# Three Domains of Critical Reading: Questioning the Text

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|  | **Validity: On its own terms** | **Synthesis: In relation to others** | **Relevance: Usefulness to you** |
| **Context:** discipline/profession, authors, currency, bias | * When was it published? * Where was it published? * What profession or discipline are the authors? * What else have they published – are they authoritative? * Are there any vested interests which might bias research? | * Have others cited or drawn on this research? * How influential has it been? * Is it cutting edge/controversial or mainstream? * Is this part of a debate and where does it sit? | * Are these authors coming at the issue from the same discipline perspective as you? * What is your overall response to the article? |
| **What are they doing?** Research Question/Aims/Hypothesis | * Are the aims clearly stated? Are they vague? * Is the research question etc valid or rest on bias/assumptions? * Is the question interesting/significant? | * Is this a radically new area of research or a tweak or new angle on existing question or topic? * How long have people been interested in this topic? | * How similar are their aims to your own? How does that affect your use of it? * Is it still worth me doing my research? |
| **How did they do it?** Methods, Models and Materials | * Are any theories/models appropriate and accurately understood? Do they develop their own? * Are the methods used for data gathering/interpretation appropriate? * Is the data set well chosen? | * Are they developing a completely new method etc? * Are the methods etc used standard and acceptable practice? * Are they adapting or improving on previous methods etc? | * Does this help me justify my own choice of approach? * Can I adapt or improve their method? * Do I agree that this is an appropriate method for research like mine? |
| **How do they know?** Argument, evidence, logic and reasoning | * Is their interpretation and analysis flawed or does it make logical sense? * Have they missed anything? * Do the results actually mean what they say they mean? | * Do they use other literature appropriately to help interpret their findings? * Do later scholars criticise them? | * Is there anything I should be watching out for when reading my own work critically? * Is there anything I can point to in order to save me having to explain it in full? |
| **What do they say?** Findings and conclusions | * Are the conclusions actually related to their aims and results? * Are the conclusions drawn proportionate to the evidence presented? | * Are their findings confirmed by other literature? * Are their findings significant and novel, compared to other literature? | * Can I rely on their conclusions to build my own argument? * Do I disagree with their conclusions to some extent? Does that help justify my research? * Any gaps/missed opportunities to help justify my research? |