



# CRITICAL READING

## INTERPRETATION: MOVING BEYOND COMPREHENSION

- 📖 Critical reading is a demanding task that requires time and effort.
- 📖 When ...
  - 📖 you must understand new ideas or evaluate complex arguments,
  - 📖 you are reading for class, community, or professional discussion, or
  - 📖 you are reading to prepare for an essay ...you must read more slowly than you do when you read for enjoyment or quick comprehension
- 📖 Critical reading means moving beyond “I liked it” – enjoyment – to “This text offers something important” – **appreciation**.
- 📖 Reading interpretation involves looking at a text’s ideas and information to understand and respond critically to the author’s points.
- 📖 Your repertoire influences how meaningful a text is to you. It determines your connection to a text.  
**Repertoire** includes...
  - 📖 Knowledge about everything (including a text’s subject)
  - 📖 Knowledge about author
  - 📖 Knowledge about forms and genres
  - 📖 Past
  - 📖 Beliefs
  - 📖 Opinions
  - 📖 Attained vocabulary
- 📖 You must use your repertoire to interpret. You contribute your own knowledge and perspective while also assimilating the text’s new ideas and information.
- 📖 Readers call upon what they need for interpretation and recreate the text as they’re reading.
- 📖 The more readers know about reading, authors, life, ideas, history, the richer the repertoires they can draw upon.
- 📖 The broader and deeper the repertoire, the more engaging and satisfying the reading experience.
- 📖 When reading a text for which you don’t possess enough of a repertoire to read effectively,
  - 📖 You dislike it, or
  - 📖 Stop reading it.
- 📖 Approach the text later, you may love it.
  - 📖 The book hasn’t changed.
  - 📖 Your repertoire has.

## ANALYSIS: CLOSE READING AND

### READING LIKE A WRITER: STEP TO RHETORICAL ANALYSIS

- 📖 Reading like a writer involves shifting your focus from meaning to rhetoric, from what the author is communicating to **why** and **how** the author is communicating.
- 📖 You examine the writer’s **choices (how)** and assess their effectiveness in light of the writer’s **purpose (why)**, audience (**how** to communicate to them), and the context (**how** time, place, and circumstance create the need to write) – the **rhetorical situation** (the blend of purpose, audience, and context).



## PREVIEW THE TEXT

- Previewing allows you to gain a sense of what the text is about and how it is organized prior to reading.
- Read head notes, biographical notes, and introductory material. Look at photos and other images.
- Skim text to give it a quick, selective, superficial reading. Don't worry about knowing the ending; it's rhetoric, suspense doesn't play a role.
- Look for time markers, headings, figures, charts, etc.
- Make a tentative decision about the **rhetorical situation**.
- Understanding the **rhetorical situation** allows you to evaluate the points and the writing's quality.

## INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS: ANNOTATION REQUIRED

- Annotating means underlining, highlighting, commenting, questioning, bracketing, joining with arrows, and numbering. You are not critically reading if you are not marking the text.
- When you neglect to annotate, you will miss important details, will have to re-read, and may misinterpret the text. This neglect will cost you more time later or cause you to make judgment errors when you must write about, discuss, or test on the text.
- Annotating directly on the text page is fundamental.
- Research shows that it doesn't matter exactly what, how, or how much you annotate but *that* you annotate. The action of marking as you read increases your chances to read closely and attentively.
- Options for writing directly on the text:
  - Write in book if you own it.
  - Photocopy required reading if you don't own book (especially if a textbook).
  - Use sticky notes directly on the page.

## ANNOTATION: WHAT TO MARK

- Number each paragraph for future reference. Use these numbers for your commenting; they will also help you find portions we analyze in class discussions.
- Mark main ideas:
  - Thesis/main claim
  - All other claims
- Mark words, phrases, or sentences that appeal to you.
- Note words, phrases, or sentences that you don't understand.
- Write in margins:
  - Comment about interesting, important, and questionable points
  - Note questions the text raises or that you have while reading
- Bracket important sections of the text.
- Identify interesting writing strategies.
- Use lines or arrows to join:
  - Related or repeated ideas
  - Repeated words/phrases
  - Related points in a sequence (number these too)

## ANALYSIS: ONCE YOU'VE FINISHED INITIAL READING

- Examine your annotations for patterns or repetitions:
  - Recurring images
  - Similar stylistic features or techniques
  - Related words and phrases
  - Similar examples
  - Reliance on authorities
  - Related rhetorical devices or strategies
- Consider various ways to group these items.
- Determine what the patterns suggest about the writer's intention or rhetorical choices.
- Further mark in margins; add comments and questions.
- Exploratory writing, the act of composing sentences, after annotating leads to idea clarification. You will discover new insights and raise new questions. Like annotation, it's the act itself not quality and quantity that aids with analysis.
- Conversing with others who have read the text also extends your understanding.