

The Critical Reader

By Erica L. Meltzer

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Note: This version of *The Critical Reader* reflects the material tested on the pre-March 2016 version of the SAT. If you are preparing for the current (P)SAT, the new edition is at http://www.amazon.com/Critical-Reader-2nd-Erica-Meltzer/dp/1515182061. If you are preparing for the AP English Language and Composition exam, you can purchase the AP Edition (beta version) at https://www.createspace.com/7045612.

Intended to demystify what is often considered the most challenging section of the SAT in a straightforward, logical manner, *The Critical Reader* includes: a list of 300 top words, a roots list, and a "second meanings" list, along with 75 practice sentence completions; a complete chapter devoted to each type of question followed by extensive exercises designed to reinforce the skills and concepts presented; and strategies for understanding difficult passages, locating important information, and identifying correct and incorrect answers more quickly and confidently.

To allow students to apply the strategies and techniques outlined in this book to College Board material while focusing on the specific areas in which they need to improve, this book also includes a list of all the Critical Reading questions in the Official College Board Guide, 2nd Edition (2009), grouped both by category and by test. It is also recommended that students use this book in conjunction with *They Say/I Say: The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing* (http://www.amazon.com/They-Say-Academic-Writing-Edition/dp/0393935841).

More about *The Critical Reader*:

The result of nearly a decade's worth of of tutoring experience,*The Critical Reader* grew out of three major observations:

1) The SAT is a test about arguments.

2) The SAT represents most high school students' first encounter with college-level reading.

3) Every passage has two authors: the author of the passage and the author of the test.

The Critical Reader is the only book that approaches the SAT from a college perspective while simultaneously breaking down and reinforcing the reading skills that the highest scorers take for granted.

Many students preparing for the SAT find Critical Reading both frustrating and baffling because it seems unrelated to the work they do in high school English class. In reality, though, the SAT tests skills that are important for *college*. Critical Reading passages are based on the type of academic "conversation" on which college reading is based -- reading that requires students to juggle multiple viewpoints within the space of a few paragraphs, all while navigating challenging vocabulary and sentence structure as well as unfamiliar and sophisticated concepts. Building on the templates in Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein's *They Say/I Say: The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing*, *The Critical Reader* teaches students to use a variety of textual clues to identify key information and distinguish between ideas that the author agrees with and ones that the author disagrees with.

Unlike other guides, which rely primarily either on works whose copyright has expired (outdated, hard in the wrong way) or on passages written specifically for that prep book (too straightforward), *The Critical Reader* aims to prepare students for exactly what they will find on the actual test. All of the passages are excerpted either from books/articles by authors whose work has appeared on College Board exams, or from recent works whose content/style are reflective of the material on the exam.

Finally, *The Critical Reader* teaches students to "read the SAT" -- that is, to use the patterns inherent in the test to identify answers likely to be correct and incorrect with maximum efficiency, and to reduce the test to its simplest terms.

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The Critical Reader By Erica L. Meltzer Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #282178 in Books
- Published on: 2013-04-06
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 11.00" h x .86" w x 8.50" l,
- Binding: Paperback
- 380 pages

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