

Guidelines for analyzing text & argument

- Who is the writer? When was the piece written? What kind of writing is this? Who are its intended readers—a sympathetic, hostile or neutral audience?
- What is the writer's thesis or central idea? What principal claim is being asserted?
- What is the writer's tone? Is it appropriate for the subject?
- What specific questions does the writer address (implicitly or explicitly)?
- How is the text organized, and is the organization effective? Are the title, the opening paragraphs, and the concluding paragraphs effective? In what ways? How do the key parts of the text relate to each another and to the thesis argument?
- What kinds of rhetorical strategies has the writer used to generate interest in the argument and to persuade readers of its merit?
- What kinds of argumentative appeals does the writer make (ethical, logical, moral, emotional, political, theological, historical)?
- What evidence does the writer use to support the thesis? How persuasive and credible is the evidence?
- Are important terms satisfactorily defined? Does the writer ever confuse facts with beliefs or opinions?
- What assumptions does the writer make about his or her audience and the subject matter? Do you share those same assumptions?
- Does the writer anticipate objections and counter opposing views?
- Does the writer fall prey to any faulty reasoning?
- To what extent has the author convinced you? Why or why not?