

Questioning As We Read

Skilled readers are able to master a subject from books alone, without benefit of lectures or class discussion. It is possible to become educated through reading alone. Skilled readers actively question as they read. They question to understand. They question to evaluate what they are reading. They question to bring important ideas into their thinking.

Skilled readers approach reading as an active dialogue involving routine questioning. Here are some of the questions critical readers ask while reading:

- Why am I reading this? What is my purpose? What do I want to gain?
- What is the author's purpose? What can I learn about the author's point of view by carefully reading the title as well as the preface, introduction, and table of contents?
- From paragraph to paragraph, can I summarize what the author is saying in my own words? What questions do I have?
- Is there some part of this sentence or paragraph that I don't understand? What part am I unsure of? What part am I clear about?
- If I do not understand something, is the author vague, or is there a problem with my reading?
- What questions do I have? How important is it for me to get these questions answered before reading further?
- Do I understand the meaning of key terms, or do I need to look them up in a dictionary?
- Is the author using key words in standard or extraordinary ways?
- Are the facts presented credible, or should I question them?
- What are the most significant ideas in this text?
- How is what I am reading relevant to me? How can I connect it to what matters or will matter in my life?
- What is the nature of the question at issue in the text? Do I clearly understand the complexities in it?
- Do I need to investigate the issue further in some other text before moving forward in this one?

Analyzing an Author's Reasoning Through Questions

Critical readers are able to identify the elements of reasoning embedded in a text. Here are some questions (overlapping with those above) which we can ask through understanding the elements of thought:

Purpose: What is the author's purpose?

Question: What question is the author attempting to answer?

Information: What information does the author use in coming to conclusions?

Inferences: What are the main conclusions or inferences made by the author?

Concepts: What are the main ideas that guide the author's thinking?

Assumptions: What does the author take for granted?

Point of View: What is the author looking at, and how is s/he seeing it?

Implications: If the author is correct (or insightful), what are some implications we should recognize?