

Module 3: Applying Analysis



In this module, you will review analytical strategies and create a writing plan using the elements of a critical analysis.

Reading: Preparing for Assignment 1, Milestone 1: Writing Plan Draft

As you learned in previous modules, developing analysis skills is an important step in becoming a strong reader and writer. Your Writing Notes in Module One helped you to complete a literal reading analysis of your selected reading. And in Module Two, you used active reading strategies to complete a deeper analysis of a sample text. Both of these activities will now help you engage in the process of critical analysis.

Critical analysis is the process of studying a text and evaluating the author's main argument. When looking at a text critically, you examine what the author is saying and how he or she is saying it. You explore both the strengths and the weaknesses of the argument. You break pieces of the text down into smaller parts and then put them back together again. Ultimately, your goal is to formulate a clear and concise opinion about the text and then to present your opinion of the work in the form of a written essay.



The Critical Analysis Essay

Your critical analysis essay will build on your responses from your Writing Notes from Module One. You should take some time to review your notes to help prepare you for the upcoming assignment.

When writing this essay, you will consider questions like:

- What is the author's main argument?
- Do you agree or disagree with the author?
- Is the author's argument strong or weak?
- Can you find evidence from the text itself to support your opinion?
- Can you make any personal connections to the text?
- What from your own life influenced you to draw the conclusions you did from the reading?

State Your Opinion Clearly

Do not be shy about stating your opinion about the text. You must avoid taking a stand "down the middle." Be clear with your opinion; avoid vague language. This opinion will become the backbone for your essay.

Use Evidence

Support your opinion with detailed evidence from the text. This means that you will quote, paraphrase, and summarize direct phrases and sentences from the text throughout your essay. (More information about using quotations, paraphrases, and summaries is available in Module Four.)

Focus on the Text, Not on Yourself

Try to avoid using phrases like "I think" or "in my opinion." It is obvious that these are your thoughts and opinions, since you are writing the essay. Make the author and the text the subject of your essay.

Be Open to Revision

One of the most important steps in the writing process is the final one—revision and editing. When you revise your essay, you use feedback from your instructor and peers to improve the quality of your product. You will focus on making improvements to your essay, considering the organization of your ideas, your language use, and your adherence to the guidelines and rubric for the assignment.

Remember that your essay will focus on your previously selected reading. Click on the title of your reading to access another copy of the text. (These readings are provided by the Shapiro Library.)

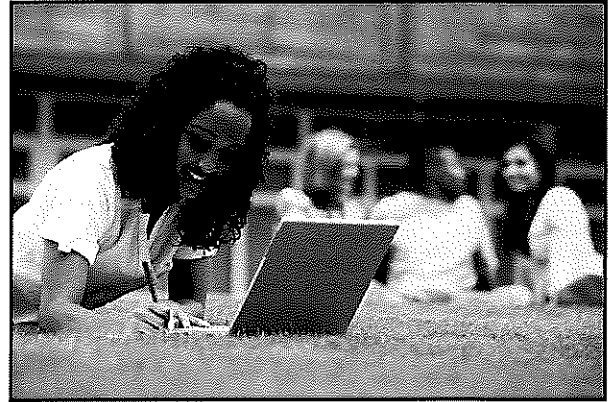
"Mother Tongue" by Amy Tan (2006)

"Me Talk Pretty One Day" by David Sedaris (1999)

"Some Lessons From the Assembly Line" by Andrew Braaksma (2005)

Reading: Preparing for Assignment 1, Milestone 1: Writing Plan Draft

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The Critical Analysis Essay

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When writing this essay, you will consider questions like:

- What is the author's main argument?
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- Can you find evidence from the text itself to support your opinion?
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- What from your own life influenced you to draw the conclusions you did from the reading?

Click on each of the tabs below to learn about some general tips for writing a strong critical analysis essay:

State Your Opinion Clearly**Use Evidence****Focus on the Text, Not on Yourself****Be Open to Revision**

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Reading: Preparing for Submitting Your Writing Notes

Introduction to Analysis

In [1-3: Discussion: Moment of Critical Thinking in Real Life \(/content.php?cid=116927\)](#), you engaged in a small group discussion with your peers about a moment in your life when you had to look at something a little closer to make sense of it. In addition to **describing** that moment, you also engaged in the process of **analysis**.

