
Literary Criticism: An Overview

CRITICAL
APPROACHES
TO
LITERATURE

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Why be Critical?



As a student in higher education, you are expected to develop a critical approach to your studies it helps:

Across disciplines

Interpret news reports

Identify political agendas

Make career choices



Becoming skilled in critical analysis takes time, however it is a transferable skill for life

What does it mean to be Critical?

Analysing and evaluating the credibility of:

sources of information

evidence

ideas and viewpoints (including your own)

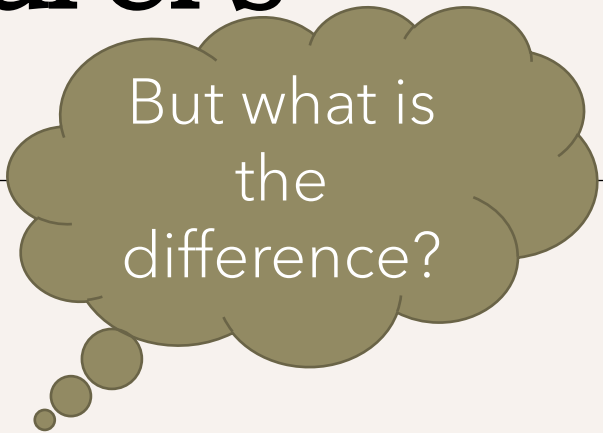
practices/approaches (including your own)

But

remember...

to be critical can also mean identifying positive elements

You may hear your lecturers say...



But what is
the
difference?

... that you or someone else's work is too
descriptive and that it needs to be more
critical or analytical

	Describing (descriptive)	move towards	Analysing (critical / analytical)
	Stating what happened	→	Identifying the significance of what happened
	Noting the method used	→	Indicating whether or not the methodology is suitable
	Listing details	→	Evaluating the significance of details
	Stating links between items	→	Showing the relevance of links between items
	Stating when something happened	→	Identifying why timing is important
	Stating options	→	Evaluating the options and stating which should be selected

Difference between being descriptive and critical

Questions to ask and answer to help you be more **critical**

	Describing	move to	Analysing	Questions
	What happened	➡	Identifying significance	<i>Why</i> is what happened important/relevant?
	Noting method	➡	Method suitable?	What could be improved or should be questioned ?
	Listing details	➡	Evaluating significance of details	What do the details tell us?
	Linking items	➡	Relevance of linking items	<i>Why</i> should items be linked?
	Stating when	➡	Identifying why timing's important	What is the <i>historical significance</i> ?
	Stating options	➡	Evaluating options and stating which to select	What options are the most valid and <i>Why</i> ?

Questioning Sources

Who?

authors /
academics

What?

claims
made

Where?

location of
research

**When
?**

historical
context

Why?

rationale
for the
argument

How?

methodological
issues

Moving beyond **describing** to **analysing**

Analysis and criticism = informed judgment or interpretation

A critical researcher is always ***questioning*** -
nothing is taken for granted

Each criticism must be supported by
evidence

What are the critical approaches in literary criticism?



- Critical Approaches to Literature. -examines language and literary conventions; plot, rhyme, meter, dialect, setting, point of view, etc. -focuses on aspects of everyday life in various cultures; using ideas of folklore, ritual, celebrations, traditions, etc.

What is meant by 'critical'?



To be critical means that you are required to:



ask questions about the ideas and information presented in the text and;



to comment thoughtfully by engaging in a process of evaluating or;



making judgements about the validity or relevance of the text to your research or field of study.

Being “Critical”



Is to:



Use the information to understand the topic from different perspectives and in relation to relevant theoretical frameworks in the field.

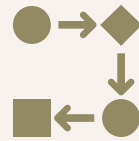


Ask the right questions and make links with previous information.



Develop a position and arguments to support it.

What is meant by evaluation?



