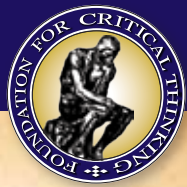


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*How to Assess
Close Reading
and
Substantive
Writing*

The International
CRITICAL
THINKING
READING &
WRITING TEST

Richard Paul &
Linda Elder

The International Critical Thinking Reading & Writing Test

Introduction

The International Critical Thinking Reading & Writing Test assesses the ability of students to use reading and writing as tools for acquiring knowledge. To appreciate the significance of this test, it is important to understand the integral relationship between reading, writing, and learning.

Reading, Writing and the Educated Mind

Educated persons routinely read closely and write substantively—to learn new ideas, to deepen their understanding of ideas, and to correct conceptual misunderstandings.

To read closely is to construct accurately the meaning of the texts one reads. It involves constructing the thinking of an author in one's own mind, in such a way that were the author to hear the summary, he or she would say, "Excellent, you understand exactly what I was saying!"

Educated persons realize that many of the most important ideas and insights are to be found only in written publications. They also realize that there is a significant difference between reading closely (and hence being able to say accurately and precisely what is said in a text) and reading superficially (and hence being able merely to express a vague, and often erroneous, facsimile of what is said in a text).

To write substantively is to say something worth saying about something worth saying something about. It involves the ability to identify important ideas and express significant implications of those ideas in clear and precise writing.

Educated persons understand the important difference between writing that is merely fluent (but says nothing worth saying) and writing that is substantial (that says something important). They realize, in other words, the difference between "style" and "substance."

To read and write with skill and insight:

1. Students need to understand *how* to read and write well. In other words, they need to understand the *theory* behind close reading and substantive writing. They need to make intuitive in their thinking the conceptual connections behind skilled reading and writing, and then to grasp how skilled reading and writing interrelate.
2. They need practice in close reading and substantive writing. If they are ever to become skilled at reading and writing, students need daily practice, over many years, in disciplined reading and writing. They must develop the habit of reading and writing for deep learning. Through this practice, they come to *learn how to learn*. They gain skills that enable them to continue learning throughout a lifetime.

The Relationship Between Reading and Writing

There is an intimate relationship between reading well and writing well. Any significant deficiency in reading entails a parallel deficiency in writing. Any significant deficiency in writing entails a parallel deficiency in reading.

For example, if students cannot distinguish writing that is clear from writing that is unclear, there will be problems in their reading. They will, for example, mistake vague ideas for clear ones. They will think they understand when they don't. For example, suppose students read the sentence, "Democracy is a form of government in which the people rule." Students skilled in close reading will recognize that they don't really know what this sentence means until they answer the following questions: "Who exactly are *the people*?" and "What exactly is meant by the word *rule*?" In other words, they will recognize the importance of explicating the meaning of the words *people* and *rule*. They will see that understanding these concepts is essential to giving meaning to the sentence.

Similarly, if students cannot detect significant vagueness and ambiguity within texts they read, they will have difficulty formulating significant concepts as they write. In fact, to write substantively students must be able to bring ideas from a text into their thinking, arranging those ideas logically in clear prose style.

In superficial uncritical reading, students soon forget and often distort what they read. In superficial uncritical writing, students often misrepresent what is in the text. Superficial writing does not help students take ownership of the substance they write about. It produces instead an illusion of knowledge. It opens the door for multiple forms of misunderstanding.

Thus, close reading and substantive writing are symbiotic skills of disciplined thought. Both require that we think from multiple perspectives. Both require that we use the elements of reasoning well.¹ In other words, both require the intellectual ability to:

1. **Clarify purposes:** an author's purpose(s) (when we read), and our own purpose(s) (when we write).
2. **Formulate clear questions:** those that an author is asking (as we read) and those we are pursuing (as we write).
3. **Distinguish accurate and relevant information from inaccurate and irrelevant information:** in texts that we read and in preparation for our own writing.
4. **Reach logical inferences or conclusions:** based on what we read, and in preparation for writing.
5. **Identify significant and deep concepts:** those of an author and those we want to guide our thinking while we write.
6. **Distinguish justifiable from unjustifiable assumptions:** that an author is using, or that we are using in our own thinking as we write.
7. **Trace logical implications:** those of an author's thinking, and those that may follow from our written work.

¹ For explication of the elements of reasoning, see: Linda Elder, and Richard Paul. 2003. *A Miniature Guide to the Foundations of Analytic Thinking*. Dillon Beach, California: Foundation for Critical Thinking. www.criticalthinking.org

8. **Identify and think within multiple viewpoints:** those that an author presents (or fails to present when relevant) and those relevant to the issues in our written work (and that we need to include).

These are just a few examples that shed light on the intimate relationship between close reading and substantive writing and on the important connection between disciplined thought and skilled reading and writing. As students develop their abilities to read closely and write substantively, they come to see the many ways in which the two processes are related.

Purpose of the Test

The purpose of the test is to assess students' abilities to think in particular "disciplined" and skilled ways. If used successfully, the results make it possible to determine the extent to which students have and have not learned foundational critical thinking, reading and writing skills.

Intellectual Skills Essential to Close Reading²

To think within any discipline or subject, students must be able to deeply comprehend what they read. Consider the following competency standards for close reading.

Critical Thinking Principle

Educated persons are able to read texts closely and, through that process, take ownership of the most important ideas in them. They also understand the importance of reading to learning.

