Why bother with Critical Reading?
To comprehend the text’s meaning

To engage emotionally or intellectually with the text

To understand the structure of the text

To find connections between the text and other sources

To provide arguments for/against the text

To use the text as evidence/support for your own argument

& more!
What is critical reading?

What type of text am I reading?
ex. Fiction, Journal Article, Speech, Textbook

Who is the intended audience?
ex. Students, Academics, Policy Makers

Why would you be asked to read this text?
ex. To recall medical information for medical school examinations.

What reading skills would be helpful for this text?
ex. Skimming, annotating, note taking, underlining.
1. Context
2. Reading Goal
3. Reading Strategy
You do not have to be good. You do not have to walk on your knees for a hundred miles through the desert repenting. You only have to let the soft animal of your body love what it loves.

Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you mine. Meanwhile the world goes on. Meanwhile the sun and the clear pebbles of the rain are moving across the landscapes, over the prairies and the deep trees, the mountains and the rivers. Meanwhile the wild geese, high in the clean blue air, are heading home again.

Whoever you are, no matter how lonely, the world offers itself to your imagination, calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting - over and over announcing your place in the family of things.

Wild Geese, by Mary Oliver
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Wild Geese, by Mary Oliver

**First Pass:** What impression does this poem leave on me?

- It makes me feel comforted.
- It reminds me that there is a place for me in the world, even if I feel like I don't deserve it.
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Wild Geese, by Mary Oliver

Preliminary Analysis:

Mary Oliver uses vast and inspiring natural imagery to stir the reader's imagination about the world.

- The imagery of sun and rain moving across landscapes, prairies, deep trees, mountains, and rivers, announces the vast range and diversity of the earth. The movement of the rain over all these features implies a huge sprawl, signalling the massive scale of the world.

The world that Oliver invokes inspires awe and humility.
You do not have to be good.
You do not have to walk on your knees for a hundred miles through the desert repenting.
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Wild Geese, by Mary Oliver

Preliminary Analysis:

Through the image of the wild geese, the reader is reminded about their place in a world that is greater than themselves. This encourages the reader to let go of the guilt that is constraining them.

- Oliver refers to the reader as a "soft animal", relating us to the other animals - geese - mentioned in the poem. When Oliver described the wild geese, high in the clean blue air, heading home, it contrasts with the initial image of a person walking for a hundred miles in the desert, repenting. The image of the wild geese, free in a vast ecosystem reminds us the world is much greater than our worries, and that we have a place in this wide world.
First Pass: understand the denotative meaning of the text. Develop an understanding of the overall story, its structure, and main themes.

Second pass: Hone in on specific passages for a closer reading. Notice the impression the texts leaves on you. Notice impressions that are particularly interesting, odd, confusing, or intriguing.

Third pass: So you have an impression. Investigate HOW the text creates this impression. Look at:
- Vocabulary, syntax, metaphors, rhetorical devices, etc.
- How does the text, using the above tools, create the impression you experience?
• First Pass: Read through the text with the intention of locating the "conclusion" or final claim of the argument amongst the paragraphs.

• Second Pass: Work your way backwards through the text to find the main premises/claims that support the conclusion.
  ○ Pass 2.b: Read the sign-posts and connecting phrases to identify the relationships between the premises and overall argument structure.

• Refine your conclusion and argument structure in light of the above. This is a reiterative process!
### Pro-tips for skimming

- You don't need to know everything in the text! Sometimes, trying to know everything can be detrimental to your reading goals.

- Read the **Abstract, Intro, and Conclusion** for a general understanding of a journal article or scientific study.

- Notice how the material is presented – there might be a background, analysis, and appendix section. Skim the section headers to get a sense of what kind of content is placed where. Which portion of the text is most relevant to your class?

- Look out for signposts that signal main ideas:
  - "the aim of this article is–"
  - "I will argue that–"
  - "the evidence demonstrates that–"

- If you are allowed, consider reading reviews of the books (they usually point out the key features + main argument of the book!)

### Pro-tips for deep reading

- Sometimes, deeper reading sessions are required for close-reading, creative classes, and qualitative analysis of data.

- Understand what you are reading for.
  - Reading for comprehension?
  - Reading for intellectual response?
  - Reading to excavate features/structures/interconnections of the writing?

- When reading a larger text, use annotation symbols/underlining/highlighting to identify key building blocks, evidence, and analysis for the author's argument. This helps you trace different ideas within a larger text.

- Note passages that are confusing, puzzling, or troubling. These can be the focus of interpretive work.

- Use a citation manager (such as Zotero!) to keep track of key quotes and references.
EXERCISE #1

Take out a reading that you are doing for a class this week.

Use some of the critical reading strategies we have discussed and attempt your reading for the next 10 minutes.

