# How to read non-fiction texts

(based on *Contexts*)

The basic procedure:
- Try to understand what the text is about
- Distinguish between fact and opinion
- Analyse how the contents are presented and how they are designed to influence the reader's mind

You may find the rhetorical pentagram useful in your analysis. The idea behind the pentagram is that all the concepts are interrelated, and your job is to find out how these interrelations work in the text.
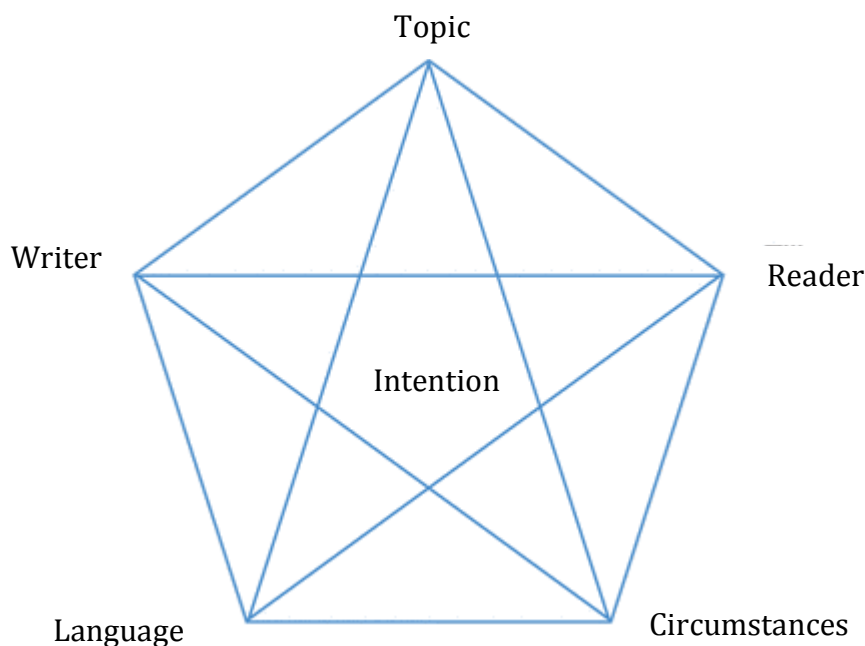
What type of text is it?
- Is the text an essay, article, speech, advertisement, letter (to the editor), interview?
- What is the theme/topic/subject?

Who is speaking?
- What is the speaker's background: family, education, occupation, religious or political point of view, age, sex, other important characteristics?

To whom is the person speaking?
- What is the reader's background?

What is characteristic of the text?
- Language.
- Specific vocabulary, sentence structure, punctuation?
- Tone/style
- Imagery/symbolic language.
- Are there any rhetorical effects - repetition, alliteration (bogstavrim) ...?
- Are there any references to specific topics, places or people?
- Are there quotations? If yes, by whom, and in what way are they used?
- Selection of material- what has been and included what has been left out?

- What type of arguments are used? Are they weak or strong?
- What is the lay-out of the text?
- Are there illustrations? If yes, what kind, and what is the relation between illustration and text?

What is actually said?
- Try to find key words in the text or give each paragraph a headline (if it has not already got one).
- Try to summarize the text in a hundred words for a person who has not read it.

What is the writer's or speaker's intention?
- Does (s)he want to argue, convince, discuss, educate, entertain, inform, instruct, persuade, prove?

What is the medium?
- Where does the text appear - in what kind of newspaper (broadsheet or tabloid)? In a magazine, on the television/ radio/internet? In an anthology/book?

How reliable is the text?
- Is the text of current interest or out-dated?
- Is the topic relevant (to you)?
- Is the text clear/direct?
- Do you find the text and the arguments reliable or unreliable? Why?
- Does the text hold water if you compare it with other information on the topic?
- Were you convinced by the text? Why/Why not?

Non-fiction Analysis Chart (based on *Passwords*)

Who (sender)	What (genre)	To whom (receiver)
age education background political stand occupation personal aims Immediate needs	article essay, documentary, lecture speech, advertisement propaganda instruction manual message	age education background political stand occupation marital status

How	Why	Where
composition or structure language (choice of words, connotations, allusions, figurative language) tone style selection of material type of arguments degree of concrete information quotations references layout illustrations	inform discuss or open a forum for a debate or ask for other opinions instruct argue convince entertain prove educate accuse cha	TV or radio press (popular, serious, weekly, monthly, magazine) educational book conference meeting hearing e-mail/computer SMS/mobile phone