**8 Step Critical Thinking Process**

**Step 1 – Identify the Main Argument**

For Step 1, identify the main argument or line of reasoning. You should summarise the main argument and the reasons the author gives to support it. This shows that you understand what the author is saying. You should also acknowledge your own biases and assumptions and set these aside so that they don’t ‘cloud your judgment’ or prevent you from finding all the information you need.



**Step 2 – Examine the Introduction and Conclusion**

For the second step I want you to examine the Introduction and Conclusion to see if there is a link between them. You are looking for consistency here, and whether you get a sense straight away for how the author will link their conclusions to the main argument.



**Step 3 – Identify the Key Evidence**

In step 3, identify the key evidence that the author has offered to support their argument. Here you should evaluate or make a judgment about whether the evidence contributes to the overall argument and leads clearly to the conclusion.



**Step 4 – Critique the Quality of the Evidence**

In this next step, look critically at the quality of the evidence. Determine when it was produced to see if it is up to date and whether it is still relevant. It’s also important here to analyse whether the evidence is biased. Check who produced and / or sponsored the evidence to help you decide this.



**Step 5 – Analyse the Amount of Evidence**

Now you need to decide whether the author has supported their argument enough to prove their case and to make you accept their reasoning. Ask yourself, ‘is all the evidence relevant?’, and ‘what’s missing?’



**Step 6 – Does it flow?**

For step 6, make a judgment about whether there is a logical flow in the order in which the evidence is presented. Does it make sense? Would the argument be stronger if it was presented in a different way? This will help you to evaluate the overall argument.



**Step 7 – Smoke and Mirrors!**

In this step, decide whether the author has interpreted and used the evidence correctly, or have they manipulated it to suit their argument or line of reasoning? Another thing to look for here is whether the author has attempted to persuade you by using emotional language. Remember – to think critically, you need to remain objective.



**Step 8 – Is there balance?**

In this final step, determine whether the author has presented a balanced argument. Ask yourself whether enough consideration has been given to other points of view. A stronger argument will be one that considers and responds to opposing views.