Identify:
- CONTEXT
- READING GOAL
- READING STRATEGIES

10:00
Annotation is a very important strategy when you're trying to achieve your reading goals.
A (non-exhaustive) list of Annotation Techniques

- Summarizing
- Paraphrasing
- Identifying structure
- Underlining Main Ideas
- Writing in the margins
- Providing Examples
- Connecting ideas across the text/
  connecting the test with external sources
Crisis are essential to the reproduction of capitalism. It is in the course of crises that the instabilities of capitalism are confronted, reshaped and re-engineered to create a new version of what capitalism is about. Much gets torn down and laid to waste to make way for the new. Once-productive landscapes are turned into industrial wastelands, old factories are torn down or converted to new uses, working-class neighbourhoods get gentrified. Elsewhere, small farms and peasant holdings are displaced by large-scale industrialised agriculture or by sleek new factories. Business parks, R&D and wholesale warehousing and distribution centres sprawl across the land in the midst of suburban tract housing, linked together with clover-leaved highways. Central cities compete with how tall and glamorous their office towers and iconic cultural buildings might be, mega-shopping malls galore proliferate in city and suburb alike, some even doubling as airports through which hordes of tourists and business executives ceaselessly pass in a world gone cosmopolitan by default. Golf courses and gated communities pioneered in the USA can now be seen in China, Chile and India, contrasting with sprawling squatter and self-built settlements officially designated as slums, favelas or barrios pobres.

But what is so striking about crises is not so much the wholesale reconfiguration of physical landscapes, but dramatic changes in ways of thought and understanding, of institutions and dominant ideologies, of political allegiances and processes, of political subjectivities, of technologies and organisational forms, of social relations, of the cultural customs and tastes that inform daily life. Crises shake our mental conceptions of the world and of our place in it to the very core. And we, as restless participants and inhabitants of this new emerging world, have to adapt, through coercion or consent, to the new state of things, even as we, by virtue of what we do and how we think and behave, add our two cents’ worth to the messy qualities of this world.

In the midst of a crisis it is hard to see where the exit might be. Crises are not singular events. While they have their obvious triggers, the tectonic shifts they represent take many years to work out. The long-drawn-out crisis that began with the stock market crash of 1929 was not finally resolved until the 1950s, after the world had passed through the Depression of the 1930s and the global war of the 1940s. Likewise, the crisis whose existence was signalled by turbulence in international currency markets in the late 1960s and the events of 1968 on the streets of many cities (from Paris and Chicago to Mexico City and Bangkok) was not resolved until the mid-1980s, having passed through the early 1970s collapse of the Bretton Woods international monetary system set up in 1944, a turbulent decade of labour struggles in the 1970s and the rise and consolidation of the politics of neoliberalisation under Reagan, Thatcher, Kohl, Pinochet and, ultimately, Deng in China.

With the benefit of hindsight it is not hard to spot abundant signs of problems coming well before a crisis explodes into full view. The surging inequalities in monetary wealth and incomes of the 1920s and the property market asset bubble that popped in 1928 in the USA presaged the collapse of 1929, for example. Indeed, the manner of exit from one crisis contains within itself the seeds of crises to come. The debt-saturated and increasingly deregulated global financialisation that began in the 1980s as a way to solve conflicts with labour by facilitating geographical mobility and dispersal produced its denouement in the fall of the investment bank of Lehman Brothers on 15 September 2008.

It is, at the time of writing, more than five years since that event,
Some cold, hard

Note Taking Tips (#1)

Take Advantage of Excel when writing Literature Reviews, Annotated Bibliographies, or conducting research where you are synthesising many different sources,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Full Citation</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Journal/Book Title</th>
<th>Key Words</th>
<th>Main Idea(s)</th>
<th>Relevance to my project</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ahn Jean (2003) The Socio-Economic Background of the Gwangju Uprising, New Political Science, 25:2, 159-176, DOI: 10.1080/07393140307187</td>
<td>Ahn Jean</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>The Socio-Economic Background of the Gwangju Uprising</td>
<td>New Political Science</td>
<td>Economics; Socioeconomic Analysis; Cultural Analysis</td>
<td>The Gwangju Uprising is not a singular 10-day event, but is an eruption of socio-economic contradictions of South Korean society in the late 1970s.</td>
<td>Background to the uprising, framing the factors that led to the conflict</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Some cold, hard

Note Taking Tips (#2)

Take note of all your key passages in one document, with the page number and key-words to tag the content of each passage.

This really helps in avoiding accidental plagiarism!
Impersonality and the lack of intimate human relationships

FROM WIRTH

- ‘acquaintances tend to syand ina. relationship of utility to us in the sense that the role which each on eplays in our live is overwhelmingly regated as a means for the achievement of our own ends’ (12)
- ‘loss of the ‘spontaneous self-exp, the morale and the sense of participation that come with living in an integrated society’ (13)
- ‘physical contacts are close but our social contacts are distant’ (14)
- ‘close living together and working ...spirit of competition, aggrandisement, and mutual exploitation’ (15)
- ‘weakening the bonds of kinship, and the declining socila significance of the famiylm the disappearance of the neighbourhood, and the undermining of the traditional basis of social solidarity’ (21)

OWN IDEAS

- Singaporean’s being known as kiasu, or afriad to lose out → could stem from the lack of emotional ties as pointed out by Wirth
Exercise #2

Take out a reading you are working on for a paper, an upcoming lesson, or a presentation.

Activity: Annotate your text in a way that will be helpful for your overall reading goals

Keep the genre of the text and your reading goals in mind when figuring out a system of annotation!
Feedback