Evaluation is the process that:



Encourages you to show an understanding of the text content by analyzing the purpose and the structure of the text and,



Allows you to assess and make judgements about its appropriateness according to various academic criteria.

What is meant by analysis?

To approach a topic
analytically is to:

Examine carefully the
content, issues and
structure, by separating
them into component
parts and explaining
how they interrelate.

To be able to
summarize, i.e. to
express the main points
of an idea or topic in
fewer words and without
including examples or
details.

Reading Scientific Journals

Skim the article

- *(abstract, look for the “big picture”, jot questions, find more info in books)*

Re-read carefully

- *(materials and methods and results several times, ask questions)*

Distill and describe

- *(distill to scientific essence, describe in your own words).*

Write a draft

Criteria For Evaluating Academic Texts



Writing and
structure of the
article (e.g the
style and
expression).



Argumentation
and use of
evidence



Methodology



Relevance



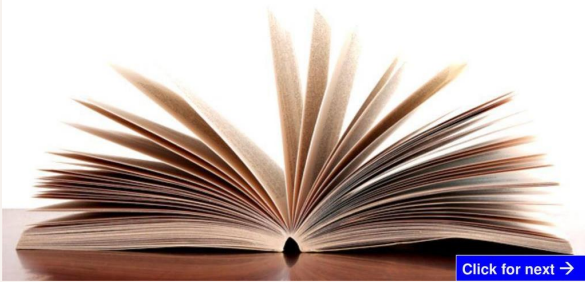
Significance
and
contribution to
its field

What are the 4 approaches in writing a critique?



- **Describe**: give the reader a sense of the writer's overall purpose and intent.
- **Analyze**: examine how the structure and language of the text convey its meaning.
- **Interpret**: state the significance or importance of each part of the text.
- **Assess**: make a judgment of the work's worth or value.

What is Literary Criticism?

