

Critical Reading





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College and Career Readiness Standards for Reading:

7. Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse formats and media, including visually, quantitatively, as well as in words.
8. Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.
9. Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.



Where do you get information?





When we watch the news, read a magazine article or listen to a political speech, we need to keep in mind that there are multiple perspectives on every story.

When analyzing multiple works on a similar theme, it is important to use **logical reasoning** to evaluate and compare the central ideas or arguments. Ask yourself:

- How do the authors' or speakers' purposes differ?
- Do the authors portray the subject matter objectively?
- Do the authors present multiple points of view and include sources representing both sides of the story?
- What evidence does each author use to support his or her main idea?





It is important to determine if a source is **biased** for or against one side of an argument.

Biased writing often leaves out certain information, only including facts that support the author's point of view.

For example, some news sources report in favor of the Republican Party, while others tend to favor the Democratic Party. While both sources report on many of the same stories, the people and events are portrayed very differently.



Propaganda is information, especially of a biased nature, used to promote or publicize a particular product, cause or point of view.

Propaganda is intended to make its audience accept an idea without examining the evidence from different perspectives.

Propaganda appears in just about every medium, including newspapers, books, radio, posters, advertising, magazines and political speeches.



Propaganda techniques



Recognizing propaganda



A critical reader evaluates not only what evidence the author uses to support an idea, but also how the evidence is being used.

When looking at two or more texts, compare what evidence the authors use. For each text, consider:



1. Does the author present the information objectively, representing both sides of the argument?

2. Does the author exaggerate or distort the evidence to support one side over the other?

3. Does the author leave information out, and why is it left out?

It is important to closely evaluate an argument and distinguish facts from opinions.

Facts are proven statements that are verified through research. In an argument, facts support the assertions being made.

*Example:
The Battle of Wounded Knee was on December 29, 1890.*

Opinions are personal judgments. Opinions may be reasonable inferences based on facts, but they are not proven statements.

*Example:
The Battle of Wounded Knee was the most horrific American battle ever fought.*

Using evidence



Understanding an author's points of view is crucial to evaluating his or her argument. Ask yourself these questions:

1. What does the author hope to accomplish?

2. Is the author for or against the issue at hand?

3. What details point to the author's point of view?

When an author is for a given cause, he or she has taken the **affirmative stance**.

When an author is against a given cause, he or she has taken the **negative stance**.



Affirmative or negative stance



Many documents throughout U.S. history have shared a common purpose. Whether conveyed through a speech, a letter, a film or the drafting of a law, these texts share common themes and address similar issues.

The following examples all address the issue of inequality and civil rights:

- The Emancipation Proclamation
- Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech
- The Voting Rights Act of 1965.

Consider how the language of these documents might differ. Who is the target audience for each?



Comparing texts