Performance Indicators and Dispositions

Students who think critically routinely read texts that are significant and thus expand their worldview. When reading, they consistently strive to accurately represent in their own thinking what they are reading in the text. Recognizing that every text has a purpose, they clarify the purpose of texts as they read them. Recognizing that close reading requires active engagement in reading, they create an inner dialog with the text as they read—questioning, summarizing and connecting important ideas with other important ideas.

Outcomes

1. Students reflect as they read.
2. Students monitor how they are reading as they are reading—distinguishing between what they understand in the text and what they do not understand.
3. Students accurately summarize and elaborate texts (in their own words) as they read.
4. Students give examples, from their experience, of ideas in texts.
5. Students connect the core ideas in a text to other core ideas they understand.
6. Students take the core ideas they obtain through reading and apply them to their lives.
7. Students accurately paraphrase what they read (sentence by sentence).

² For a deeper understanding of the skills described in this competency, see: Richard Paul, and Linda Elder. 2003. *The Thinker's Guide to How to Read a Paragraph and Beyond: The Art of Close Reading*. Dillon Beach, California: Foundation for Critical Thinking. www.criticalthinking.org

8. Students accurately and logically explicate the thesis of a paragraph:
 - First, students state the main point of the paragraph in one or two sentences.
 - Second, students elaborate what they have paraphrased. (“In other words...”)
 - Third, students give examples of the meaning by tying it to concrete situations in the real world. (“For example...”)
 - Fourth, students generate apt illustrations: metaphors, analogies, pictures, or diagrams of the basic thesis (to connect the thesis to other meanings they already understand).
9. Students analyze the logic of what they read (its purpose, its main question, the information it contains, its main idea...)
10. Students evaluate what they read (for clarity, accuracy, precision, relevance, depth, breadth, logic, and significance, and so forth).
11. Students accurately role-play an author’s viewpoint, as presented in a text.

Intellectual Skills Essential To Substantive Writing³

Now consider the intellectual skills necessary to substantive writing.

Critical Thinking Principle

Educated persons are able to write in such a way as to say something substantive. They also understand the importance of writing to learning.

Performance Indicators and Dispositions

Students who think critically use writing as an important tool both for communicating important ideas and for learning. They use writing to deepen their understanding of important concepts and to clarify interrelationships between concepts. They consistently write in such a way as to become more clear, precise, accurate, relevant, deep, broad, logical and significant as thinkers. In writing, they are able to clearly and accurately analyze and evaluate ideas in texts and in their own thinking. They consistently learn to write as they write to learn. In other words, they use writing as an important tool for learning ideas deeply and permanently.

Outcomes

1. Students reflect as they write.
2. Students monitor how they are writing as they are writing—distinguishing between what they understand in the text and what they do not understand.
3. Students accurately summarize (in their own words) texts they read, or ideas they hear.
4. Students routinely give examples from their experience as they write to (exemplify important ideas).
5. Students explicitly connect core ideas to other core ideas as they write.
6. Students write about ideas that apply to their lives.

³ For a deeper understanding of the skills described in this competency, see: Richard Paul, and Linda Elder. 2003. *The Thinker’s Guide to How to Write a Paragraph: The Art of Substantive Writing*. Dillon Beach, California: Foundation for Critical Thinking. www.criticalthinking.org

7. Students demonstrate the ability to explicate in writing the thesis they are developing or defending.
 - They state their main point.
 - They elaborate their main point.
 - They give examples of what they mean.
 - They create analogies and metaphors that help readers understand what they mean.
8. Students demonstrate the ability to clearly and accurately analyze, in writing, the logic of a text, chapter, academic subject, significant concept, and so on: (its purpose, its main question, the information it contains, its main idea...)
9. Students consistently use universal intellectual standards in their writing, routinely checking their writing for clarity, accuracy, precision, relevance, depth, breadth, logic, significance, and fairness and so forth.

Five Levels of Close Reading and Substantive Writing

There are at least five levels of close reading and substantive writing. Our purpose in this test is to determine the test-taker's ability to read and write at one or more of these five levels of proficiency.

First Level—Paraphrasing

The first level of reading proficiency is that of accurately translating an author's wording into our own. In other words, we put the words and thoughts of the author into our words. Our paraphrase is successful only to the extent that our words capture the essential meaning of the original text, only to the extent that it makes intelligible the meaning of the original text.

Hence, if we read the following in a text: "democracy is rule by the people," our paraphrase of it might read, "Democracy exists only to the extent that there is a broad basis of equality of political power among the people at large. This means that all people within the state should have relatively equal power and equal input in determining what the laws will be. By implication, a state fails to be democratic to the extent that a few people—whether they be wealthy or otherwise influential—have significantly more political power than others." The paraphrase helps open up the text because it points us to possible problems in assessing the degree to which any country is democratic—for example, "Does it restrict the influence of the wealthy so they cannot use it to exercise a disproportionate influence in the decision-making of the government?"

Second Level—Explicating

In this proficiency we assess the thinker's (reader's) ability to state, elaborate, exemplify, and illustrate the thesis of a paragraph. Consider the four questions that can be used to assess writing for clarity:

1. Could you state your basic point in one simple sentence?

2. Could you elaborate your basic point more fully (in other words)?
 3. Could you give an example of your point?
 4. Could you give an analogy or metaphor to help clarify what you mean?
- Each of these clarification strategies requires substantive writing skills.

