

Probe the Author's Mind
 ThinkSheet for Expand Critical Perspective

Questions for Critical Reading¹

Thoughtfully address several sub-questions from each of the three main questions. Use extra space as needed.

<p>1. What does the author say in this text and how? (Reconstruct the author's messages as accurately and clearly as you can.)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. What is the author's central claim in this text? What are the supporting claims? b. What reasons does the author give or imply to justify these claims? What evidence is given to support these reasons? c. What are the author's stated and unstated purposes in introducing the ideas, arguments, propositions in this text? What does the author want readers to believe and to do because of this text? d. How does the author go about making the argument? 	
<p>2. Where is this author coming from? (Imagine this author's persona—voice, facial expressions, body language, modes of delivery—and the genuine person behind the performance.)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. What is the author's persona in this text—the image of self he or she wants to portray? b. What are the author's attitudes, emotions, feelings about the material in the text? c. What worldview (philosophy) and social-political stands underlie the author's claims, reasons, and choices? d. AUDIENCE: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) What audience(s) does the author seem to be addressing? 2) What assumptions does this author make about the audience(s)? What seem to be the author's attitudes, emotions, feelings about the audience(s)? 3) How does the author treat his or her audience(s)? 4) What relationship is this author building with the audience(s)? e. Who is the genuine person behind the performance —what does the text reveal about this author's real character and judgment? 	

¹ Sources: selected and adapted from Adler & Van Doren (1972), Bomer & Bomer (2001), Christiansen (1994-2001, pp. 313-315 & 357), and Paul (1992).

3. Should this author's message be accepted and acted upon? (Decide how to respond to the text and why.)

- a. How good is the argument?
1. CONTROVERSY:
 - a) Is the issue important? Is it worth attention now?
 - b) Has the author clearly defined the issue?
 2. QUALITY OF EVIDENCE:
 - a) Is the evidence representative?
 - b) Up to date?
 - c) Accurate?
 - d) Sufficient?
 - e) Relevant
 - f) Internally consistent?
 3. QUALITY OF REASONS:
 - a) Do the conclusions logically follow from the reasons and evidence?
 - b) Is there a more logically justifiable interpretation available of the information/evidence than the one the author provides?
 4. BREADTH OF PERSPECTIVE:
 - a) Does the author consider all sides of the argument?
 - b) Are the other sides shown in their true light—are they accurately represented?
 - c) Are the opposing arguments answered satisfactorily?
 - d) Has the author demonstrated why her/his conclusion has more merit than the alternatives?
 5. CONSEQUENCES:
 - a) If the author's claims were put into practice, what could be the consequences?
 - b) Has the author seriously considered the consequences of her/his claims?
 - c) Would the consequences be constructive or destructive for society?
- b. How trustworthy is the author?
1. Given how the author treats the audience(s) (see 2d3 above), how appropriate is this treatment?
 2. How appropriate is the role the author adopts in this text? (authority, investigator, explorer, teacher, skeptic, advocate, critic, etc.)
 3. How appropriate are the attitudes, emotions the author expresses and seeks to engender in the reader?
 4. Is there an overall consistency in the choices the author made when constructing the argument?
 - a) Do all the reasons, evidence, conclusions, and purposes of the author come together into a unified logical whole, or are there contradictions?
 - b) Do the emotional appeals work in conjunction with the logical appeals, or in opposition?
 - c) Is the author's behavior in the text consistent or inconsistent with the world view and values that underlie the argument?
 5. Is there consistency between this particular text and the author's life generally?