

LiSS Podcast 8

(Intro)

This is LISS podcast number 8.

Titled, 'Adopting a more critical approach to reading' by Kay Tulley Pitchford.

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(Main Body of text)

DAVID: Welcome to the second in our series of podcasts about critical analysis. The series is designed to give you a greater insight into this complex issue and suggest some strategies to help you develop your skills. In this podcast we are going to discuss critical reading. So Kay, how do you adopt a more critical approach to academic reading?

KTP: The first thing to say is that it's important to read widely – to gain a good overview of different views. A critical reader knows that if you only read one text, you only get one person's perspective on the subject. If you read several texts, you'll gather a wider range of views – from which you can form your own ideas. When you've read a text ask yourself 'Has anyone else written about this? Was it similar or different?'

To be critical you need to question everything. When you read the literature for an assignment you need to consider the arguments being made by different authors: who do you agree with and why? Are you reading a strong, persuasive argument or can you see flaws?

DAVID: What criteria can we use to make these decisions?

KTP: Look for good evidence to back up the author's argument and ask whether the evidence supports the author's conclusion. Has the text come from a reliable, credible and up-to-date source, such as a university e-journal or a more dubious, anonymous website? Does the author have a good reputation and authority in her subject? If it is a study, was a sound methodology adopted or can you see a bias?

DAVID: So it's important to keep an objective mind when reading?

KTP: Yes, and challenge any assumptions being made. Remember, you're not just reading a text to find out the facts, but you are reading a text to learn the significance or the implications of an idea or concept. When you've finished the text, ask the simple question 'so what?' This should help you decide whether or not it is important for you to know and if it will be useful for your assignment.

DAVID: So, as with critical thinking, critical reading takes time.

KTP: Yes, allow plenty of time to mull over what you have read. Reflecting is an important part of the learning process. Take notes to help you clarify what the text is really about. Some people like to use mind-maps to organise their thoughts. Another good idea is to set up an informal study group to discuss what you've read. This will help you to test out your own thoughts and hear others' ideas.

DAVID: Thanks, Kay. You've given us some useful tips on how to adopt a more critical approach to academic reading. The next podcast in this series will look at how to sound more critical when writing your assignments.

(Outro)

For further details on this podcast and to listen to others in the series please visit www.cumbria.ac.uk/liss