

CRITICAL ARTICLE REVIEW

STUDENT PROSPECT | STRUCTURE • LANGUAGE • ASSESSMENT

350–450
WORDS

4
PARAGRAPHS

120
MINUTES

NO
DICTIONARY

Your task: demonstrate understanding of the article, identify its key ideas and arguments, and critically evaluate the author's argumentation.

01 INTRODUCTION

50–80 words

INCLUDE title • author • source • date • topic • thesis • purpose of the review

YOUR GOAL Show what the article examines and what the author argues.

USEFUL LANGUAGE

- The article entitled ..., published in ..., examines ...
- The author argues / claims / contends that ...
- The purpose of this review is to critically evaluate ...

02 SUMMARY

120–150 words

INCLUDE the author's main ideas + principal arguments used to support the thesis

YOUR GOAL Summarise the author's reasoning accurately. Do not evaluate it yet.

USEFUL LANGUAGE

- The author claims that ... / highlights ... / outlines ...
- To support this claim, the author ...
- Furthermore ... / Moreover ... / Consequently ...

03 CRITICAL ASSESSMENT

150–220 words

INCLUDE ONE particularly strong or weak argument + your claim + your own support

YOUR GOAL Evaluate the argumentation, not simply whether you agree with the topic.

USEFUL LANGUAGE

- The article's weakest point / most vulnerable claim is ...
- The argument that ... is plausible, but it oversimplifies ...
- The author fails to account for ... / neglects ...
- This argument does not stand up to scrutiny because ...

04 CONCLUSION

≈ 2 sentences

INCLUDE your overall evaluation of the author's argumentation

YOUR GOAL Restate your judgement consistently; introduce no new argument.

USEFUL LANGUAGE

- In conclusion, the author's argumentation ...
- While the article provides useful insights into ..., its analysis ...
- Overall, the article overemphasises ... while downplaying ...

CORE ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

SUMMARY: What does the author argue? → How is it supported?

ASSESSMENT: What is strong/weak? → Why? → What supports YOUR claim? → Why does it matter?

DO • AVOID • ANALYSE • CHECK

DO ✓

- Use a clear four-paragraph structure.
- Distinguish the author's ideas from your own.
- Paraphrase; retain only essential key terminology.
- Use reporting verbs: argues, contends, highlights, maintains.
- Begin paragraph 3 with a clear evaluative topic sentence.
- Support YOUR claim with reasoning/evidence.
- Use academic vocabulary and linking devices.

AVOID ✗

- Do not list: "First the author says ... then ...".
- Do not introduce ideas not mentioned in the article in the summary.
- Do not overload the summary with names, figures or minor facts.
- Do not copy the article's wording.
- Do not replace analysis with "I agree / disagree".
- Do not repeat the article's arguments as your own analysis.
- Do not let the conclusion contradict paragraph 3.

ANATOMY OF A STRONG REVIEW

SOURCE ARTICLE	Isabel Hilton, "The Global Succession Crisis," Prospect, September 2025.
AUTHOR'S CLAIM	Strongman systems are vulnerable to dangerous succession crises, with potentially serious international consequences.
REVIEWER'S CLAIM	Hilton's reliance on Mao's chaotic succession is unduly selective: it overlooks later orderly Chinese transitions and instability that can accompany democratic transitions.
WHY IT WORKS	The reviewer identifies a specific weakness → supplies counter-evidence → explains its significance → offers a more nuanced assessment.

COMMON ASSESSMENT PITFALLS

STRUCTURE & CONTENT	CRITICAL ANALYSIS	LANGUAGE
• Unclear paragraphing • Missing / inaccurate topic or thesis • New ideas or excessive detail in the summary • No author reference in the summary	• No evaluative topic sentence • Support does not develop your claim • Unclear or superficial analysis • Repetition / plagiarism	• Vocabulary below the expected professional level • Copied wording from the source • Weak / incorrect linking • Lexical, grammatical, spelling or punctuation errors

30-SECOND SUBMISSION CHECK

✓ 4 paragraphs? 350–450 words?	✓ Topic + thesis accurate?	✓ Author mentioned in summary?	✓ Paragraph 3 starts with MY evaluation?	✓ My claim has support?
✓ Summary = author's ideas only?	✓ Conclusion matches my assessment?	✓ Academic linking used?	✓ No copied wording?	✓ Grammar + spelling checked?

KEY PRINCIPLE: A critical review evaluates the **QUALITY OF THE AUTHOR'S ARGUMENTATION** — not merely the topic itself.