Clarification Strategies

- **The ability to state a thesis clearly in a sentence.** If we cannot accurately state our key idea in a sentence using our own words, we don't really know what we want to say.
- **The ability to explain a thesis sentence in greater detail.** If we cannot elaborate our key idea, then we have not yet connected its meaning to other concepts we understand.
- **The ability to give examples of what we are saying.** If we cannot connect what we have elaborated with concrete situations in the real world, our understanding of the meanings is still abstract, and, to some extent, vague.
- **The ability to illustrate what we are saying with a metaphor, analogy, picture, diagram, or drawing.** If we cannot generate metaphors, analogies, pictures, or diagrams of the meanings we are constructing, we have not yet connected what we understand with other domains of knowledge and experience.

Third Level—Analysis

At this level of proficiency we assess the student's ability to identify the following:

- The author's *purpose* in writing the text.
- The most important *question*, problem, or issue in the text.
- The most significant *information* or data in the text.
- The most basic *conclusion* in the text.
- The most basic *concepts*, theories, or ideas in the text.
- The most fundamental *assumptions* of the text.
- The most significant *implications* of the text.
- The *point of view* in the text.

Fourth Level—Evaluation

In this level of proficiency we assess the student's ability to evaluate or assess the text using eight basic intellectual standards.

Fifth Level—Role-Playing

In this level of proficiency, we assess the student's ability to actively role-play the thinking of the author.

These levels are summarized in the following chart, and written as directions for students.

First Level: Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing the Text Sentence by Sentence

1. State in your own words the meaning of each sentence as you read.

Second Level: Explicating

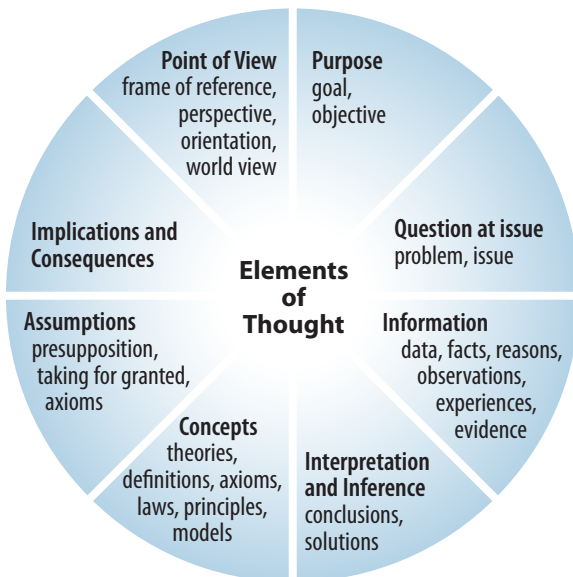
Explicating the Thesis of a Paragraph

1. State the main point of the paragraph in one or two sentences.
2. Then elaborate on what you have paraphrased (“In other words,...”).
3. Give examples of the meaning by tying it to concrete situations in the real world. (For example,...)
4. Generate metaphors, analogies, pictures, or diagrams of the basic thesis to connect it to other meanings you already understand.

Third Level: Analysis

Analyzing the Logic of Text

Anytime you read, you are reading the product of an author’s reasoning. You can use your understanding of the elements of reasoning, therefore, to bring your reading to a higher level. You can do this by writing your answers to the following questions (you may ask these questions in any order you want):



Use the template in Appendix A, *Analyzing the Logic of an Excerpt, Article, Essay, or Chapter*,

Fourth Level: Evaluation

Assessing the Logic of What We Are Reading

Every written piece is not of the same quality. You assess what you read by applying intellectual standards to it, standards such as *clarity*, *precision*, *accuracy*, *relevance*, *significance*, *depth*, *breadth*, *logic*, and *fairness*. Some authors adhere to some standards while violating others. For example, an author might be *clear* in stating his or her position, while at the same time using information that is not *accurate*. An author might use *relevant* information but fail to think through the complexities of the issue (that is, fail to achieve *depth*). An author's argument might be *logical* but not *significant*. As a reader, then, you need to become adept at assessing the quality of an author's reasoning. You do this *only when* you can accurately state in your own words an author's meaning.

To assess an author's work, answer the following questions:

- Does the author *clearly* state his or her meaning, or is the text vague, confused, or muddled in some way?
- Is the author *accurate* in what he or she claims?
- Is the author sufficiently *precise* in providing details and specifics when specifics are relevant?
- Does the author introduce *irrelevant* material, thereby wandering from his/her purpose?
- Does the author take us into the important *complexities* inherent in the subject, or is the writing *superficial*?
- Does the author consider other *relevant* points of view, or is the writing overly *narrow* in its perspective?
- Is the text internally *consistent*, or does the text contain unexplained contradictions?
- Is the text *significant*, or is the subject dealt with in a trivial manner?
- Does the author display *fairness*, or does the author take a one-sided, narrow approach?

Fifth Level: Role-Playing

Speaking In the Voice of an Author

Role-playing an author is, in one way, the ultimate test of understanding. When you role-play, in essence you say: "Look, I will enter the mind of the author and speak as if I were the author. I will discuss any questions you may have about the text by adopting the voice of the author and will answer your questions as I think the author would. I will speak in the first person singular. I will be like an actor playing the part of Hamlet. I will try to be the author fully and truly for the purpose of this exercise."

To role-play an author, you need a partner who has read the text and is willing to ask you important questions about it. Responding to questions forces you to think within the author's logic. Practicing talking within the voice of an author is a good way to get a personal sense of whether you have really absorbed the core meanings of a text.

