

# Critical Analysis Handout

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CENTRE FOR  
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## Critical Analysis

Critical analysis is the thoughtful interpretation of data based on the available evidence and making insightful connections between ideas and concepts. Critical analysis is asking questions while collecting information/resources about a topic. The answers to these questions become the framework of your critical analysis.

Any critical analysis writing you do should cover the groundwork of **who, what, where, when, why, and how**. After thoroughly analysing the elements of a topic, you should be able to elaborate on the scope and set parameters of the critical analysis discussion covered in your writing. Most topics are huge and complex; setting parameters of what will and won't be analysed is just as important as detailing the 6Ws. Finally, take the 6W's and extrapolate your critical analysis further, and you should be able to answer: so what? What next? And why does this matter?

Remember, a critical analysis is not necessarily a criticism of literature or a topic. A critical analysis is when you analyse, understand, and extrapolate from a topic, substantiating your analysis with the available evidence. Below are some questions you can ask yourself when researching the topic for your critical analysis.

### Who

- Who is the author? (Are they well-known and respected in their field? Do they have a bias?)
- Who is their intended audience?
- Who benefits from this?
- Who are the key stakeholders in the topic? (Are they in positions of authority on the topic? Are they influenced/affected by this topic? Do they have an understanding of the topic at all?)
- Who makes decisions on this? (Are they in a position of power, intrinsic or innate?)
- Who is affected by this? (Scale, individual, small group, minority, majority, population)
- Who is a leading expert(s) on this subject?

### What

- What is the author's viewpoint?
- What is the intended audience's viewpoint?
- What is the actual audience/your viewpoint?

- What are the strengths and weaknesses of this piece of information (does this article have a robust sample size? Are there errors in their methodology?)
- What are the other perspectives on this topic? (Is there conflicting information surrounding this topic?)
- What is the best/worst-case scenario for this topic? (Are there historical or current examples of this? Or can you extrapolate best/worst case if the topic is allowed to continue?)
- What can be done to make a positive or negative change in this topic?
- What is getting in the way of progress?
- What is getting in the way of this topic? (What is preventing or holding back key stakeholders from making a positive/negative change in this topic?)
- What is the most/least important? (Are there factors that have been blown out of proportion for this topic? Is the most critical factor of this topic overshadowing equally valuable factors?)
- What are the ethical implications?
- What are the cultural ramifications?
- What are the scientific/medical impacts that have bearing on this topic?
- What are the broader social issues that come into play?

### Where

- Where is this applicable? Is it 'Canada-healthcare similar'?
- Where do you see this in the real world? (Can the results of an article's study be replicated or seen in a real-world setting? Are there similar concepts/situations? Does it occur frequently or irregularly?)
- Where is the most need for this? (Is this topic geographic or population-specific? Rural vs. urban vs. suburban?)
- Where in the world would this be a problem? (Is it dependent on specific factors in the area? Weather, insects and animal populations, topography, climate, pollution, societal landscape, culturally enforced practices, religious requirements, genetic bottlenecks, etc.)

### When

- When was this discussed? (Is it recent? Within the last five years?)
- When is this acceptable/unacceptable?
- When would this benefit/harm society?

- When would be the best time to take action?
- When will we know if it/us has succeeded? (Ex. when will we know the long-term effects of a new drug?)
- When has this happened previously? (History repeating itself?)
- When can we expect this to change?
- When should key stakeholders be invited to participate?

### Why

- Why is this a problem or a challenge?
- Why is this relevant to the author? To the audience? To population groups?
- Why does this influence people?
- Why should people understand this?
- Why should this information be disseminated to the public?
- Why has this been done a certain way for x period of time?
- Why is there a need for this?
- Why does this matter? (For the author, the audience, you, or people/groups)

### How

- How is this similar to [insert other topic or concept]?
- How does this impact others/concepts/topics?
- How do we know about this? (Was it first brought to light by a trustworthy source? Is it an observable phenomenon?)
- How can we approach this topic safely, professionally, and respectfully?
- How does this benefit us or others?
- How does this harm us or others?
- How do these two concepts/ideas interact with each other? (Cause & effect, problem & solution, contrasting, supporting, building, symbiosis & mutualism, predation & parasitism & competition)
- Can we/others predict how this will turn out in the future?
- Can we/others change this?

## Resources

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