



Critical Reading by Dr. Henry Khiat, UniSIM

Critical reading helps you to get the most out of your study materials. It helps you to prepare better for your seminars and assessment. Below is the six-stage process of critical reading that you can consider using in your studies.

Stage 1: Reading the Preface - Understanding the background information of the book

Read the preface of the book. It tells you the background information of the book. Such information includes the bio-data of the author, the reason why the book is written, the aims of the book, how the book is organized, the various important concepts or theories promoted in the book etc. Have a sense of the background information of the book even if you are only required to read a few chapters from it.

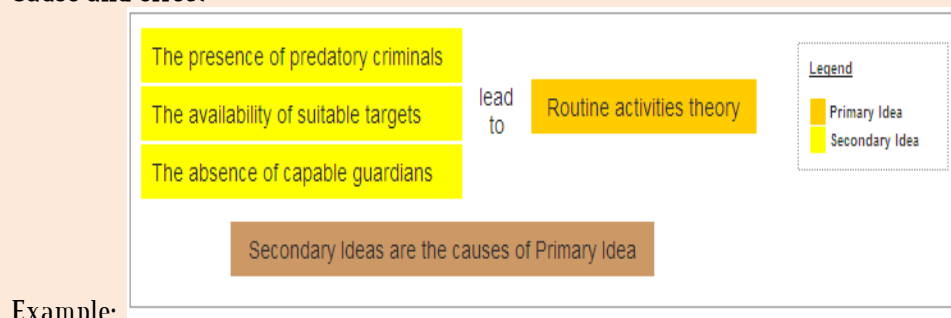
Stage 2: Reading the Introduction Chapter - Have a summary or big picture of the book

The introduction section of the book usually gives you a summary or preview of the book. Gather information regarding the main concepts, arguments, theories and propositions in the introduction. This sets the basis for you to read the required chapters more meaningfully.

You can skip Stage 1 and 2 if you are reading a journal article. However, you can get information about the journal article from its abstract. You can know more about the author by reading other articles of his or searching his academic information in the internet.

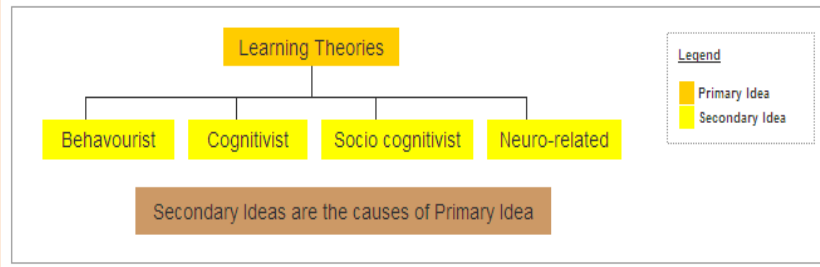
Stage 3: Analysing Individual Chapter - Capturing the essences of the content

- a) Conduct a quick first read of the chapter with a relaxed mind. This will help you to remove any inertia to start reading and serve as an advance organization for your second read.
- b) Conduct the second read in chunks. If possible, read and manage each paragraph at a time. Identify the primary idea, secondary ideas and support information.
 - i) **Primary idea** of the chapter. It can usually be found in the chapter's title and elaborated in the chapter's introduction. It can be a proposed theory, argument, hypothesis, practice etc.
 - ii) **Secondary idea (Reason)** of each of the latter paragraph of the chapter. Each secondary idea should be a development of the primary idea.
 - iii) **Support information (Evidence)** of each secondary idea includes examples, comparisons, analogies, anecdotes, statistical data, theories etc.
- c) Relate the primary idea, secondary ideas and support information.
- d) Determine if these relationships belong to:
 - i) **Cause and effect**



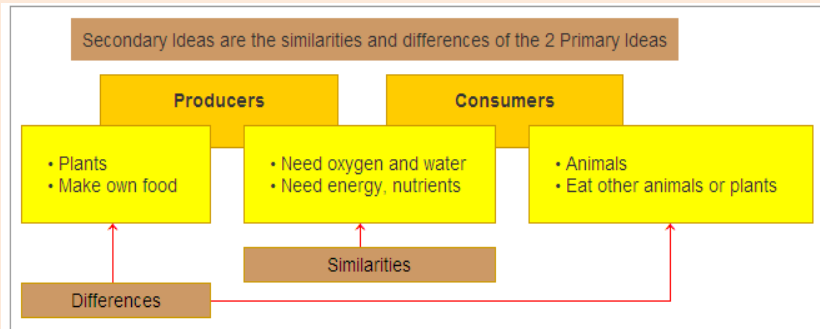


ii) Categorization



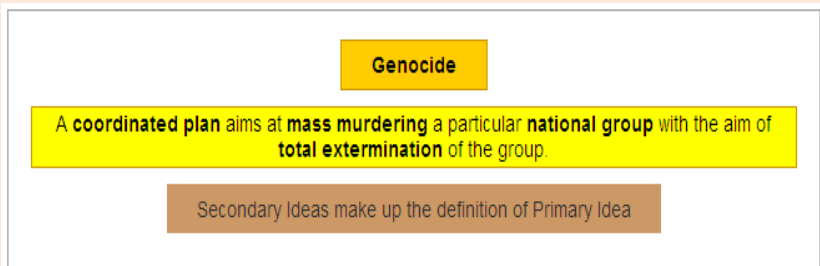
Example:

iii) Comparison and Contrast



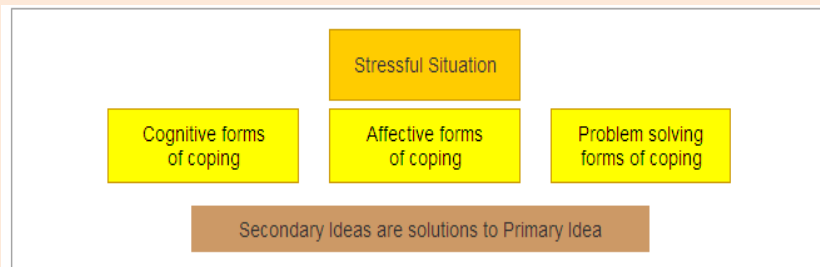
Example:

iv) Definitions



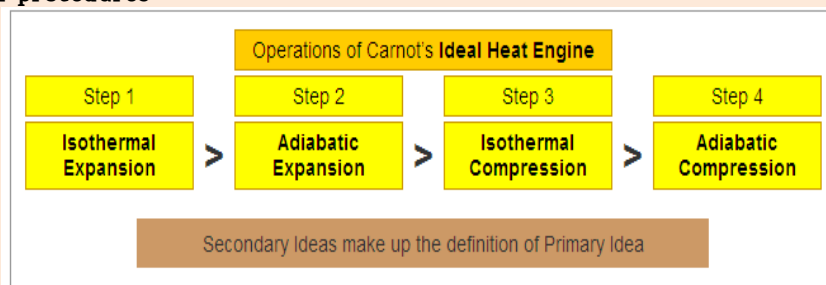
Example:

v) Problem and Solutions



Example:

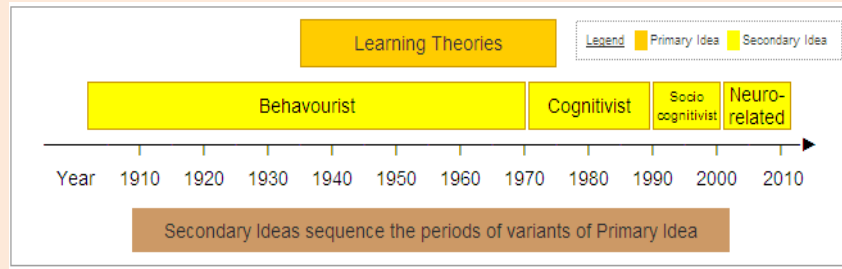
vi) Process or procedures



Example:



vii) Sequence of events



- e) However, there are times when the main idea is not written explicitly in the chapter. When this happens, you have to learn to infer the implied idea from the content. The implied idea has to be logical such that it is grounded on the content of the paragraph instead of your own assumptions or feelings.

Stage 4: Reflecting on the ideas and evidences

Reflection is important in understanding the content in depth. In the process of reflection, asking probing questions about the ideas and evidences can be useful. These questions can be:

- What do you think are the purposes of the author in promoting this primary idea in the chapter? What are your thoughts about this?
- Do the secondary ideas sound sensible, logical and unprejudiced from your prior experiences and knowledge? If no, list down why you think so?
- Are there any relationships between the secondary ideas? If yes, what are they?
- Are the evidences supporting each secondary idea valid, reliable, current, authoritative and objective? Are there any other contradictory evidences?
- Are the ideas applicable or can be used to solve problems in real life or your workplace? If yes, how? If no, why?

Stage 5: Connecting the paragraphs

Usually, a reading may be made up of a number of paragraphs. After analysing each paragraph,

- Find out the relationships between the paragraphs by linking up their ideas. If there are such relationships, what are they?
- Draw a final conclusion of the whole reading. Add your thoughts and doubts in the conclusion.

Stage 6: Enhancing and sustaining understanding

After you have done the analysis and reflection of the reading,

- Clarify all your doubts. Direct your list of queries to your tutors, peers, internet or any other sources. Do not procrastinate and get help as soon as possible. Enhance and revise your notes when needed. By this stage, your notes should be comprehensive enough for you to prepare for assessment without going back to the readings.
- Evaluate your understanding of the chapter by writing a summary of what you have learnt and checking against your notes to see if they are correct. Alternatively, attempt any questions set at the end of the chapter or complete the online formative quizzes.