If you are working alone, write out a dialogue between the author and a questioner attempting to understand the logic of the author's reasoning.

The Test Format

There are five primary student forms in the test that link together (Forms A-E). The entire test (every form) need not be included in any given testing situation. For example, you may decide to use the forms that focus on the first and second levels of close reading and substantive writing at one time, and the third, fourth, and fifth levels later. Many different combinations of the forms might be used for a given testing situation.

In addition to the four primary test forms, there are two additional forms—Form AA, which focuses on paraphrasing short quotes, and Form CC, which focuses on formulating the logic of a subject or discipline. Forms AA and CC are logically parallel to forms A and C respectively.

Specimen Answers

For four of the five primary forms (A–D), we provide 12 specimen answers (three for each form). We also provide examples of answers for forms AA, and CC. We suggest that test graders complete each test form themselves before reading our specimen answers. View our answers not as the right answers, but simply reasonable answers. It is important that both teachers and students understand that there are multiple ways to accurately paraphrase a text, to explicate the thesis of a text, to explicate the reasoning embedded in a text. What you will be assessing in student work is their ability to capture the essence of a sentence, phrase, or text, the essence of the author's reasoning, and so forth.

Students should be provided with a dictionary or thesaurus and instructed to look up any words when they are unsure how to express a given word or phrase in their own words. They should be instructed not to rush the test; and they should be allowed ample time to work through the complexities of each form of the test at their own pace. They should be encouraged to work at each sentence until they are satisfied that they have captured the essential meaning of it as precisely as they can. We want students to understand that critical reading and writing take time and perseverance. It is far better to assign only a few forms, with ample time for students to competently complete their work, than to assign more forms than students can reasonably work through in a given test situation.

Creating Your Own Prompts

As you read through the test forms, you will see that they can be used with an unlimited number of excerpts and subjects. Should you decide to use your own texts you will need to create sample answers. The main point is that the format used throughout the test can be used again and again, using different text prompts within any discipline or subject.

Grading Rubrics

For each test form, test graders will use a 1–10 point scoring scale. The following guidelines outline how student answers should be graded. The total points possible will depend on whether one grades each item within every test form or grades each form holistically.

Points Guideline

- 0–2 points**—unacceptable (unskilled). The answer is inaccurate and/or unclear.
- 3–4 points**—poor (minimally skilled). The answer, though partially accurate and minimally clear, is significantly inaccurate or misleading.
- 5–6 points**—mixed level (beginning skills). The answer is clear but not perfectly accurate. It is partially correct and partially incorrect.
- 7–8 points**—commendable (skilled). The answer is well expressed, though with minor problems. It is basically correct and clear. Any misunderstanding is minor.
- 9–10 points**—excellent (highly skilled). The answer is accurate, insightful, clearly and precisely stated, and well exemplified (when an example is relevant).

Choose Holistic or Individual Answer Scoring

The grading rubrics can be used for each individual answer within a form or holistically for the entire form. If a score is given for each part within a form, after scoring is completed individual scores will then need to be averaged to obtain an overall score for that form. For example, for Form AA—Paraphrasing Substantive Quotes, if the text being paraphrased is divided into eight sections, graders might score each of the eight sections according to its clarity and accuracy (as outlined in the grading rubrics). Once answers for all eight sections have been individually scored, points for each section would be added and then divided by eight to get the average score for the entire form.

In order to achieve accuracy in grading, we suggest that this individual scoring format be used before holistic scoring is attempted.

To test the accuracy of holistic grading, graders should use the following procedure:

1. Begin by giving a holistic score to answers within a form, then
2. score answers for each section within the form, then
3. average scores for answers given for individual answers, then
4. compare this average score with the holistic score given initially.

Once graders can ensure that holistic scores for answers on the entire form match average scores for section scoring, they can move to holistic grading as a rule.

Scoring the Examination to Achieve Reliability

Before grading the test, graders should review the basic theory of critical thinking, close reading, and substantive writing.⁴ To ensure that student answers are not misgraded, only those with a basic understanding of critical thinking should grade test papers. To achieve reliability in grading, the following guidelines should be followed:

⁴ We recommend the following background reading material: *The Thinker's Guide to Analytic Thinking*; *The Thinker's Guide to how to Read a Paragraph*; *The Thinker's Guide to How to Write a Paragraph*; *Critical Thinking: Learn the Tools the Best Thinkers Use* (chapters 2–3). These publications can be found at www.criticalthinking.org.

- Prior to grading the test, graders should also “take the test” themselves, and then compare their answers to our specimen answers.
- Test graders should reach consensus on the range of plausible interpretations for any particular test form.
- Once a consensus is achieved, all participating graders should assess several forms completed by students and then compare scoring results by each grader.
- The result should be within a one-point range. That is, the margin of error for graders should be plus or minus one point. Graders should work with at least two other faculty graders until the scoring of the exams falls consistently within this range.

Applying the Grading Rubrics to Our Specimen Answers

We consider each of specimen answers to be at the level of *excellent*, though some might benefit from further elaboration.