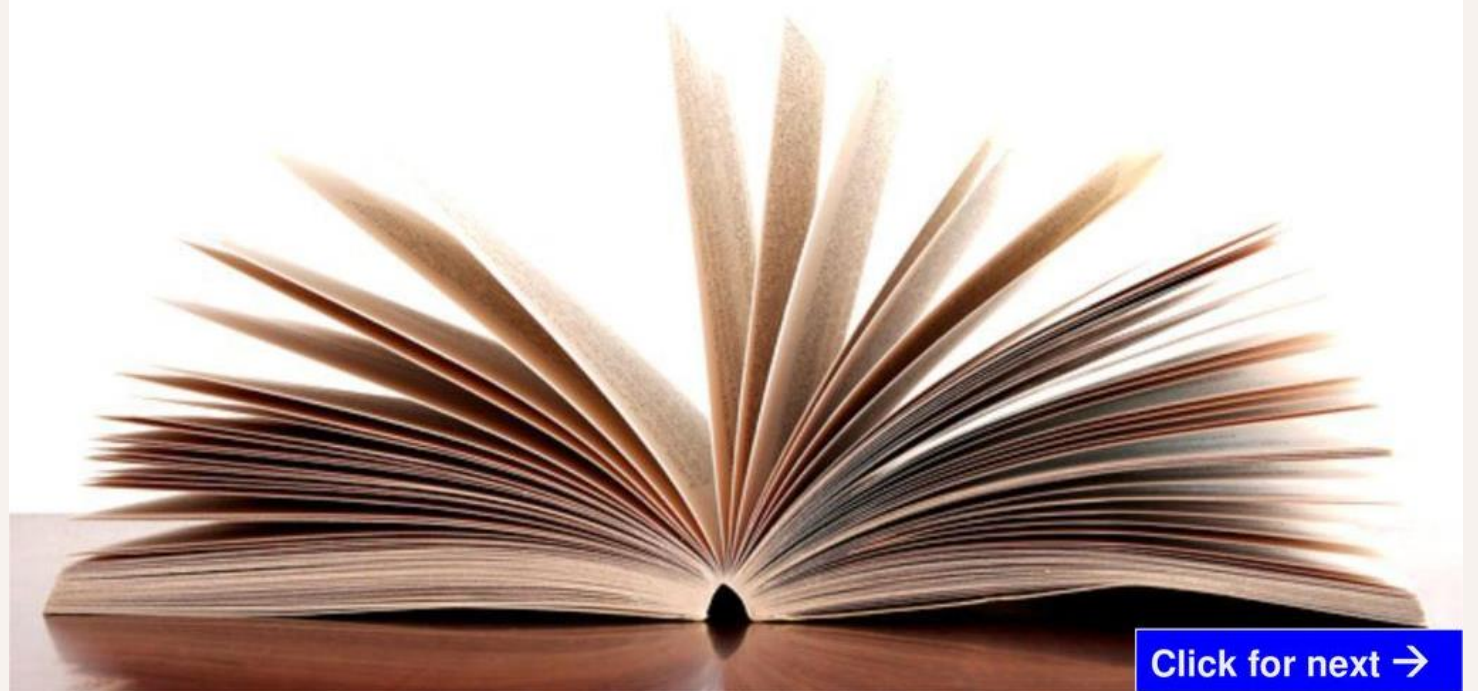


Click for next →

What are the 4 approaches to literary criticism?

- The moral approach: literature and moral ideas
- The psychological approach: literature and psychological theory
- The sociological approach **الاجتماعيه**: literature and social ideas
- The formalistic approach: literature as aesthetic structure

What is Literary Criticism?



[Click for next →](#)

Literary criticism gives us a window into a work of literature

It gives us a particular way of understanding the text from a specific viewpoint

Criteria For Evaluating Academic Texts



Writing and structure of the article (e.g the style and expression).



Argumentation and use of evidence



Methodology



Relevance



Significance and contribution to its field

Questions To Consider



What type is the study (theoretical article, report on an experiment or review of research).



What is the problem/aim (discuss the extent the aim has been achieved).



How the argument is; logical, supported, is supporting the hypothesis.



Does the research seem objective? (Consider the methodology).

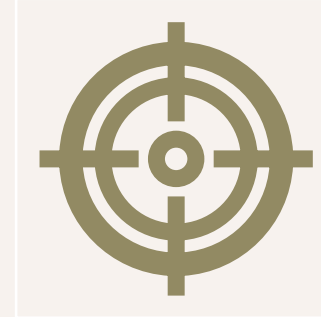
How relevant is the evidence? Valid? Accurate?
What type of evidence is used?

What conclusions are drawn by the experimenter on the basis of the finding? Do you consider that these are justified by the results or has the experimenter made unjustifiable conclusions?

Critical Review Structure



Introduction (one
paragraph)



