

HERMENEUTIC CIRCLE

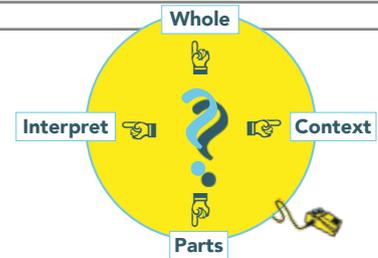
Component: Academic Reading
ILO: To read a text critically

TOOL

A model for reading so we can ask critical questions of academic texts. The Hermeneutic Circle is a useful tool to help us interpret text and ask questions of it. It helps us to think about the text, the reasons why it may have been written and helps us to think deeper. This is a useful skill for all students and can be used when they are first asked to read academically. It is also good to revisit this circle when challenged with tricky reading. See the handout for a description.

ACTIVITY

You can introduce this activity to help students to think more critically about texts. There are many ways to implement this. (NB If your students struggle with reading it may be best to scaffold this over a few weeks, starting with teacher-generated questions to demonstrate the kinds of questions they could be asking).



1. TEACHER-GENERATED QUESTIONS

Students read a given text and answer the questions you set them (one question from each of the four aspects). They discuss the questions in pairs/small groups and feedback to the big group. A mind map of their thoughts could be a useful way to get a big picture of the text. This is a useful activity when you want students to engage with a section of a core text.

2. STUDENT-GENERATED QUESTIONS

This works in the same way as no.1, but the students have to come up with the questions after reading the text. This can be useful when presenting a topical subject - something that has happened recently which impacts your module.

3. BUILDING UP

You can refer back to previous readings and their mind maps either to look for connections in the text (e.g., they are both looking at the rise in popularity of a certain genre) or connections in how you critique writing (asking the same questions of different texts).

4. MIND MAPS

Instead of explicitly asking questions of the text you could do a group activity onto the board to create a mind map. Ask students to read a text then draw a large Hermeneutic Circle on the board and get students to add their comments under each section. This summary can be a useful revision aid. Take a photo and put it on the VLE.

EXAMPLE

Read the article Jay-Z named world's first billionaire rapper by Forbes magazine

WHOLE - the overall message of this article is about the rise to superstar status of hip-hop artists.

CONTEXT - Inner-city African Americans in the late 1970s. It's not just the hip-hop music but all the circumstances that caused it to develop you need to think about when you are reading.

PARTS - This article covers music, race and culture, investments.

INTERPRET - How do we interpret the message this news conveys to the music industry and its audience?

LARGE GROUP TEACHING

With large groups, you can either run this as a solo activity and then put students into groups to discuss/adjust their decisions or you could have small-group discussions which contribute to a whole-group activity of generating one list.

SUCCESS

Students move through a text knowing what key things they are seeking from it.

NEXT STEPS

READ Backwards TLA can help students to read a text more critically.

RESOURCES/REFERENCES

https://www.theguardian.com/music/2019/jun/03/jay-z-is-worlds-first-billionaire-rapper-report-claims	The article referred to in the example above.
www.musostudy.com/resources/3SS/hermeneutic-handout.pdf	Handout describing how to use the cycle
www.musostudy.com/resources/3SS/hermeneutic-bookmarks.pdf	Visual reminders to cut up and place with texts, on laptop etc.
www.musostudy.com/resources/3SS/hermeneutic-circle.png	Image for use on slides etc.