What is Critical Reading?

Critical reading is reading with the purpose of understanding, analyzing and evaluating the material. A critical reader is constantly asking the following question when reading:

Am I really THINKING about what I am reading?

**BECOMING A CRITICAL READER:**

* **Consider the source**
* What kind of publication is this?
* What is the author’s background in this subject?
* To whom is the author writing?
* **Recognize what is said**
* Has the author really said what I think he said?
* **Recognize assumptions and implications**
* Are the author’s statements consistent?
* What assumptions has the author made? Are these assumptions stated?
* Does a statement depend on its context for meaning?
* **Recognize intent, attitude, tone and bias**
* What is the author’s intention?
* What is the author’s attitude? Tone? Bias?
* Does the author make the point directly or in a roundabout way through humor, satire, irony or sarcasm?
* Are the author’s words to be taken exactly as they appear, or are they slang, idioms, or figures of speech?
* Which of the author’s statements are facts? Opinions?
* **Analyze arguments**
* Which of the author’s statements are supported? Which are unsupported?
* What are the author’s conclusions?
* Which of the author’s conclusions are justified? Which are not justified?

*Adapted from Critical Reading Improvement, Anita Harnadek (McGraw-Hill, 1978)*

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