When reading sources, it can be tricky to figure out what to “pull” from them and even trickier to figure out how to relate this information to your own ideas. This handout will explain the process of analysis and provide examples of the types of questions to ask as you read through your sources.

Summary vs. Analysis

**Summary** involves providing a brief overview of an author’s ideas.

Analysis, on the other hand, takes this process a step further. **Analysis** involves examining the information presented in your sources to apply it to your own thesis or research question.

While summary is often a useful first step when analyzing a text, simply articulating someone else’s ideas is not the same as reacting to them and using them to inform your own. Most students are familiar with summary, but analysis is often a new skill that needs to be developed.

*Note:* For more information on how to summarize, please see our “Incorporating Sources” handout.

Often, the next level of thought after analysis is synthesis. This means putting sources together and placing them into the wider context of the field.

*Note:* For more on how to synthesize, please see our “Synthesizing Information” handout.

Questions to Ask

When **analyzing** a text, you want to look for information that supports, questions, and/or broadens your thinking. You’ll also want to evaluate the logic, credibility, impact, and effectiveness of the author’s assertions by breaking down the components and structure of arguments in order to better understand the facts and inferences presented.

Here are some questions to keep in mind when analyzing:

**Clarification**

- Why is the author asking this question?
- Why is the author defining/explaining this concept in this specific way?

**Evidence**

- How does the author present arguments and evidence?
• Why are the authors using this particular evidence to support their ideas?
• Does the evidence given support the claims the author is making?
• How does the information in this source support or question my ideas?

Alternate Views
• Why does the author present ideas this way?
• Why are/aren’t conflicting points of views addressed?
• Are there any questions left unanswered?
• What is the historical context in which this source was written, and does this affect the viewpoint?
• Does the author consistently repeat any specific language or examples?

Significance
• Why is the author asking this?
• How can the author’s conclusions be tested or proven?
• How recently was this information published?
• How does this information affect other research?
• How does this information answer my question?
• Do the ideas in this source have wider implications beyond the setting or focus of the text?

Asking these questions as you go through your sources will help you successfully determine which information is relevant to your research question and argument and therefore, should be incorporated into your own paper.

Note: For more information on how to pull relevant points from your readings, please see our “Critical Reading” handout.

References