



CRITICAL READING: From What to Why

ORGANIZATION: Paragraph Level

What do these paragraphs *do*? Explain their function by identifying 1) the thesis, 2) any supporting evidence, and 3) the conclusion.

PARAGRAPH	FUNCTION?
1 Anonymous online communities are endangered by persistent user identity.	←
Think about it: your online identity lives in one of three places now a Twitter, a Facebook; maybe a MySpace. People are putting loads of information on these sites in order to create a strong identity. This means that we re becoming very comfortable with sharing intimate details about our lives.	←
2	
The thing is, not true: we re comfortable when all of that information is online in a user profile, but we re not comfortable when we re asked to share that information in different ways. For example, if someone called you up on the phone and asked you to give out all of these things that people post online y say, Hell and hang up.	←
3	
So we need to think about sharing personal information in different terms. Here what I mean: First, we re being tricked into giving out this information. Second, the more people get tricked like this, the less chance anonymous communities have of surviving. I ime for people to push back.	←
4	

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PREMISES

Now we know about the thesis, the conclusion, and the topic sentences. Now we have to ask a question: *why* does all of this make sense? The answer will be the author's reasons – the premises of his argument.

Let's start with the **overall argument**. How do the topic sentences support the overall conclusion? First, number the topic sentences that you underlined above. Try sketching lines of dependency that show these main numbered reasons depend on each other.

Next, look at the **individual paragraphs** (numbers 2, 3, and 4). How do the other sentences in the p



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PREMISES

Now put both diagrams together. You should be able to show how the sentences fit together how each sentence builds on the previous one, leading to the conclusion.

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NEXT STEPS and FURTHER READING

You just done the hardest work involved in critical reading: figuring out how an argument works is the most important part. Often, though, you want to go further and ask if what you're reading is a *good* argument. There are many different ways to do this and again, questioning is a useful method. The following is a very small sample of a large number of possible questions you can ask a text:

Are any of the words or sentences ambiguous that is, c