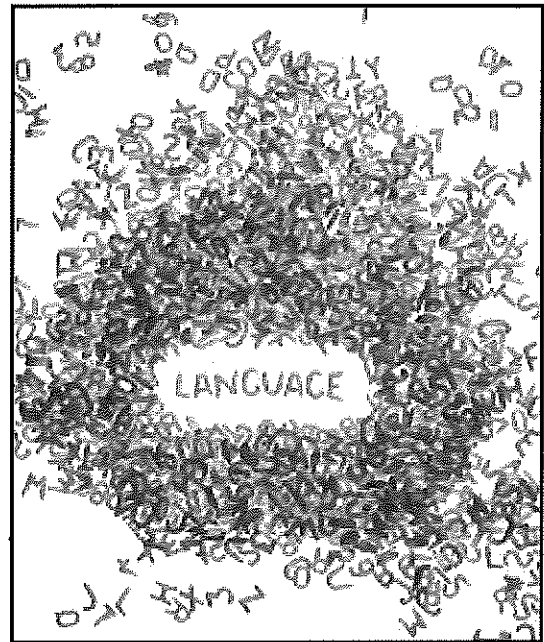
Analysis is a process that you constantly use in your everyday life. When you are getting ready to take out a loan in order to buy a car, you analyze the loan documents in order to see how it will affect your budget. When you study the nutritional information of a food product and compare it to similar products, you are analyzing that information in order to understand how it will impact your health. You even use analysis skills when watching your favorite television show and try to predict what will happen in the following scenes.

Analysis is also a process that is important in your academic and professional endeavors. You use analytical skills in all types of academic coursework—from business to education to health care to the social sciences. You also use analysis in the workplace—whether you are completing a business plan, critiquing a student's work, considering a patient's symptoms, or reading over a case study.

You will develop and use analytical skills in this course, with the goal of helping you to become a strong and confident writer. You are going to focus on strengthening your analysis and writing skills using one of three selected readings that will be introduced later in the eLearning material.

Literal Reading

What is **literal reading**? It is when you take what you're reading at face value. Literal reading is surface-level reading of a text. It is an understanding of a piece of text without breaking down components to study further.



Cup finds sweet home back in Chicago

BY JAY COHEN

CHICAGO — Showing off their grit and determination, the Chicago Blackhawks finally put away the Tampa Bay Lightning in the Stanley Cup finals.

The city of broad shoulders, strong enough to carry the silver trophy once again. A Windy City party 77 years in the making.

Duncan Keith scored in the second period and directed a dominant defense that shut down Tampa Bay's high-scoring attack, and the Blackhawks beat the

BLACKHAWKS 2, LIGHTNING 0

Blackhawks are champs for third time in six years

Lightning, 2-0, in Game 6 on Monday night for their third NHL title in the past six seasons.

"It doesn't feel real right now. It's unbelievable," captain Jonathan Toews

said. "Feels like a dream. Every time we do it, it gets better and better. It's an amazing feeling."

Patrick Kane had a goal and an assist, helping the Blackhawks clinch the Cup on home ice for the first time since 1935. Corey Crawford, who was pulled from Chicago's first-round series against Nashville, had 25 saves in his fifth career playoff shutout.

Keith was a unanimous selection for the Conn Smythe Trophy for playoff MVP after he finished with 21 points while

STANLEY CUP: CONTINUED ON D3

After 77 years, the Blackhawks win one for the home crowd

Clinching game: ■ Home ■ Away

Year	Score	Opponent
1934	3-1	vs. Red Wings
1938	3-1	vs. Maple Leafs
1961	4-2	vs. Red Wings
2010	4-2	vs. Flyers
2013	4-2	vs. Bruins
2015	4-2	vs. Lightning

We engage in literal reading every day. Reading news stories is one of the ways we quickly gain information. Depending on the story, however, we may read further into it.

Image courtesy of Ron Cogswell (CC-BY 2.0)

previous

1 / 4

next

When you engage in literal reading, you will often have a "gut reaction" to the text. For example, if you see a stop sign when driving down a road, your gut reaction is to, hopefully, stop. Or if you send a quick email or text to a friend confirming a meeting time, the message is often relayed at face value ("Let's meet after work at 6pm."). Some news articles also relay news that prompts a gut reaction from the reader (e.g., "I'm really mad that the author wrote that," "What an enlightening story," "This is a great idea—everyone should be on board!" These gut reactions are important in our daily lives because we do not have time to stop and contemplate every piece of text we encounter. When a road sign says, "Stop," we stop without a second thought.

