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LLED 7800 – Final Unit – Critical Thinking
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Goals and Rubric - “Critical Thinking”

Critical thinking is purposeful and reflective judgment about what to believe or what to do in response to observations, experience, verbal or written expressions, or arguments. Critical thinking gives due consideration to the evidence, the context of judgment, the relevant criteria for making the judgment well, the applicable methods or techniques for forming the judgment, and the applicable theoretical constructs for understanding the nature of the problem and the question at hand. Critical thinking employs not only logic but broad intellectual criteria such as clarity, credibility, accuracy, precision, relevance, depth, breadth, significance and fairness. (Wikipedia, 2009)

The goals of this unit on *Critical Thought* will be to construct, through writing response papers to teacher provided texts and other classroom activities, a clearer understanding and definition of critical thought. The texts read by the students will gradually define a concrete idea of the importance of critical thought (if there is one) and a clear definition of what it means to critically respond to the ideas presented in the text and classroom activities.

Goal #1 (Portfolio)

A written group of “response papers” that illustrate what the students think and/or feel about what they read. The writings will be accumulated in a portfolio so that each text provided by the teacher has a response from the student. Every two weeks, students will spend time reacting to a text that discusses critical thought in a different method. The responses should be somewhat “raw” in format and summarize a student’s reaction to the presented text. They may be in various formats (journal, reading log, or outline of ideas considered) depending on how the student responds to the text. Preferably, they will thrash out the ideas presented in the text in such a way that they show some personal consideration of the ideas presented in the text. The papers should consider the following:

- 1) How do you feel about what you are reading?
- 2) What do you agree or disagree with?
- 3) Can you identify with the situation?
- 4) What points illustrated in the text stand out in your opinion?

Goal #2 (Classroom Activities)

Classroom activities will work to further develop a student’s understanding of how information is presented to him in a pre-packaged way that must be deconstructed and critically considered. Students will discuss the following items to consider how, or if, they have an effect on their personal decisions:

- 1) Teacher provided text, (the text they will be writing about for their portfolios)
- 2) Advertisements (magazine, billboards and television),
- 3) Expectations from friends,

- 4) Expectations from clubs, groups or sports teams,
- 5) Anything students feel influenced by.

Goal #3 (Rough Draft of Final Paper)

The rough draft will be based on “ideas and thoughts” from the portfolio and teacher or group reactions to response papers and classroom activities on critical thought. It may also include ideas presented by other students in small groups. The rough draft of some students may be anonymously presented to the class in small groups or in large group discussion with the whole class. With many suggestions by the teacher to individual portfolio response papers, the student should have plenty of ideas to expand on. Some of the following may be considered in the rough draft paper:

- 1) Based on ideas discussed in class, thoughts considered in the response papers, and feedback from the teacher on the portfolio, students should create a list of important concepts about critical thinking.
- 2) Students should combine these ideas to create an overall definition and premise about their reaction to “critical thinking.”
- 3) The rough draft paper should be organized similar to the following:
 - a. Provide a definition of critical thinking that will highlight:
 - i. What critical thinking means to the student,
 - ii. Criteria used to differentiate critical thinking from other thinking,
 - iii. What makes critical thinking important in a society,
 - iv. Examples of situations that may specifically require critical thinking.
 - v. How individual judgment plays a role in critical thinking.
 - b. Include a thesis statement that provides a basis for your determination of the importance of critical thought.
 - c. Decide on the key points that will focus your ideas. These will be your topic sentences.
 - d. Develop your ideas by adding examples, quotations, and details to your paragraphs.
 - e. Attempt to make your paper flow by having each paragraph lead into the next paragraph.
 - f. Check your thesis and make sure the ideas of each paragraph support your thesis.

Goal #4 (Final Paper)

This final paper should illustrate an evolution of the student’s rough draft on thoughts and ideas discovered in the portfolio of reading response papers, classroom activities and any other discussions between classmates and teacher. It should consider in-depth feedback from the teacher. The paper will consider the students definition of critical thought, their responses to examples of critical thought and a final determination on the level of importance of critical thought and how they are, or are not, affected by information presented to them in their daily life.

- 1) The paper should narrow the topic to points the student feels most express his case.