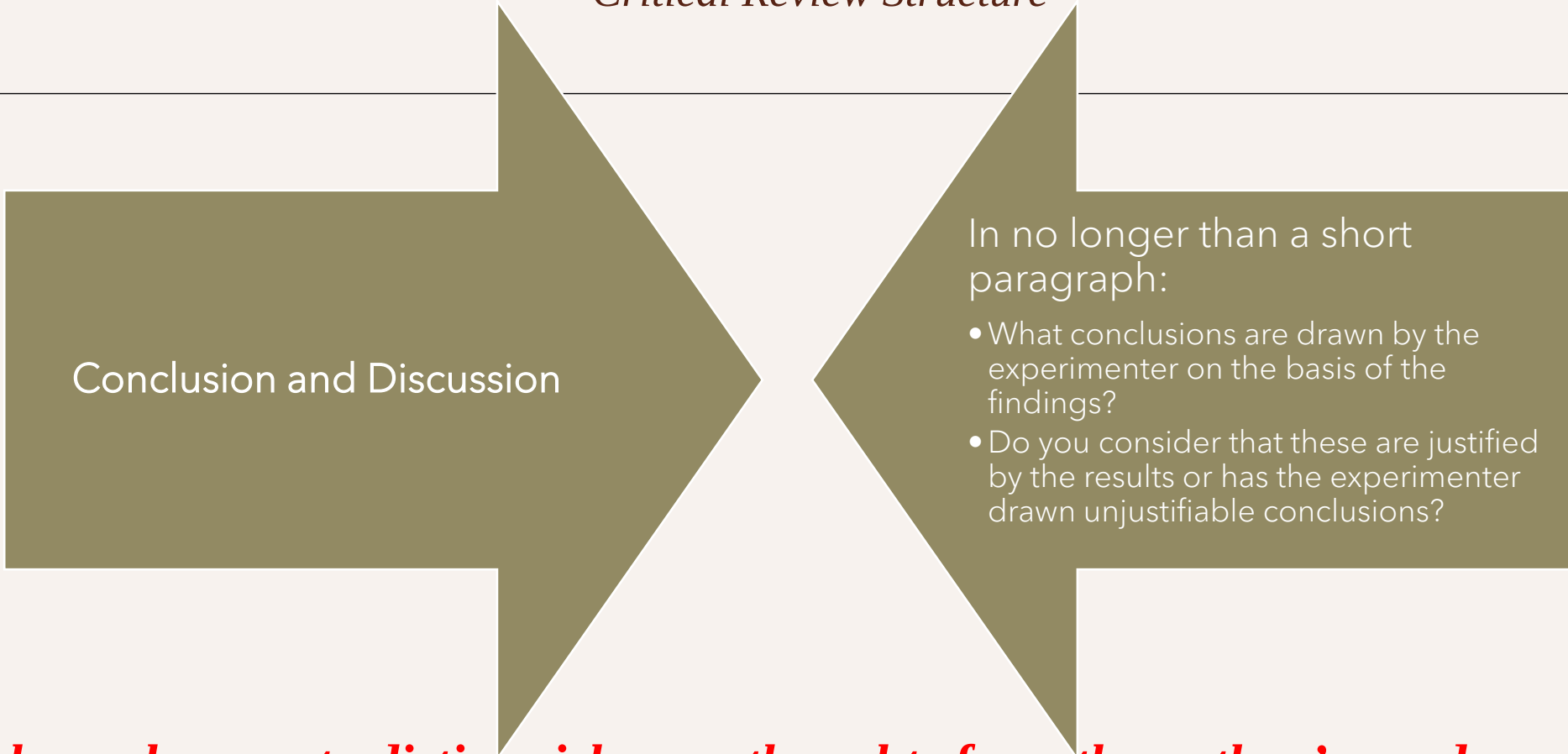
Summary (no longer than
half the review)

Critical Review Structure

*NOTE: In your summary,
comment critically on the text
including:*

- *discussion of the points raised,*
- *questioning the arguments,*
- *expressing and considering agreement / disagreement,*
- *positive and / or negative judgements on the author's ideas, methods, argument, expression, organization etc.*

Critical Review Structure



The diagram consists of two large, olive-green, arrow-shaped boxes pointing towards each other, forming a central diamond shape. The left box contains the text 'Conclusion and Discussion'. The right box contains the text 'In no longer than a short paragraph:' followed by a bulleted list of two questions. The entire diagram is set against a light gray background with horizontal lines above and below it.

Conclusion and Discussion

In no longer than a short paragraph:

- What conclusions are drawn by the experimenter on the basis of the findings?
- Do you consider that these are justified by the results or has the experimenter drawn unjustifiable conclusions?

Always be sure to distinguish your thoughts from the author's words

Writing a Critical Review

The purpose of the critical review is to review and critically evaluate an article.

- Each student will be provided a scientific research paper on recent advances in selected topic, and is expected, at the defined dates
 - Submit a report (4-5 pages, TR 12 font, double space, and according to criteria explained later in this presentation).
- Present about the review in 5-8 minutes and answer questions of the audience.