

Questions to ask when consuming media / reading texts:

Economic production/distribution questions:

- Who made this?
- Who is the intended audience?
- Who paid for this?
- Who profits from this?
- (for historical texts) How was this media/text originally distributed? Who supported/paid for that platform?
- How is this media being distributed to me right now? Who is supporting/paying for this platform?

Interpretive/Ideological questions:

- What is the “thesis” or intended usage?
- What alternative messages or usages might exist? For which audiences?
- What is my position to this text as a reader/consumer (am I the intended audience)? If you aren’t the intended audience, what responsibility do you have to listen to (and reflect on) the perspectives of those it was produced for? Be a respectful guest in other communities’ real and virtual spaces.
- How does this text make me feel? Allow yourself to feel, observe, take notes. Reflect and process. Then ask: how might my response relate to my positionality?
- What is my critical stance on, or interpretation of, this text?
- Can I find outside evidence to support or refute the message of this text?
- What existing narratives or ideologies does this text align with? Which does it refute?
- Can I find critics with alternative readings of this text? Are these takes convincing? Does my critique need clarification in response?
- Are the formal elements of this work conducive to “selling” the project? Do they take an oppositional stance to traditional markets?

Formal questions:

- Make detailed, careful observations. Take notes. Read/view/listen multiple times.
- What strategies do the producers use to convey their message? Are these effective?
- What pre-existing media/genres/styles does this project build on, pay homage to, subvert? If you aren’t sure, do some homework.
- Written texts: how does the language being used indicate audience, set tone, persuade?
- Audiovisual texts: how do visual and sonic elements (lighting, framing, color, editing, sonic coloring) indicate audience, set tone, persuade?
- Note the physical space in which this media/text is encountered (e.g. a theater, a handheld screen, a flash mob, an online text, a live performance). How does that space impact the experience of interacting with it?
- Do the producers conform to generic expectations, or defy them? How? To what effect?