Consequential Validity

This test, when used appropriately and graded accurately, should lead to a high degree of *consequential validity*. In other words, the use of the test should cause teachers to teach in such a way as to foster close reading and substantive writing abilities. For example, for students to perform well on Form AA, they must be able to accurately paraphrase what they read. They will not be able to effectively do this if they have not been taught the skills necessary for doing so. They will need practice in it. Therefore, teachers will need to design instruction so that students learn how to accurately paraphrase, and get adequate practice in paraphrasing. Similarly, for students to perform well on Forms A and B, teachers will need to design instruction so that students get routine practice in stating, elaborating, exemplifying, and illustrating the thesis of a text. In addition, for students to perform well on Forms C and D, teachers will need to teach students how to analyze and assess reasoning and give them practice in doing so.

In other words, for students to perform well on the test, teachers will need to design instruction so that students *can* perform well on the test. Students cannot become skilled in paraphrasing without practice in it. Students cannot become skilled in summarizing a thesis without practice in it. They cannot become skilled in analyzing and assessing reasoning without practice in it. However, when they have routine practice in paraphrasing, summarizing, analyzing, and assessing, they will develop skills of mind requisite to learning well within any subject or discipline, and thinking well within any domain of human life.

In short, use of the test should lead students to learn some of the most important skills they need to function in the world as educated persons.

Using the Test in Pre- or Post-Instruction (or both)

Any part of the test can be used in pre- or post-instruction format in order to assess improvement in skills after instruction and/or to gather data for research purposes.

The International Critical Thinking Reading and Writing Test Form AA

Paraphrasing Substantive Quotes

Directions: For each of the quotes in this section, paraphrase in your own words the meaning of the quote.

He who passively accepts evil is as much involved in it as he who helps to perpetuate it.

—*Martin Luther King, Jr.*

Every effort to confine Americanism to a single pattern, to constrain it to a single formula, is disloyalty to everything that is valid in Americanism.

—*Henry Steele Commager*

In a free society, standards of public morality can be measured only by whether physical coercion—violence against persons or property—occurs. There is no right to be offended by words, actions, or symbols.

—*Richard E. Sincere, Jr.*

Liberty is the only thing you cannot have unless you are willing to give it to others.

—*William Allen White*

I can't understand why people are frightened of new ideas. I'm frightened of the old ones.

—*John Cage*

The legitimate powers of government extend to such acts as are only injurious to others.

—*Thomas Jefferson*

The propagandist's purpose is to make one set of people forget that certain other sets of people are human.

—*Aldous Huxley*

The shepherd always tries to persuade the sheep that their interests and his own are the same.

—*Stendhal*

The Declaration of Independence

Form A

Paraphrasing A Text Sentence by Sentence

Background Understandings: From the Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1776.

To make sense of this paragraph one must understand that it is part of a political manifesto adopted by the Continental Congress proclaiming the independence of the thirteen British colonies in America from Great Britain.

When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shown that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security.

Directions: Paraphrase the text above in sections, as indicated below.

When in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another,

PARAPHRASE:

and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them,

PARAPHRASE:

a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

PARAPHRASE:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

PARAPHRASE:

That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed,

PARAPHRASE:

That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or abolish it,

PARAPHRASE:

and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.

PARAPHRASE:

Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes;

PARAPHRASE:

and accordingly all experience hath shown that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed.

PARAPHRASE:

But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security.

PARAPHRASE:

The Declaration of Independence Form B

Explicating the Thesis of a Text

Directions: After reading the excerpt from the Declaration of Independence, complete the following four tasks:

1. State the thesis of the passage in your own words.
2. Elaborate the thesis with additional explanation. (“In other words...”)
3. Give one or more examples of the thesis.
4. Illustrate the thesis with a metaphor or analogy.

The Declaration of Independence Form C

Explicating the Logic of a Text (An analysis of eight basic structures)

Directions: After reading the Declaration of Independence, express clearly and precisely:

1. The author's *purpose*.
2. The most important *question*, problem, or issue in the excerpt.
3. The most significant *information* or data in the excerpt.
4. The most basic *conclusion* in the excerpt.
5. The most basic *concepts*, theories, or ideas in the excerpt.
6. The most fundamental *assumptions* of the excerpt.
7. The most significant *implications* of the excerpt.
8. The *point of view* in the excerpt.

See Appendix A: The Logic of an Excerpt, Article, Essay, or Chapter for a full template.

The Declaration of Independence Form D

Evaluating the Logic of a Text

Directions: Assess the text according to eight basic intellectual standards.

1. Does the author express what he/she means clearly (or is the text vague, confused, or muddled in some way)?
2. Is the author accurate in what he/she claims?
3. Is the author sufficiently precise (providing details and specifics when they are relevant)?
4. Does the author wander from his/her purpose (thereby introducing irrelevant material)?
5. Does the author take us into the important complexities inherent in the subject (or is the writing superficial)?
6. Does the author consider other relevant points of view (or is the writing overly narrow in its perspective)?
7. Is the text internally consistent (or are there contradictions in the text)?
8. Is what the text says significant (or is the subject dealt with in a trivial manner)? Does the author display fairness (or is the subject dealt with in an unfair manner)?

The Declaration of Independence

Form E

Role-Playing the Author

Directions: Role-play the principal author of the declaration, Thomas Jefferson, by constructing a dialogue between him and an intelligent questioner who asks him to explain various portions of the text

Respond to the questions as if you were Jefferson. Have the questioner ask whatever questions you would imagine might occur to such a person about what the declaration means. Answer by trying to reconstruct what you think Jefferson might say. Make sure that what you “attribute” to him is implied in some way in the text. We have begun the dialogue for you. Your job is to continue it.

Questioner: Mr. Jefferson, why did you write this document?

