Kenyon College Writing Center | Fall 2025 | Reading a Text Critically

Step One:	Prereading: what did you learn about the text before you read it?	Here we're thinking about class notes, author bios (if relevant), and contexts provided by your professor (historical, ethical, disciplinary-focused, etc.)
Step Two:	Add context: when did the text happen? What else was occurring?	Here you can also think about where the text is occurring-is it something happening in a specific setting (in or outside the USA), is it happening as part of a process (like lab work), is it part of a larger study?
Step Three:	Ask questions as you read: what is important to remember? What is the text about? Who is the author?	Make notes (in-text or in a separate place): ask yourself, why does this part seem particularly important? Why does the author keep using this word? What are they trying to tell me, even if it's not directly stated? Include page numbers if that's helpful.
Step Four:	Reflect: does the text support or challenge my beliefs in some way? How?	(Might need to go to step 5 first and return to this step). Here you're thinking about how what you read impacted or enhanced your knowledge in some way. What insights have you gained? What do you still wish you learned more about? Are there areas for future study in subsequent texts?
Step Five:	Summarize: What is the main message of the text? (logos) (Might be good to do after each chapter).	Is the message clear? What do I take away as the message? Do others (perhaps articles critical of the text) take away a different message? (You can also think about why this is the message you take away. Does it have anything to do with step 4?)
Step Six:	Examine the rhetoric: Are there moments of logic? Do we trust the author's credentials? What emotional appeals are used?	Logos-logic: how logical, understandable, clear is the author's message and supporting points? Credentials-ethos: why is this author the one who can write this text? What establishes them as someone who can publish on this topic/ in this field? Emotions-pathos: are they playing on our emotions at all (usually through testimonies or anecdotes)? What emotions are they incorporating into the text if any?

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