Reading and Analyzing a Scholarly Article

Article Structure
Look at the structure of the article (most empirical research articles follow the same specific format)

- Abstract (summary of the whole article)
- Introduction and Literature Review (why they did the research and the research literature that supports it)
- Methodology (how they did the research)
- Results (what happened)
- Discussion (what the results mean)
- Conclusion (what they learned)
- References (whose research they read and cited in the article)

The Introduction and Conclusion are the sections most likely to have information that you will cite or paraphrase in your literature review.

How to read a scholarly article critically
As you read, finish the sentence for each point. The answers to these questions are often found in Introduction & Literature Review or Conclusion.

✔ The main purpose of this article is . . . [State as accurately as possible the author’s purpose for writing the article. In order to demonstrate the author’s purpose you will have to furnish some background information on the topic so you may need to consult your textbook about the topic]

✔ The key question that the author is asking is . . . [Figure out the key question in the mind of the author when he/she wrote the article]

✔ The most important information in this article is/concerns . . . [Identify the facts, data, or resources the author uses to support his/her argument. To expand on this statement you will have to look at the foot or endnotes]

✔ The main conclusion[s]/inference[s] in this article is/are . . . [Identify the key conclusions the author comes to and presents in the article]

✔ The main assumptions underlying the author’s thinking are . . [Think about what the author is assuming to be true and what might be questioned. To expand on this statement you will need to think about the larger context of the topic]

✔ If we accept the author’s line of reasoning, the implications are . . . [What consequence does the author’s argument have on our understanding of current research and/or theory?]

✔ If we reject the author’s line of reasoning, the implications are . . . [What consequence does rejecting the author’s argument have on our understanding of current research and theory?]

✔ When writing this article, the author’s point of view may have been influenced by . . . [Scholars are influenced by events that occurred during the time when they wrote; by personal prejudices; or by hidden agendas, such as pressure from an organization who compensated them to do the research.]