Reading Sources with a Critical Eye

**What arguments does the author make?** Does the author present a number of different positions, or does he or she argue for a particular position? Do you need to analyze the argument?

**How persuasive do you find the argument?** What reasons and evidence does the author provide in support of any position(s)? Are there citations or links—and if so, are they credible? Is any evidence presented without citations? Do you find any of the author’s assumptions questionable? How thoroughly does he or she consider opposing arguments?

**What is the author’s stance?** Does the author strive for objectivity, or does the content or language reveal a particular bias? Does the author consider opposing views and treat them fairly?

**Do you recognize ideas you've run across in other sources?** Does the source leave out any information or perspective that other sources include—or include any that other sources leave out?

**Does this source support or challenge your own position—or does it do both?** Does it support your thesis? Offer a different argument altogether? Does it represent a position you may need to acknowledge or refute? Don’t reject a source just because it challenges your views; your sources should reflect a variety of views on your topic, showing that you've considered the subject thoroughly.

**What can you tell about the intended audience and purpose?** Is the author writing to a general audience, to a subset of that audience, to specialists in a particular field? Are you a member of that audience? If not, does that affect the way you interpret what you read? Is the main purpose to inform readers about a topic or to argue a certain point?