

# Critical Thinking Lesson

## I. Critical Thinking: what it is, and how to do it.

(a) *Critical thinking is serious consideration, exploration, analysis, and the drawing of a reasonable conclusion in regards to a single topic.*

(b) *What is a critical essay?*

- i. An essay in which the writer creates a cogent thesis, supports this thesis with evidence from primary and secondary sources, analyzes and explains the data used, and reaches a reasonable conclusion which proves the thesis based on the analysis.

(c) *Asking and Answering Critical Questions*

- i. The question must have to do with the subject material.
- ii. The question must be specific instead of general.
- iii. The answer to a factual question must be a fact, and therefore must be verified.
- iv. The answer to an opinionated question must be an opinion, but must also be verified, either by finding other opinions that are in agreement, or facts which support the opinion.

(d) *BS Analogy*

- i. The Tank Analogy: Tanks are designed to be fast, have medium armor, and firepower is the last priority. This way, the tank can get out of the way of enemy fire, absorb fire that is small and fast enough to hit it, and it is the responsibility of the gunner to make every shot count.
- ii. If the gunner shoots something more than once and it is still there, it deserves to be there.
- iii. If a critical question is asked over and over and no answer is given, or the facts and supporting opinions contradict said answer, the student is asking the wrong question and needs to re-evaluate.

## II. Integrating Active Reading

(a) *Take good notes.*

- i. Instead of highlighting or underlining passages in the reading, take notes explaining *why* this information is important. This will make it easier to integrate into a critical paper.

(b) *Re-Read.*

- i. Go over important sections again. Particularly with books such as RF, which is rife with symbolism, a re-read may reveal new information.

(c) *Only take important information.*

- i. Remember to only take information that is important. Don't overload on info because you will have to sort through it later when you write the paper.

## III. The Dreaded T-Word: Thesis

(a) *What is a thesis, and what makes it good?*

- i. A thesis is a statement. It cannot be a question; moreover, it is the answer to a question
- ii. A thesis is an opinion. A thesis cannot be a fact because you cannot argue a fact. Two plus two will always equal four. Theses are supported by facts.
- iii. A thesis is provable. A good thesis must be a sound argument that you can prove. Saying Changez hates America because he was recruited by Al-Qaeda when he returned to Pakistan seems to make sense, but there is no way to prove this with the text.