Reading Journal Abstracts

Abstracts in scholarly journals provide an overview of what the article covers and gives more information than the title alone. Reading the abstract closely can help you determine if the article is relevant to your topic, thus saving you time in the research process.

The specifics of an abstract (or even whether an article has an abstract) can vary by discipline. However, in general abstracts should help you answer some or all of the following questions:

- what is the author(s) main research question(s) or argument?
- what method(s) or methodology is the author(s) using to answer the question?
- what theory or theoretical lens is the author using?
- what is the population or object(s) of study
- what are the author's finding(s) or conclusion(s)?
- what is the significance of this research?

Classroom activity:

Using the abstract provided by your librarian, identify the following elements. If an element is not present indicate this as N/A.

- main research question(s)
- method(s) or methodology
- theory or theoretical lens
- population or object(s) of study
- finding(s) or conclusion(s)
- significance