At the college level, you must know how to **read critically**.

**Reading critically** requires you to go beyond just learning facts from the texts that you read. Reading critically involves asking questions to understand the text’s **intention, credibility**, and **context**.

**Intention**
Just as most of your essays now contain a **thesis**, or argument, so do most texts you will read. After you read a text, ask yourself these questions:
- What is the author’s thesis?
- How does the author support his or her thesis?

**Credibility**
Not all texts are equally trustworthy. As you read a text, you must ask whether it is credible. Several factors influence credibility. As you evaluate a text, keep the following questions in mind:
- What are the author’s qualifications? Is he an expert in the topic of the text?
- What kind of evidence does the author use to support his thesis? Are there concrete examples and evidence?
- Does the author make an effort to address opposing viewpoints?

**Context**
When reading a text, it is important to consider how the text fits into the “big picture,” whether that means the “big picture” of your class, or culture or history in general. A text can mean very different things when taken out of context. As you read, consider the following questions:
- In what time period was this text written, and what events may have influenced the author?
- Do you know anything about the author’s life or work that may help you understand why and how this text was written?
- What does the text say about culture and society at the time it was written?

When you learn to read critically, you will discover much more going on beneath the surface of the texts you read. Understanding the intention, credibility, and context of a text is crucial to understanding the text itself.