

CRITICAL REVIEW

A critical review is an evaluation of an academic text. Evaluation is the process of demonstrating an understanding of the text by analysing its purpose and structure and assessing its appropriateness according to various academic criteria.

Analysis

Analysis of a text involves careful examination of its content, issues and structure by separating it into component parts and explaining how these parts function and interact.

Critique

- Critique is not necessarily negative - it may be positive, negative or a combination of both
- Critique notes and highlights what is new, old and important in the text
- When you find yourself responding negatively to a text, analyse this response - sometimes texts challenge your perceptions, assumptions, biases, ideological position
- Put the article aside and think about what you have read; if anything remains unclear, go back to the article to clarify your understanding
- Critique each text on its own merits, but also keep in mind its place in the literature as a whole and its value to your own research question
- Use your own words where possible
- Use direct quotations only when you want to communicate the author's unique mode of expression
- Keep quotations brief
- Quote briefly from the article and then discuss what you have quoted as part of your critique
- Make it clear when you are summarising the writer's ideas and when you are using your own ideas
- Your review should stand on its own
- Make sure you are writing a critical review and not simply a summary of what the author says.

Critical review questions

Some useful questions to ask about a text are:

- Has the author formulated a research question/problem/issue?
- Is the question clearly defined?
- Is the significance of the question clearly established?
- Could the question be approached more effectively from another perspective?
- What is the author's research orientation?
- Who is the intended audience for the text?
- Are main points adequately explained?
- Are comments adequately supported?
- Are the research/methodology/samples/tests/conclusions valid?
- Are measurements clear and sufficiently detailed?
- Is more (or less) data needed?
- Are arguments logically sound/interesting/relevant/timely?
- Is more information needed?
- What style/language/examples are used?

- Does the text contribute new knowledge/perspectives or contradict and refute existing views?
- What are the limitations of the text?

More personal perspectives:

- How does the text help me to understand the topic?
- What part of the text inspires me?
- How does this text relate to the research question I'm developing?