

Aristotle: Nicomachean Ethics

Analytical Reading Worksheet (part 2b-end)

Part 2: "What is being said in detail, and how?"

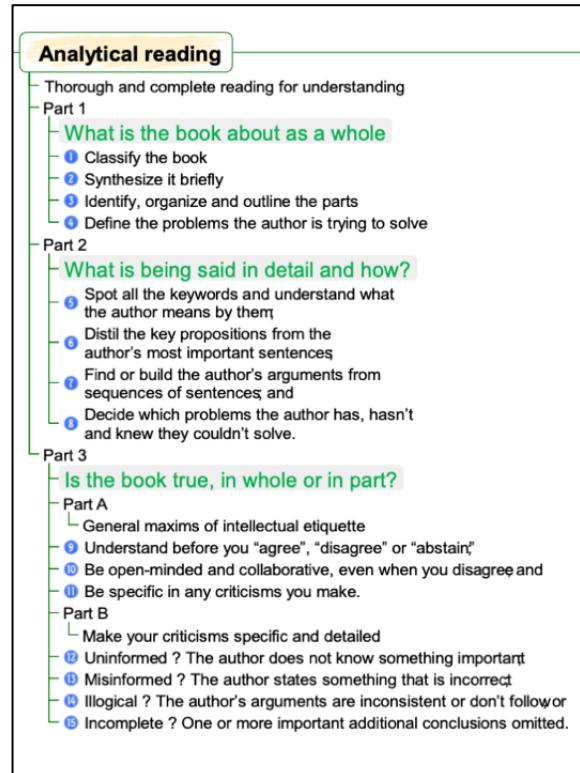
The next 4 sub-steps in analytical reading will help you clarify exactly what the author is saying and how he's saying it. Just as writing uses words to build sentences and paragraphs, so logic uses terms to build propositions and arguments. Your task is to find and relate these back to part I.

5. Spot all the **keywords** and understand what the author means by them (the author's terms)

First, make a list of, then define all the unfamiliar or important **keywords** in the book. Use the title, headings, figures, glossary, and formatting to help spot them. Make sure you understand exactly how the author is using these words; be sure you understand what they mean. Consider context - what do the words around the keywords say about how the author is using them? What about the rest of the book? The combination of keywords and the specific way an author uses them are the **author's terms**.

Go back to your outline and the things you marked in your book; use the book outline as well.

- Pick 5-10 key words
- Figure out how Aristotle uses them as terms by looking at what he says about them and how he uses the words (this will help you in the next step with propositions) – list and describe those terms in this section



6. Distil the key **propositions** from the author's most important sentences

Find, highlight, and dissect the sentences whose meaning is either not immediately obvious or that are clear declarations of knowledge or opinion. These are the author's **propositions**, the foundations that support their main arguments. A good way to spot these is to look for high concentrations of the **terms** that you gathered above.

Once you've found them, puzzle away at these propositions until you can re-state them clearly *in your own words*. Alternatively, challenge yourself to exemplify the general truth they imply with a specific personal example. Both exercises will challenge you to show true understanding.

- You should have at least one proposition dealing with what you think the *entire* book is about
- After this, you should have at least 4 more propositions from the book – remember page references (or ranges) for the content of these propositions, as it will help with our in-class discussion.

7. Find or build the author's **arguments** from sequences of sentences

Third, find or piece together the collections of sentences or paragraphs in the book that connect one or more propositions in support of a particular conclusion. These chains of logic are the author's main **arguments**.

To spot them, look for things the author states they must assume, can prove, or need not prove because they are self-evident; look for conclusions where you find reasons (and vice versa).

This step is only as good as the steps beforehand – since keywords → terms → propositions → arguments. If you are struggling here, it's probably bc you need stronger work in the three previous steps.

8. Decide which **problems** the author has, hasn't, and knew they couldn't solve.

Finally, relate your analysis back to your observations from part I. What problems has the author solved? Which have they missed? Where did they know that they failed?

This step will be hard if you haven't taken the time to define the problems. Go back to that part of Part 1 and work on it if you need to! Then come back here and determine if Aristotle solved the problems!

