



## Questions for Critical Thinking & Analysis

### Overall Analysis<sup>1</sup>

*In this text/source...*

- “What do I *notice*?” (as opposed to “what do I think or feel?”) What do I find most interesting, strange, or revealing? Why?
- What is implied by my observations, and why does it matter?
- What is the main argument? Are there other implicit arguments?
- What is the meaning of the key passages? Are other meanings possible?
- Which ideas are most significant, and why?
- Which ideas don’t fit with the rest? So what?
- “How do [the] parts help me to understand the meaning of the [text] as a whole?”
- “If we think in the way that the reading suggests, what might follow? What might we gain/lose?”
- When was this written/created? Where? “What else was going on at the time that might have shaped the writer’s ideas and attitudes?”
- How do the time and location impact the arguments, assumptions, and implications of this text?
- What is the interpretive context--the lens--within which the writer is operating? How does this impact the arguments, assumptions, and implications of this text?

### Key Terms<sup>2</sup>

*In this text/source...*

- What are the key terms, and what do they really mean? How are they being defined, either implicitly or explicitly?
- Is a key term used differently from its used in other contexts? If so, what is this text’s nuanced definition, and how does it impact your understanding of other portions of this text?
- If the full meaning of a term is unclear, how does that impact your understanding of other portions of the text?

### Perspectives, Assumptions, and Connections<sup>2</sup>

*In this text/source...*

- Are there any unexplored perspectives or implications of the main points and arguments?
- What explicit assumptions or interpretations are made about evidence and ideas? Are those assumptions and interpretations reasonable, or do they need more support?
- What are the underlying assumptions of key terms and arguments? Are any groups or perspectives overlooked?
- What connections are made between ideas in this text and other concepts outside of the text? Are those connections legitimate?
- What cause-effect thinking is apparent? Is the evidence sufficient to prove that the effect was a direct result of the cause? Could there be other causes?
- What comparisons are being made, and are the things being compared “truly alike in significant ways? Do the differences between them affect the comparison?”
- Are there any false dilemmas (unfairly viewing an issue as only having two sides or two options, often two extremes or polar opposites)? What other sides/options are worth considering?

1. Adapted from Rosenwasser, David and Jill Stephen. *Writing Analytically*. 8th ed., Cengage Learning, 2019, chapters 1-4.

2. Adapted from Woolfolk Cross, Donna. “Propaganda: How Not to Be Bamboozled.” *Language Awareness: Readings for College Writers*, 12th ed., edited by Paul Eschholz, et al., Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2016, 247-57.