

## Helpful Hints for Writing A Critique

If you are asked to write a critique of an article or an essay assigned by your professor, you analyze the reading, identify your personal reaction to it, and develop a clear, concise explanation of support for your reaction. Your knowledge of the discipline in which you are working is the basis on which you build the explanation. Successful critiquing begins with the **READING**:

- ◆ Read the entire article, trying to identify the writer's main point. Underline any unfamiliar words as you read, but do not stop to look them up until you have finished reading.
- ◆ Look up the unfamiliar words, and then carefully and slowly read the article again. This time look for the ideas the author uses to support the main point.
- ◆ Summarize the article in your own words, using just one or two sentences.
- ◆ Check out the author's credentials and the reliability of the sources. Is this a reliable author? Can he or she be considered an authority on the subject? Are the sources upon which the article is based clearly and accurately indicated?
- ◆ Read the article one more time to analyze how the author has supported his or her ideas. Are there examples, facts, or opinions? What is the author's bias? Are opposing arguments addressed competently? Are you convinced or unconvinced about the author's main point? Why? Will you incorporate the information you read into your life or do you reject it? Why? (You may agree with some points and disagree with others.)

Now that you have thoroughly read and analyzed the work, you are ready to plan how you will **WRITE** about it. The key is to identify what you want to say about the article in an effective **thesis statement**.

<b>SOME KEY WORDS TO USE IN A CRITIQUE:</b>			
evidence	statistics	logical appeals	reasonable
facts	expert opinions	relevant	logical
opinions	emotional appeals	representative	fallacies
examples	ethical appeals	accurate	flawed

Once you know what you want to say, follow this pattern:

- **Introduction:** Introduce the work by stating the author, title, and source along with the date of publication. Polish the one- to two-sentence summary of the work that you developed earlier and add it to the introduction, leading up to your thesis statement.
- **Body:** Use about three to five points to support your thesis statement. The questions you answered as you read should serve as a guide to help you select your points. For example you can discuss
  - the author's credentials or lack of credentials
  - the audience he or she aims at and the appropriateness of the vocabulary
  - the amount and kinds of support used to back up his or her major ideas
  - the use and correct identification of outside research
  - how the author handles any biases or opposing opinions
  - the logic of the argument
  - how the author's ideas correlate with knowledge you already have

Use evidence from the work to demonstrate the point you are making. You can either paraphrase or quote directly. Also explain why the evidence supports your point. For example, you might say:

**The author uses many statistics to prove his point, but he fails to indicate his source. He notes that one out of two marijuana smokers go on to use more dangerous drugs; however, he never says how he acquired that information, nor does he include a reference at the end of the article. Should the reader trust that the statistics are accurate, or could they be the author's invention because he is opposed to all legalization of drugs? If no sources are acknowledged for statistics, he author casts doubt on his entire argument.**

Each of your paragraphs should include these three elements: your point, evidence from the work, and explanation of why the evidence supports your point.

- **Conclusion:** Here you can summarize your main points, restate your thesis statement in fresh words, and discuss the success or failure of the author to convince the reader. Is his or her work significant? How does it impact readers?

Critiques are usually written in third person. Check with your instructor about his or her preference. Be sure to read your assignment sheet carefully. There may be some variations from the pattern suggested here. Keep this in mind: Instructors want less summary and more analysis.