Jefferson: I wrote this document to justify the American colonies in separating themselves politically from Great Britain. I believe that all people on earth have the right, the basic human right, to freely choose the way they are governed.

Questioner: Under what conditions do you think that people are justified in attempting to overthrow their government?

Jefferson:

Questioner:

Jefferson:

Continue dialog...

On Civil Disobedience

Form A

Paraphrasing A Text Sentence by Sentence

Background Understandings. From an essay on civil disobedience (pp. 635, 636–637, 644), originally written in 1849 by Henry David Thoreau,⁵ a well-known scholar in 19th Century American cultural and literary thought.

I heartily accept the motto, “That government is best which governs least”; and I should like to see it acted up to more rapidly and systematically. Carried out, it finally amounts to this, which also I believe, “That government is best which governs not at all”; and when men are prepared for it, that will be the kind of government which they will have. Government is at best but an expedient; but most governments are usually, and all governments are sometimes, inexpedient. The objections which have been brought against a standing army, and they are many and weighty, and deserve to prevail, may also at last be brought against a standing government. The standing army is only an arm of the standing government. The government itself, which is only the mode which the people have chosen to execute their will, is equally liable to be abused and perverted before the people can act through it.

Can there not be a government in which majorities do not virtually decide right and wrong, but conscience?...Must the citizen ever for a moment, or in the least degree, resign his conscience, to the legislator? Why has every man a conscience then? I think that we should be men first, and subjects afterward. It is not desirable to cultivate a respect for the law, so much as for the right. The only obligation which I have a right to assume is to do at any time what I think right....If the injustice is part of the necessary friction of the machine of government, let it go, let it go;...If the injustice has a spring, or a pulley, or a rope, or a crank, exclusively for itself, then perhaps you can consider whether the remedy will not be worse than the evil; but if it is of such a nature that it requires you to be the agent of injustice to another, then, I say, break the law. Let your life be a counter friction to stop the machine.

Directions: Paraphrase the text above in sections, as indicated below.

I heartily accept the motto, “That government is best which governs least”; and I should like to see it acted up to more rapidly and systematically.

PARAPHRASE:

Carried out, it finally amounts to this, which also I believe, “That government is best that governs not at all”;

PARAPHRASE:

⁵ Thoreau, Henry David. 1937. *Walden and Other Writings*. New York: The Modern Library.

and when men are prepared for it, that will be the kind of government which they will have.

PARAPHRASE:

Government is at best but an expedient; but most governments are usually, and all governments are sometimes, inexpedient.

PARAPHRASE:

The objections which have been brought against a standing army, and they are many and weighty, and deserve to prevail, may also at last be brought against a standing government. The standing army is only an arm of the standing government. The government itself, which is only the mode which the people have chosen to execute their will, is equally liable to be abused and perverted before the people can act through it.

PARAPHRASE:

Can there not be a government in which majorities do not virtually decide right and wrong, but conscience?

PARAPHRASE:

Must the citizen ever for a moment, or in the least degree, resign his conscience, to the legislator? Why has every man a conscience then? I think that we should be men first, and subjects afterward.

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It is not desirable to cultivate a respect for the law, so much as for the right. The only obligation which I have a right to assume is to do at any time what I think right.

PARAPHRASE:

If the injustice is part of the necessary friction of the machine of government, let it go, let it go;...If the injustice has a spring, or a pulley, or a rope, or a crank, exclusively for itself, then perhaps you can consider whether the remedy will not be worse than the evil;

PARAPHRASE:

but if it is of such a nature that it requires you to be the agent of injustice to another, then, I say, break the law. Let your life be a counter friction to stop the machine.

PARAPHRASE:

On Civil Disobedience **Form B**

Explicating the Thesis of a Text

Directions: After reading the excerpt from *On Civil Disobedience*, complete the following four tasks:

1. State the thesis of the passage in your own words.
2. Elaborate the thesis with additional explanation. (“In other words...”)
3. Give one or more examples of the thesis.
4. Illustrate the thesis with a metaphor or analogy.

On Civil Disobedience **Form C**

Explicating the Logic of a Text **(An analysis of eight basic structures)**

Directions: After reading the excerpt from *On Civil Disobedience*, express clearly and precisely:

1. The author's *purpose*.
2. The most important *question*, problem, or issue in the excerpt.
3. The most significant *information* or data in the excerpt.
4. The most basic *conclusion* in the excerpt.
5. The most basic *concepts*, theories, or ideas in the excerpt.
6. The most fundamental *assumptions* of excerpt.
7. The most significant *implications* of the excerpt.
8. The *point of view* in the excerpt.

See Appendix A: The Logic of an Excerpt, Article, Essay, or Chapter for a full template.

On Civil Disobedience Form D

Evaluating the Logic of a Text

Directions: Assess the text according to eight basic intellectual standards.

1. Does the author express what he/she means **clearly** (or is the text vague, confused, or muddled in some way)?
2. Is the author **accurate** in what he/she claims?
3. Is the author sufficiently **precise** (providing details and specifics when they are relevant)?
4. Does the author wander from his/her purpose (thereby introducing **irrelevant** material)?
5. Does the author take us into the important complexities inherent in the subject (or is the writing **superficial**)?
6. Does the author consider other relevant points of view (or is the writing overly **narrow** in its perspective)?
7. Is the text internally consistent (or are there **contradictions** in the text)?
8. Is what the text says **significant** (or is the subject dealt with in a trivial manner)? Does the author display **fairness** (or is the subject dealt with in an unfair manner)?

