Writing a Critique

Every reader/user has the right to analyze the source, whether an expert or not

The more you know, the more you can say, the more specific your criticism

Writing a Critique

The critique that you write at the beginning of your research is not the same than the one you write at the end

Standards of a Good Critique

- Critique is NOT just negative
- A proper critique also indicates what was done well
- Critique is a **fair** assessment of a source's content and value
- Different needs or contexts lead to different critical evaluations

1st Key Component of a Critique

Always begins with a summary

- Usually written like a standard summary
- Objective and general ideas only
- Description of contents, few details
- No opinion or evaluation yet

1st Key Component of a Critique

Always begins with a summary

This explains how you understood the source's thesis and argument

2nd Key Component of a Critique

NUTS & BOLTS section

- multi-paragraph
- dissects/explains the key points in detail
- what affected **your** opinion good/bad

2nd Key Component of a Critique

NUTS & BOLTS section

- explained at great detail - **with examples**
- the more you know, the more detailed this section will be

3rd Key Component of a Critique

Your final analysis/judgment of source

- Acts as a conclusion
- Builds on nuts & bolts as well as summary

3rd Key Component of a Critique

Your final analysis/judgment of source

- Honest evaluation, not absolute good or bad
- If inappropriate for YOUR needs, but appropriate for others, explain the difference

Writing a Critique

- Ask yourself these questions (critical analysis worksheet helps you do this)
- What are the author's credentials?
- Why are they an authority?
- Why should they be used for an academic/professional research paper?
- Credentials can also come from the context – publisher, website sponsor, etc.

Writing a Critique

- What level of audience is the source written for?
- Items written for a general audience are easy to read, but not usually as strong of sources as academic/professional sources
- You may want to use a source as your own background, but not for the actual paper
- Difficult to read and/or understand is not necessarily a bad thing in research

Writing a Critique

- What is the author's main thesis?
- What are they trying to prove/explain?
- This needs to be put in your own words, not the author's
- That way, you know that YOU have understood the source

Writing a Critique

- What are the author's main arguments or supporting points for their thesis?
- Which are most important (to you at least)?
- Which are most convincing?
- Which parts are weaker, less developed?
- Every argument has its weaker points
- The more you know, the easier it is to spot the weaknesses

Writing a Critique

- Does the author use statistics?
- Are they believable?
- Where do they come from?
- Are they just presented, or are they analyzed and put into context of the thesis?
- Does the author use just statistics to back the claim, or do they synthesize other evidence to support the statistics?

Writing a Critique

- Does the author use specific examples to back up their claims?
- How believable are they?
- Are the examples from their own observation or are they second-hand?
- Are the examples the only support for their claims, or are the examples used to support other evidence?

Writing a Critique

- Does the author present original evidence?
- Original evidence is evidence generated by the author themselves – experiments, surveys, interviews, etc.
- Does the author explain the creation?
- Do they identify time and place of interview?
- Do they indicate questions asked and of how many people ?
- Do they indicate the experiment's setup?

Writing a Critique

- Now – you need to ask yourself these questions about the source:
- Which parts do I **agree** with, and why?
- Which parts do I **disagree** with, and why?
- What parts are usable for **MY** thesis, **MY** argument?
- How does this source (and its arguments) fit into my overall research/thesis/paper?