



Critically analysing a news article

University students are sometimes asked to critically analyse an academic article or a book chapter as part of an assignment task; however, for some degrees, such as in Media or Journalism, students may be required to analyse different types of texts. Examples include:

- a news article (online or paper-based)
- a website
- a podcast
- a television episode
- a design publication
- an amateur recording of an event (e.g., mobile phone footage of an event)
- visuals (e.g., advertisement, social campaign, image)
- media release

Not all commonly used critical thinking and reading questions are relevant to these types of texts. Before analysing a text, ensure that you understand the task expectations, the type of text(s) you are required to critically analyse, and who the intended audience is.

Critically analysing a news article for your assignment tasks

Critically analysing a news article might involve any of the following questions:

- Where has this article been published? Why is this important?
- Who is the author? Is there any information about his/her background?
- Who is likely to read this type of newspaper (i.e., who is the intended audience)?
- Is the article written effectively to engage its intended audience? How has this been done?
- Is there any evidence used to support the ideas presented in the text? What is this evidence? Is it biased?
- Is this article funded or sponsored by an external party?
 - How might such funding or sponsorship impact the use and presentation of evidence? And why might this be important?
 - Does this create any bias?
- Is this intended to be an editorial/opinion piece or a news article?
- What strategies have been used to present ideas/arguments/evidence in terms of language use, structure, and visuals to convince the audience?

NOTE: Consider the purpose and layout of a news article. Your critical analysis might focus primarily on the written content, but could also include an analysis of how visuals and layout are used to present arguments/evidence.

Writing critically about a news article

Once you have critically analysed the news article using appropriate critical thinking questions, use your notes to form written paragraphs which demonstrate your analysis. Look at the example task and paragraph below:

Example task

Critically analyse the use of ethos, pathos and logos in the article provided to you by your tutor.

Here the student has been asked to analyse a news article in relation to ethos, pathos and logos. While reading the article, the student might ask:

- Who is the intended audience?
- Does the article use ethos, pathos and logos to engage the audience? Is this done effectively? How?

Example paragraph demonstrating critical analysis

Elements of ethos, logos and pathos appear throughout the article to highlight contention and to engage the audience. *Ethos is evident in that formal language is used throughout the text to indicate an academic level of thought. Furthermore, the article mentions that Pacella is a PhD candidate, highlighting her expertise in the area, and thus strengthening the reliability of her arguments. In terms of logos, logic and reasoning, rather than conjecture and opinion, are used throughout. For example, a number of independent sources are referred to as support for This is done in a logical and concise manner, providing an argument that Similarly, images are used to emphasise assertions made throughout the text. Figure 1 for instance, shows ...to accentuate points made within the text about ... The use of images can be quite powerful, and given that this is an online article, more visuals could have been included to further supplement arguments and retain audience interest. Finally, although pathos is not included extensively throughout the article, the very notion of ANZAC day as a commodity is inherently an emotive topic. By relating the term 'commodity' to 'ANZAC day' in the title, the author increases ... Whether intentional or not, the author manages to capture audience attention through sentimental provocation.*

Adapted from:

Farrelly, M. (2010). Critical discourse analysis in political studies: An illustrative analysis of the empowerment agenda. *Politics*, 30(1), 98-104.

Topic sentence (focus):

- The paragraph will focus on ethos, logos and pathos

Development/explanation/support of focus

- Ethos (language, author background and its role)
- Logos (evidence used, real-world examples, images)

Conclusion

- Closes on pathos (limited use of pathos in the article, but still has impact)