What is a critique?

A critical assessment of a text.

A personal response based on an analysis and reasoned evaluation of the text.

A critique should:

- Inform (help reader understand the nature of the text)
- Interpret (explain the meaning of the text)
- Evaluate (discuss your opinions of the text)

Possible Structure

Introduction

- Introduce text and author.
- State author’s main idea/argument
- Identify author’s purpose (to inform, persuade, entertain?)
- Background information, e.g.:
  - Biographical information about author
  - Intended audience of text
  - Circumstances in which text was written
  - Why subject is of current interest
  - Why controversy about the text or the subject
  - State own opinion, points you will make about the text

Summary

- Sum up main points made by author

Analysis

- What arguments used?
- What evidence presented?
- Any underlying assumptions/biases?
Evaluation

- Your response to the text. Consider the following:
  - Text well organised, clear, easy to read?
  - Terms clearly defined?
  - Argument logical?
  - Sufficient evidence for arguments?
  - Do arguments support main point?
  - What assumptions made?
  - Information accurate/significant used and interpreted fairly?
  - Opposite views presented/addressed?
  - How does text compare with other material/views on the subject?
  - Any issues overlooked?
  - Text appropriate for intended audience?
  - What kind of language used?
  - Is a calm, reasoned tone used?
  - What are the author’s credentials?
  - Author associated with well-known/respected authority?
  - Evidence of peer review?

Conclusion

- What is the value of the text in general?
  - Reminder of strengths/weaknesses of text.
  - How well does the text achieve its purpose?
  - How far does it contribute to understanding of the subject?
  - What questions/observations does it suggest?

Critiquing a piece of research – other aspects to consider

- Validity – does the research test what it set out to test?
- Reliability – would the same results be obtained if the research was repeated in the same conditions?
- Suitability of methods used
- Researcher bias
- Ethics