CRITICAL READING: A FIVE-STEP OUTLINE OF THE PROCESS

I. PRE-READING
   A. Preliminary Examination
      - Examine Length
      - Examine the Title
      - Think about the Author
      - Preview the Introduction and Conclusion of the Essay
   B. Classification
      - Classify the General Subject Matter in 2-3 words
      - Skim the Essay and Describe What Kind of Essay It Is
   C. "Seeing the Skeleton"
      - Spot Subdivisions:
      - Jot Down a Brief Outline of the Essay
      - Think about how Parts of Outline Relate to the Whole Work
      - Define the Basic Problem the Author Discusses
      - Make Up a Few Questions About the Essay Before Reading

II. INTERPRETIVE READING
   A. Look for the Important Words
      - Locate Recurring Words
      - Identify and Look-up Unknown Words
      - Identify Oddly Used Words
      - Identify Ambiguous Words
   B. Paraphrase and Summarize
      - Paraphrase as you Read
      - Summarize What You've Just Read
   C. Locate and Identify the Parts You Do Not Understand.
      - Mark Confusing Sections
      - Reread Confusing Sections
      - Talk It Over with Other Readers
      - Sleep on it and return later, if all else fails

III. CRITICAL READING
   A. Ask Questions
      - Talk Back to the Text
      - Question the Text
      - Question Your Own Attitude
      - Examine the Context
      - Look for Broader Implications
      - Figure out why it is important
   B. Make your Mark
      - Make Notes in the Margin
      - Make Notes to bring to Class

IV. SYNTOPIC READING
   A. Seek Confirmation (Do other books/articles reach similar conclusions?)
   B. Seek Disagreement (Do other books/articles reach different conclusions?)
   C. Seek Synthesis (Could the ideas in this book be applied in some way to different subjects?)
      (Could a smart reader combine or reconcile the different voices in the debate?)

V. POST-READING
   A. Review
      - Look again at the notes you took while reading
      - Double-check that you've answered your own questions.
   B. Summarize
      - Restate the main argument and conclusion of the essay in a single sentence.
      - Summarize your own reaction to the essay.
   C. Explain
      - Explain, in your own words, how the author reached the conclusion.
      - Explain why you found it convincing or not.