

Critical thinking

Critical thinking includes:

1. Identifying other people's positions, conclusions and arguments;
2. Evaluating the evidence for alternative points of view;
3. Weighing up opposing arguments and evidence fairly;
4. Being able to read between the lines, and identifying false or unfair assumptions;
5. Recognising techniques used to make certain positions more appealing than others, such as false logic and persuasive devices;
6. Drawing conclusions about whether arguments are valid and justifiable, based on good evidence and sensible assumptions;
7. Reflecting on issues in a structured way, bringing logical insight to bear;
8. Presenting a point of view in a structured, clear, well-reasoned way that convinces others.

Stella Cottrell (2005)



Critical Reading

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- Two aspects
 - Critical about the text: its language, ideas, arguments and evidence.
 - Critical about self: evaluating our critical thinking

Fact or opinion?

- A fact is a statement that can be verified.
- An opinion is a perception about something.

Questioning!

The duty of the man who investigates the writings of scientists, if learning the truth is his goal, is to make himself an enemy of all that he reads, and, applying his mind to the core and margins of its content, attack it from every side. He should also suspect himself as he performs his critical examination of it, so that he may avoid falling into either prejudice or leniency.

(Hasan Ibn al-Haytham)



Questions for Critical Reading

- **Purpose**

- What is author's overall purpose (to describe, to explain, to convince, to persuade, to negotiate or other purpose)? **What made me to conclude so?**
- Is the overall purpose clear or muddled? **Why do I think so?**

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- **Audience/Reader**

- Who is the intended audience? **Why do I think so?**
- What assumptions does the author make about the reader's knowledge or beliefs?

- **Thesis or Main Idea**

- What is author's thesis/main point? **Why do I think so?**
- Has the author provided supporting evidence/details? **Why do I think so?**
- What are the supporting details? **Why do I think so?**
- Are the supporting ideas actually related to the thesis? **Why do I think so?**

Questions for Critical Reading

- **Organization and Evidence**

- How does the author signal the organisation of the essay?
- What kinds of evidence does the author use (personal experience, descriptions, statistics, other authorities, analytical reasoning, or other).
- What evidence was most or least effective?

- **Language and Style**

- What is the author's tone (humorous, ironic, angry, preachy, academic, or other)?
- Did the tone support or distract from the author's purpose or meaning?
- What choices did the author make in terms of constructions (voice, nominalization, agency)? What do they convey/imply?

Topic Vs Main idea Vs Purpose

- Topic: The subject that is written about
- Main Purpose: Communicative goal
 - Describe, discuss, analyse, compare, convince
- Main Point: Primary point or argument

IIT Kanpur is an established technical university.

There are several differences between IITK and IITC.

IITK is a better educational institute than IITC.

Main idea Vs Purpose

European zoos of the late 19th and early 20th centuries incorporated the visual cultures of their animals' native homes into ornate buildings—reflections of their nations' colonial aspirations. The Berlin Zoo's ostrich house resembled an Egyptian temple, with large columns flanking the entrance and scenes of ostrich hunts decorating the exterior. Berlin's elephant enclosure was built in the spirit of a Hindu temple; the home for its giraffes adopted an Islamic architectural style. Zoos in Cologne, Lisbon, Antwerp, and Budapest, among others, created similar exhibits. These zoos were no home for subtlety: The animals they contained were exotic to most visitors; the buildings that did the containing reinforced the sensation.

Which of the following best states the main idea of the paragraph?

- A. Buildings in late 19th and early 20th century European zoos emphasized the exotic origins of the animals they housed.
- B. Many buildings in late 19th and early 20th century European zoos were built to resemble Egyptian temples.
- C. European zoos in the late 19th and early 20th centuries sought to evoke painful emotions in their visitors.
- D. During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, most of the animals in European zoos came from outside of Europe.

Main idea Vs Purpose

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The main purpose of the paragraph is to:

- A. argue that European zoos of the late 19th and early 20th centuries should have made more of an effort to accommodate their animals' needs
- B. describe specific ways in which late 19th and early 20th century European zoo buildings evoked the animals' home countries
- C. compare the buildings at the Berlin Zoo to zoo buildings in Cologne, Lisbon, Antwerp, and Budapest
- D. illustrate the importance of housing zoo animals in buildings that offer comfort