- 2) The paper should provide facts, examples and support from the text, classroom activities and response papers.
- 3) Without penalty to students, the teacher may highlight some grammar issues found in student papers in order to provide the students with ideas to improve their use of language rules.

Rubrics – Unit on “Critical Thought”

Rubric for percentages of each area within the Unit:

- 40% of total grade “Portfolio”
- 20% of total grade “Classroom Activities”
- 20% of total grade “Rough Draft”
- 20% of total grade “Final Paper”

The rubric for percentages consists of an emphasis on **development and discovery** within the concept of critical thought. In other words, a greater amount of a student’s grade comes from those areas in which the student is documenting the discovery process and progression of thought on the topic of critical thinking rather than presenting “final papers.” Hence, the goal that receives the highest percent of a student’s grade is the Portfolio. In this goal, students document their processing of ideas on critical thinking to which they have been presented. In part, it is a documentation of the student’s progression towards an overall “stance” (its importance, meaning, and usefulness) on critical thought.

Rubric for Portfolio:

Portfolios that receive an A:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Most response papers should be turned in on time. At least 90% of the assigned responses are included in the portfolio. 2) Responses should indicate consideration and thought of the provided text. 3) Questions that may be considered in the papers will include: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. General reactions and feelings towards the presented ideas. b. Statements of agreement or disagreement with the text. c. Highlighted points that the author brings up. 4) Papers should be at least two paragraphs in length.
Portfolios that receive a B:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Most response papers should be turned in on time. At least 80% of the responses are included in the portfolio. 2) Responses should include general outline of at least one of the points the author illustrates. 3) Questions that may be considered in the papers will include: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. General reactions and feelings towards the presented ideas. b. Statements of agreement or disagreement with the text. c. Highlighted points that the author brings up. 4) Papers should be at least two paragraphs in length.
Portfolios that receive a C:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Some of the response papers should be turned in on time. At least 70% of the papers are included in the portfolio. 2) Some responses may lack any organizing thought on the text. 3) Responses include at least some representation of the concepts presented in the text. 4) The responses should be at least one paragraph.
Portfolios that receive a D:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Some of the response papers should be turned in on time. At least 60% of the papers are included in the portfolio. 2) Responses do not reflect the student read the text. 3) Responses do not include any ideas presented in the text.

Portfolios that receive an F:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) None of the responses are turned in on time. Less than 50% of the response papers are included in the portfolio. 2) Students work does not reflect having read the text. 3) Responses do not include any ideas presented in the text.
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Rubric for Classroom Activities:

Classroom Activities that receive an A:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Student attends at least 90% of class sessions (assuming no special circumstances). 2) Student brings in most assignments requested for classroom discussion (Example: When students are asked to bring in a magazine ad for a product they use, the student accomplishes the task.) 3) Student usually participates in classroom discussion. 4) Student contributes in large part to small group discussion with classmates.
Classroom Activities that receive a B:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Student attends at least 80% of class sessions (assuming no special circumstances). 2) Student brings in most assignments requested for classroom discussion (Example: When students are asked to bring in a magazine ad for a product they use, the student accomplishes the task.) 3) Student occasionally participates in classroom discussion. 4) Student contributes some to small group discussion with classmates.
Classroom Activities that receive a C:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Student attends at least 70% of class sessions (assuming no special circumstances). 2) Student brings in some assignments requested for classroom discussion (Example: When students are asked to bring in a magazine ad for a product they use, the student accomplishes the task.) 3) Student occasionally participates in classroom discussion. 4) Student contributes some to small group discussion with classmates.
Classroom Activities that receive a D:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Student attends at least 60% of class sessions (assuming no special circumstances). 2) Student brings in very few assignments requested for classroom discussion (Example: When students are asked to bring in a magazine ad for a product they use, the student accomplishes the task.) 3) Student seldom, if at all, participates in classroom discussion. 4) Student does not contribute to small group discussion with classmates.
Classroom Activities that receive an F:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Student attends less than 50% of class sessions (assuming no special circumstances). 2) Student brings in very few assignments requested for classroom discussion (Example: When students are asked to bring in a magazine ad for a product they use, the student accomplishes the task.) 3) Student detracts from classroom discussion. 4) Student does not contribute to small group discussion with classmates.

