CRITICAL READING

Analyze the Elements of Thought

- What is the author’s purpose?
- What key questions or problems does the author raise?
- What information, data, and evidence does the author use in his or her reasoning?
- What key concepts does the author use to organize this information, this evidence?
- What key conclusions is the author coming to? Are those conclusions justified?
- What are the author’s primary assumptions? Should any of these assumptions be questioned?
- What viewpoint is the author writing from? Should any other viewpoints be considered?
- What are some important implications of the author’s reasoning?

The Foundation for Critical Thinking

Assess an Author’s Reasoning Through Intellectual Standards

Clarity:
Are the author’s purposes, questions, information, and conclusions clearly stated?

Accuracy:
Is the information from which the author draws his/her conclusions accurate? Should any other aspect of the reasoning be questioned?

Fairness:
Does the author consider, in good faith, the viewpoints of relevant others? Does the author seem to be biased in representing the issue from a certain perspective?

Relevance:
Is the information presented relevant to the key questions and to the author’s primary purpose?

Depth:
Do the author’s claims address the complexities in the questions at issue? Does the author’s reasoning deal with the depth of the issue(s)?

Logical:
Does the author’s reasoning make sense? For example, do the conclusions follow from the information given?

Breadth:
Does the author approach the issues from multiple viewpoints (where relevant)? Are opposing viewpoints considered?

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