**How to Write a CRITICAL ANALYSIS (Critique)**

The Writing & Learning Studio Room 4301 Shoreline Community College

To write an effective critique you must first be a critical reader. You must carefully analyze a writer's argument, perspective, and/or information presented to determine strengths and weaknesses. You must look at the work objectively, using a set of criteria to evaluate it. You then make a judgement of the worth or value of the text. This handout presents a two-stage process for writing a critique.

Stage 1: Reading, Annotating and Analyzing

**1-a. Prepare to read.** First, who is the author? What are the author’s qualifications for writing the article?

Second, read the article’s headings and sub-headings, if any, for an overview of the content. Then read the first and

last paragraphs in the article for a general sense of direction.

**1-b. Read the article actively**. Look for the author’s **thesis**. As you read, note the following:

* What does the author assert? What is s/he arguing for or against? Highlight each assertion and paraphrase

it in the margin of the text.

What are the writer’s key **assumptions?** (An assumption is a belief about something. It is often not stated by a writer. Assumptions underlie all human behavior. For example, when you go to your classroom, you assume your teacher will show up. You should critically examine all assumptions.)

* How does the author **support** each idea, argument, or finding? (Forms of evidence might include statistics, expert testimony, empirical data, historical analysis, case histories, and/or personal experience.) Is the evidence believable? Are you convinced?
* What kind of appeals does the author make in order to persuade the reader? (For example, is the appeal to emotions, reasons/logic, and/or credibility?)
* How do the important ideas relate to each other? Has the author made this clear?
* What is the author’s **tone?** Serious? Satiric? Comical? Speculative?
* Does the writer present her/his thesis as the only reasonable position? Does the author acknowledge

**opposing arguments** and refute them? Has the writer overlooked any possible opposition?

Remember to make **marginal notes** that highlight and briefly summarize each main point made.

**1-c. Respond to the article subjectively.** Free-write for five minutes. Record any feelings, questions, reactions,

or thoughts you have about the article. Does it interest you? Excite you? Is it disturbing or provoking? How

effective does the article seem to be?

Stage 2: Writing the Critique

**2-a**. **Introduction.** **You don’t necessarily have to follow the order below, but the content in your**

**introduction should include this information.**

* Introduce the subject of the article. Give its exact title and full name of the author.
* Briefly summarize the source text. Include information that must be understood before the article’s point can be appreciated. (What does your audience need to know about the article in order to understand your judgement

of it?) It can be helpful to clearly state the author’s argument. For example, “The author argues….”

* Give your thesis—your evaluation of the article.

**2-b. Body.**

In the body, you will explain the judgement you made in your thesis by examining one aspect from the reading at a

time. Your topic sentence will usually indicate the element of the text you’re examining. Support your evaluation with

specific evidence from the text. Remember to cite your sources correctly when using quotes and paraphrases.

Remember: The purpose of a critical analysis is to **evaluate.** What about this text is worthwhile, useful, important,

valid, truthful, convincing, etc.?

**2-c.** **Conclusion**

Don’t simply repeat yourself, but restate your thesis and consider wrapping up your paper by using the strategy you

used to open your paper.