On Civil Disobedience **Form E**

Role-Playing the Author

Directions: Role-play the author of the text, Henry David Thoreau, by constructing a dialogue between him and an intelligent questioner who asks him to explain various portions of the text.

Respond to the questions as if you were Thoreau. Have the questioner ask whatever questions you would imagine might occur to such a person about what the text means. Answer by trying to reconstruct what you think Thoreau might say. Make sure that what you “attribute” to him is implied in some way in the text. We have begun the dialogue for you. Your job is to continue it.

Questioner: Tell me why you wrote this text. What was your purpose?

Thoreau: My purpose was to convince people that governments are often, if not usually, corrupt. In other words, governments tend to serve themselves, rather than the people to whom they owe allegiance.

Questioner: What is it that you think people should do, with respect to their government?

Thoreau: First and foremost, people need to be true to their own beliefs and stand up for those beliefs, even if it means going against the government.

Questioner:

Thoreau:

Questioner:

Continue dialog...

The Art of Loving Form A

Paraphrasing A Text Sentence by Sentence

Background Understandings. From the book, *The Art of Loving* (pp. 1–2, 23–24, 47), written in 1956, by the distinguished psychologist, Erich Fromm.⁶

Is love an art? Then it requires knowledge and effort. Or is love a pleasant sensation, which to experience is a matter of chance, something one “falls into” if one is lucky? This little book is based on the former premise, while undoubtedly the majority of people today believe in the latter.

Not that people think that love is not important. They are starved for it; they watch endless numbers of films about happy and unhappy love stories, they listen to hundreds of trashy songs about love—yet hardly anyone thinks that there is anything that needs to be learned about love.

This peculiar attitude is based on several premises which either singly or combined tend to uphold it. Most people see the problem of love primarily as that of being loved, rather than that of loving, of one’s capacity to love. Hence the problem to them is how to be loved, how to be lovable. In pursuit of this aim they follow several paths. One, which is especially used by men, is to be successful, to be as powerful and rich as the social margin of one’s position permits. Another, used especially by women, is to make oneself attractive, by cultivating one’s body, dress, etc. Other ways of making oneself attractive, used both by men and women, are to develop pleasant manners, interesting conversation, to be helpful, modest, inoffensive. Many of the ways to make oneself lovable are the same as those used to make oneself successful, “to win friends and influence people.” As a matter of fact, what most people in our culture mean by being lovable is essentially a mixture between being popular and having sex appeal.

The active character of love becomes evident in the fact that it always implies certain basic elements, common to all forms of love. These are care, responsibility, respect, and knowledge.... Love is the active concern for the life and the growth of that which we love.... Respect is the ability to see a person as he is, to be aware of his unique individuality. Respect means the concern that the other person should grow and unfold as he is. Respect, thus, implies the absence of exploitation. I want the loved person to grow and unfold for his own sake, and in his own ways, and not for the purpose of serving me. If I love the other person, I feel one with him or her, but with him as he is, not as I need him to be as an object for my use. It is clear that respect is possible only if I have achieved independence; if I can stand and walk without needing crutches, without having to dominate and exploit anyone else. Respect exists only on the basis of freedom: “l’amour est l’enfant de la liberté” as an old French song says; love is the child of freedom, never of domination.... To love somebody is not just a strong feeling—it is a decision, it is a judgment, it is a promise.

⁶ Fromm, Erich. 1956. *The Art of Loving*. New York: Harper and Row.

Directions: Paraphrase the text from the previous page in sections, as indicated below.

Is love an art? Then it requires knowledge and effort.

PARAPHRASE:

Or is love a pleasant sensation, which to experience is a matter of chance, something one “falls into” if one is lucky?

PARAPHRASE:

This little book is based on the former premise, while undoubtedly the majority of people today believe in the latter.

PARAPHRASE :

Not that people think that love is not important. They are starved for it; they watch endless numbers of films about happy and unhappy love stories, they listen to hundreds of trashy songs about love—yet hardly anyone thinks that there is anything that needs to be learned about love.

PARAPHRASE:

This peculiar attitude is based on several premises which either singly or combined tend to uphold it. Most people see the problem of love primarily as that of being loved, rather than that of loving, of one’s capacity to love. Hence the problem to them is how to be loved, how to be lovable.

PARAPHRASE:

In pursuit of this aim they follow several paths. One, which is especially used by men, is to be successful, to be as powerful and rich as the social margin of one’s position permits. Another, used especially by women, is to make oneself attractive, by cultivating one’s body, dress, etc.

PARAPHRASE:

Other ways of making oneself attractive, used both by men and women, are to develop pleasant manners, interesting conversation, to be helpful, modest, inoffensive. Many of the ways to make oneself lovable are the same as those used to make oneself successful, “to win friends and influence people.” As a matter of fact, what most people in our culture mean by being lovable is essentially a mixture between being popular and having sex appeal.

PARAPHRASE:

The active character of love becomes evident in the fact that it always implies certain basic elements, common to all forms of love. These are care, responsibility, respect, and knowledge....Love is the active concern for the life and the growth of that which we love....

PARAPHRASE:

Respect is the ability to see a person as he is, to be aware of his unique individuality. Respect means the concern that the other person should grow and unfold as he is. Respect, thus, implies the absence of exploitation. I want the loved person to grow and unfold for his own sake, and in his own ways, and not for the purpose of serving me. If I love the other person, I feel one with him or her, but with him as he is, not as I need him to be as an object for my use.

