

# Critical Reading Moves

A one-page summary of Zachary M. Schrag, "Examples of Critical Reading," *HistoryProfessor.Org*, <http://historyprofessor.org/research/examples-of-critical-reading/>. Last updated 1 April 2013.

## I. Challenge A Source's Credibility

The most critical of critical readings will show that a source says something that is factually inaccurate or logically incoherent. Historians sometimes do so to hold historical figures to account for their misdeeds. In other cases, the goal is not to condemn the creator of the source, but to use the inaccuracies or fallacies to understand better that person's view of the world.

### A. The source is lying

1. Internal evidence shows that a source is lying.
2. External evidence shows that a source is lying.

### B. The source's logic contradicts itself, or at least reveals a tension

## II. Explain the Nuances of Argument

Even sources that are factually accurate and logically sound are worthy of exploration, for every person must make choices when presenting information or argument. Look for the following, and use them to understand the source's creator's views.

### A. The source makes surprising choices about what facts to present, and how to present them

### B. The source uses striking terminology, metaphors, and imagery

### C. The source makes concessions

[Note: this may be the same as III.A.2, or a variant of it]

## III. Put the Source in Context

By reading a source with outside events in mind, the historian can extract new meanings.

### A. Contemporary context

1. The source is advancing an unstated agenda
2. The source is countering an argument

### B. Historical context

1. The source says something old
2. The source says something new