Third Stage of Analytical Reading: Rules for Criticizing a Book as a Communication of Knowledge

| General Maxims of Intellectual Etiquette | | | |
|--|---|---|---|
| Is it true? What if? | Expository Literature | Imaginative Literature | AR Worksheet 3 & Book-at-a-Glance |
| | <p>Rule 9: Do not begin criticism until you have completed your outline and your interpretation of the book. (Do not say you agree, disagree, or suspend judgement, until you can say, "I Understand.")</p> | <p>Before you express your likes and dislikes, you must first be sure you have made an honest effort to appreciate the work.</p> <p>Appreciation = having the experience the author tried to produce for you by working on your emotions and imagination.</p> | <p>Is the book true, in whole or part?</p> <p>This is answered when you can give a reasoned judgment about the poetical truth of the work.</p> <p>Is it a likely story?</p> <p>Does the work satisfy your heart and your mind?</p> <p>Do you appreciate the beauty of the work?</p> <p>In each case, can you say why?</p> <p>What of it?</p> <p>Imaginative writings can lead to action, but they do not have to. They belong to the realm of fine art.</p> |
| | <p>Rule 10: Do not disagree disputatiously or contentiously.</p> | <p>After you have done structural and interpretive rules for reading imaginative literature, you are competent to judge. Your judgement must include both:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Whether</u> you like or dislike the book – this is subjective, it's about your tastes • <u>Why</u> you like/dislike it – this is more objective, it's about the book | |
| | Special Criteria for Points of Criticism | | |
| | 12. Show wherein the author is <i>uninformed</i> . | | |
| | 13. Show wherein the author is <i>misinformed</i> . | | |
| | 14. Show wherein the author is <i>illogical</i> . | | |
| | 15. Show wherein the author's analysis or account is <i>incomplete</i> . | | |

Part 3: "Is the book true, in whole or in part?"

When deciding how much truth an author has touched on (or failed to touch on) in a book, you'll find it helpful to start with some general maxims. Read those below, and then describe if you agree, disagree, or abstain. Go to the end of this document to do so – AFTER you carefully read Part A and B below.

PART A: General Maxims of Intellectual Etiquette

9. Understand before you "agree", "disagree" or "abstain"
10. Be open-minded and collaborative, even when you disagree;

Begin with an open and collaborative mind, assume benign intent and be able to state the other person's position better than they can before weighing in with your own.

Remember that both you and the author are (usually) just as curious about and interested in finding the truth. Focusing on that, and not who is right or who is wrong, will help you get more from your reading.

Where you do disagree, monitor your emotions. Remember, just because you don't like someone's arguments, it doesn't necessarily mean that they're wrong.

11. Be specific in any criticisms you make.

Always criticize with an eye towards resolution and keep your own propositions and arguments to the same standards as you hold the author's. And remember, there's a very good chance that it's you that may misunderstand or be ignorant on some important point.

PART B: General Maxims of Intellectual Etiquette

An author and their arguments can fall short by being...

- 12. Uninformed – The author does not know something important;
- 13. Misinformed – The author states something that is incorrect;
- 14. Illogical – The author's arguments are inconsistent or don't follow; or
- 15. Incomplete – One or more important additional conclusions omitted.

One or all of these may be true, but only for specific parts of a book.

"The person who says he knows what he thinks but cannot express it usually does not know what he thinks," Adler and van Doren remind us.

- So, when you criticize, make sure you can clearly explain where your criticism applies, what kind of shortcoming you've spotted, and (for extra points) how you might improve or rewrite the argument. If you can't, be as suspicious of yourself as you would of someone else criticizing your work whose best explanation is "a general sense of unease."
- And remember, until you can level at least one of the first three points at a work, you cannot (logically) disagree with its conclusions, even though you may dislike them.

Now, you get to share what you think: "Is the book true, in whole or in part?"

Where, specifically, do you agree with Aristotle?

- List at least 2 propositions or arguments that you agree with Aristotle on. Explain why.

Where, specifically, do you disagree with Aristotle?

- List at least 2 propositions or arguments that you *disagree* with Aristotle on. Explain why – making sure you understand (to the best of your ability!), are open-minded, and are specific in your reasons.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER - If you've successfully applied the three parts of analytical reading you should find the gap between you and an author has closed considerably.

Congratulations! Using nothing but the power of your mind, you've conquered a book that was once well beyond you. You've elevated yourself from student to peer. You've met the mind of the author as equal and seen the world through the eyes of a giant. That's pretty amazing.

Part 4: "But what of it?" ~ Significance/Response

Why does the author think it's important to know these things? Is it important that you know them? If the book has not just informed, but enlightened you, what should follow? Implications, applications, suggestions?

Aristotle: Nicomachean Ethics

Book~at~a~Glance

What is the book about as a whole? (Summarize the book – classify, synthesize, explain the overall structure, and state the problem it's trying to solve)

Key propositions of the book

Key arguments

I agree with Aristotle:

I disagree with Aristotle:

What I liked about the book & why I like it.

"But what of it?" ~ Significance/Response

A few of my favorite Common Place quotes/passages...