PARAPHRASE:

It is clear that respect is possible only if I have achieved independence; if I can stand and walk without needing crutches, without having to dominate and exploit anyone else. Respect exists only on the basis of freedom: “l’amour est l’enfant de la liberté” as an old French song says; love is the child of freedom, never of domination....

PARAPHRASE:

To love somebody is not just a strong feeling—it is a decision, it is a judgment, it is a promise.

PARAPHRASE:

The Art of Loving **Form B**

Explicating the Thesis of a Text

Directions: After reading the excerpt from *The Art of Loving*, complete the following four tasks:

1. State the thesis of the passage in your own words.
2. Elaborate the thesis with additional explanation. (“In other words...”)
3. Give one or more examples of the thesis.
4. Illustrate the thesis with a metaphor or analogy.

The Art of Loving Form C

Explicating the Logic of a Text (An analysis of eight basic structures)

Directions: After reading the excerpt from *The Art of Loving*, express clearly and precisely:

1. The author's *purpose*.
2. The most important *question*, problem, or issue in the excerpt.
3. The most significant *information* or data in the excerpt.
4. The most basic *conclusion* in the excerpt.
5. The most basic *concepts*, theories, or ideas in the excerpt.
6. The most fundamental *assumptions* of excerpt.
7. The most significant *implications* of the excerpt.
8. The *point of view* in the excerpt.

See Appendix A: The Logic of an Excerpt, Article, Essay, or Chapter for a full template.

The Art of Loving Form D

Evaluating the Logic of a Text

Directions: Assess the text according to eight basic intellectual standards.

1. Does the author express what he/she means **clearly** (or is the text vague, confused, or muddled in some way)?
2. Is the author **accurate** in what he/she claims?
3. Is the author sufficiently **precise** (providing details and specifics when they are relevant)?
4. Does the author wander from his/her purpose (thereby introducing **irrelevant** material)?
5. Does the author take us into the important complexities inherent in the subject (or is the writing **superficial**)?
6. Does the author consider other relevant points of view (or is the writing overly **narrow** in its perspective)?
7. Is the text internally consistent (or are there **contradictions** in the text)?
8. Is what the text says **significant** (or is the subject dealt with in a trivial manner)? Does the author **fairness** (or is the subject dealt with in an unfair manner)?

The Art of Loving Form E

Role-Playing the Author

Directions: Role-play the author of the text, Erich Fromm, by constructing a dialogue between him and an intelligent questioner who asks him to explain various portions of the text.

Respond to the questions as if you were Fromm. Have the questioner ask whatever questions you would imagine might occur to such a person about what the text means. Answer by trying to reconstruct what you think Fromm might say. Make sure that what you “attribute” to him is implied in some way in the text. We have begun the dialogue for you. Your job is to continue it.

Questioner: Mr. Fromm, tell me, briefly, how you think of the concept of “love.”

Mr. Fromm: Well, there are different forms of love, of course, and yet there is an essence to love that one must understand if one is to be able to love, and to be loved in turn.

Questioner: So, what is the essence of love?

Mr. Fromm:

Questioner:

Mr. Fromm:

Continue dialog...

Form CC

Explicating the Logic of a Subject or Discipline as Detailed in a Textbook

When you understand and have internalized the elements of reasoning, you realize that all subjects, all disciplines, have a fundamental logic defined by the structures of thought embedded in them.

To lay bare a subject's most fundamental logic, focusing on a specific subject or discipline, answer the following questions (use textbooks, encyclopedias, and/or other relevant resources available to you):

1. What is the main *purpose* or *goal* of studying this subject? What are people in this field trying to accomplish?
2. What kinds of *questions* do they ask? What kinds of problems do they try to solve?
3. What sorts of *information* or data do they gather? How do they go about gathering information in ways that are distinctive to this field?
4. What types of *inferences* or judgments do they typically make? (Judgments about...)
5. What are the most basic ideas, *concepts* or theories in this field?
6. What do professionals in this field take for granted or *assume*?
7. What *implications* follow from studying this discipline? How are the products of this field used in everyday life?
8. How should studying this field affect my view of the world? What *viewpoint* is fostered in this field?

The International Critical Thinking Reading and Writing Test Specimen Answers

In this section, we provide specimen answers that can be used as guides for grading student answers. For directions in how to use this section, see p. 11.

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Dr. Richard Paul is a major leader in the international critical thinking movement. He is Director of Research at the Center for Critical Thinking, and the Chair of the National Council for Excellence in Critical Thinking, author of over 200 articles and seven books on critical thinking. Dr. Paul has given hundreds of workshops on critical thinking and made a series of eight critical thinking video programs for PBS. His views on critical thinking have been canvassed in *New York Times*, *Education Week*, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, *American Teacher*, *Educational Leadership*, *Newsweek*, *U.S. News and World Report*, and *Reader's Digest*.



Dr. Linda Elder is an educational psychologist who has taught both psychology and critical thinking at the college level. She is the President of the Foundation for Critical Thinking and the Executive Director of the Center for Critical Thinking. Dr. Elder has a special interest in the relation of thought and emotion, the cognitive and the affective, and has developed an original theory of the stages of critical thinking development. She has coauthored four books on critical thinking, as well as twenty-one thinkers' guides. She is a dynamic presenter with extensive experience in leading seminars on critical thinking.

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