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)*