

The image shows the cover of a spiral-bound notebook. The cover is a light beige or tan color with a fine, woven fabric texture. A silver metal spiral binding is visible along the left edge. The title "How to write textual commentary" is printed in a large, black, serif font in the center of the cover. The author's name, "Clara Fernández Vara", is printed in a smaller, black, serif font in the lower right quadrant.

How to write textual commentary

Clara Fernández Vara

Step 1: Read the text!!

- Read the text several times:
 - First time read quickly to get a gist of what the text is about.
 - Then read more slowly, looking for the main ideas.

Step 2: Contextualising

- Work to which the excerpt belongs
- Author
- Where in the work
 - What comes before
 - What comes after
- Historical/Social context
- Artistic context

Step 3: Summarising

- What the excerpt is about.
- Parts in which it is divided (can be done in the formal analysis section)
- Topics appearing
 - Main topics
 - Secondary topics

Step 4: Formal analysis

- Structure of the text (this can tie up with the topics of the text)
 - Parts
 - Patterns
 - Repetitions/Rhythms
- Formal devices used, and what their purpose and effect is.

Step 5: Content Analysis

- Thematic criticism
- How does the form affect the contents
- Topics in the text related to topics in the whole work
- How it relates thematically with other contemporary works; influences from previous works or on later works.

Step 6: Conclusion

- Retake the most important points of the commentary.
- Summarising the main points in the form and content section is basic.

Some advice

- These are the basic points that should be tackled in textual commentary but:
 - The media and the type of text affect the way in which it is made.
 - The extension and purpose of the commentary also affects the style.
 - Every section is always related to the others, so if you find yourself skipping from one section to another and then back, don't worry—is actually what you're supposed to do!