There are, however, times in our lives where we should break away from literal readings and gut reactions and instead invest in a moment of critical thinking. For example, have you ever seen a Facebook post that makes a claim that seems a bit outrageous, yet thousands of people have "liked" or reacted to it using an emoji? It is important to not take every article or post we see at face value. Instead, we need to take the time to digest each component of the reading to identify its strengths, weaknesses, and lingering questions. Did that Facebook post have any credible sources to back up its claims? Is the information being presented in the post outdated or eschewed? Does it seem like there may be a bias in the post that needs to be addressed? Are there specific words, phrases, graphics, or charts that are used to encourage a gut reaction? Does the post say, "This is outrageous," "Take a look at this horrible story," "You won't believe what happens next," or "Just one more reason to be mad about X, Y, or Z"? Does the post have a photo that makes you have an immediate reaction

← previous

2 / 4

next →

Re: meeting

To: Jean Johnson

Re: meeting

Hi Jean,

Yes, let's meet in the conference room in 10 minutes.

Best,
Cynthia

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Emails are a good way to convey information at work or in other social contexts, and messages like these are easy to take at face value.

← previous

2 / 4

next →

← previous

3 / 4

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Basic social interactions are often communicated by text, and simple exchanges over text message are another example of everyday literal reading.

← previous

3 / 4

next →



Even if we are not actively seeking out information, it is all around us. Road signs, store signs, maps, and other means of communication give us many instances of literal reading.

*Image courtesy of Espen Klem
(CC-BY 2.0)*

—surprise, frustration, anger, or joy? If we take every single piece of text we encounter at face value, whether it's a Facebook post, an op-ed piece, a speech, a billboard campaign, or anything else that evokes an immediate emotional reaction, we may have a difficult time identifying what's really being said by the author, group, or company.

You will utilize critical thinking skills as you read and analyze a chosen article in this course. For now, though, let's look at some advantages and disadvantages to literal reading.

Advantages	Disadvantages
Literal reading is quick; we can instantly understand what is clearly stated.	We may gloss over the key significance of the text.
Literal reading is easy; we take what is said at face value and do not think about deeper meanings.	We may not pick up on any nuances in the text that would give it richer, fuller meaning.
Literal reading offers information immediately, which can be helpful when such information needs to be conveyed rapidly.	Any implied information or suggestions may be overlooked because we stop looking for more information.
Literal reading offers universal understanding; there is less room for misinterpretation because there is only one clear meaning.	We may miss the bigger picture or overall context if we're simply focusing on one explicit reading.

Example: Literal Reading Modeling

Read the following excerpt from Frederick Douglass's *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave* and click on the highlighted sections to see examples of reactions that come from a literal reading of the text.

Frederick Douglass (1818–1895) was an African American who escaped slavery and went on to become a leading intellectual, social reformer, and abolitionist. Douglass's first autobiography was published in 1845. In the chapter that follows, Douglass uses narrative argument in his autobiography to help illustrate how literacy changed his life. These selections show how literacy helped to not only give him his freedom, but first forced him to recognize his lack thereof. In his *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, Douglass shows us the story of how his growing ability to read and write changes the way he thinks about the people around him, as well as his own life.

I lived in Master Hugh's family about seven years. During this time, I succeeded in learning to read and write. In accomplishing this, I was compelled to resort to various stratagems. I had no regular teacher. My mistress, who had kindly commenced to instruct me, had, in compliance with the advice and direction of her husband, not only ceased to instruct, but had set her face against my being instructed by any one else.

She was an apt woman; and a little experience soon demonstrated, to her satisfaction, that education and slavery were incompatible with each other. From this time I was most narrowly watched. If I was in a separate room any considerable length of time, I was sure to be suspected of having a book, and was at once called to give an account of myself. All this, however, was too late. The first step had been taken. Mistress, in teaching me the alphabet, had given me the *inch*, and no precaution could prevent me from taking the *ell*.

Douglass then describes how he learned how to read; he did this principally by doing his errands very quickly, bringing his book with him, and asking the local children to help him learn to read. When he was twelve, he read several documents that changed his life:

The reading of these documents enabled me to utter my thoughts, and to meet the arguments brought forward to sustain slavery; but while they relieved me of one difficulty, they brought on another even more painful than the one of which I was relieved. The more I read, the more I was led to abhor and detest my enslavers.

The narrative concludes with Douglass telling a story about speaking with some Irishmen who suggested that he should run away to the north, where he could be free. He ends the chapter by telling us that, although he pretended he wasn't interested in the idea of escaping,

I nevertheless remembered their advice, and from that time I resolved to run away. I looked forward to a time at which it would be safe for me to escape. I was too young to think of doing so immediately; besides, I wished to learn how to write, as I might have occasion to write my own pass. I consoled myself with the hope that I should one day find a good chance. Meanwhile, I would learn to write.

A literal reading of these passages gives us several pieces of information. For example, Douglass lived with Master Hugh for seven years, where he learned to read and write, and his Mistress taught him the alphabet. There are deeper meanings to be inferred from this passage, but a literal reading gives us just the facts.

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