Rubric for Rough Draft:

Rough Draft that receives an A:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Student should meet on-time deadline for rough draft. Paper is three pages in length. (Double spaced) 2) Student defines critical thought with a thorough definition to include:
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. What critical thinking means to the student, b. Criteria used to differentiate critical thinking from other thinking, c. What makes critical thinking important in a society, d. Examples of situations that may specifically require critical thinking, e. How individual judgment plays a role in critical thinking. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3) Student provides a thesis statement that presents a basis for the paper’s discussion of critical thought. (For Example, does the student think critical thinking is important and why.) 4) Student provides at least three ideas from the assigned text or classroom activities that illustrate why critical thought is, or is not, important. 5) Student concludes paper by summarizing ideas. 6) Student’s paper “flows” from one idea to the next. 7) Student follows an organized theme throughout the paper.
Rough Draft that receives a B:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Meet on-time deadline for rough draft. Paper is three pages in length. (Double spaced) 2) Student defines critical thought with a thorough definition to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. What critical thinking means to the student, b. Criteria used to differentiate critical thinking from other thinking, c. What makes critical thinking important in a society, d. Examples of situations that may specifically require critical thinking, e. How individual judgment plays a role in critical thinking. 3) Student provides a thesis statement that presents a basis for the paper’s discussion of critical thought. (For Example, does the student think critical thinking is important and why.) 4) Student provides at least two ideas from the assigned text or classroom activities that illustrate why critical thought is, or is not, important. 5) Student concludes paper by summarizing ideas. 6) Student paper may not contain an organized theme throughout the paper.
Rough Draft that receives a C:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Does not meet on-time deadline for rough draft. Paper is less than three pages in length. (Double spaced) 2) Student may define critical thought with a thorough definition. 3) Student provides a thesis statement that presents a basis for the paper’s discussion of critical thought. (For Example, does the student think critical thinking is important and why.) 4) Student provides at least one idea from the assigned text or classroom activities that illustrate why critical thought is, or is not, important. 5) Student concludes paper by summarizing ideas. 6) Student paper may not contain an organized theme throughout the paper.
Rough Draft that receives a D:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Does not meet on-time deadline for rough draft. Paper is less than three pages in length. (Double spaced) 2) Student does not define critical thought with a definition. 3) Student provides a statement that does not adequately present a basis for the paper’s discussion of critical thought. (For Example, does the student think critical thinking is important and why.) 4) Student provides at least one idea from the assigned text or classroom activities that illustrate why critical thought is, or is not, important. 5) Student does not conclude paper by summarizing ideas. 6) Student paper may not contain an organized theme throughout the paper.

Rough Draft that receives an F:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Does not meet on-time deadline for rough draft. Paper is less than one page in length. (Double spaced) 2) Student does not define critical thought with a definition. 3) Student provides a statement that does not adequately present a basis for the paper's discussion of critical thought. (For Example, does the student think critical thinking is important and why.) 4) Student provides at no ideas from the assigned text or classroom activities that illustrate why critical thought is, or is not, important. 5) Student does not conclude paper by summarizing ideas. 6) Student paper does not contain an organized theme throughout the paper.
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Rubric for Final Paper:

Final Paper that receives an A:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Meet on-time deadline for Final Paper. 2) Teacher comments and suggestions in rough draft have been addressed in final paper. 3) Grammar has been improved or maintained at an appropriate level. 4) Presentation of final paper is typed or neatly handwritten. 5) Final paper is at least three pages in length, double spaced.
Final Paper that receives an B:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Meet on-time deadline for Final Paper. 2) Teacher comments and suggestions in rough draft have been addressed in final paper. 3) Grammar has not been improved or maintained at an appropriate level. 4) Presentation of final paper is typed or neatly handwritten. 5) Final paper is at least three pages in length, double spaced.
Final Paper that receives an C:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Paper may not meet on-time deadline for Final Paper. 2) Teacher comments and suggestions in rough draft have not been appropriately addressed in final paper. 3) Grammar has not been improved or maintained at an appropriate level. 4) Presentation of final paper is not typed or neatly written. 5) Paper is less than three pages in length, double spaced.
Final Paper that receives an D:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Student does not meet on-time deadline for Final Paper. 2) Teacher comments and suggestions in rough draft have not been appropriately addressed in final paper. 3) Grammar has not been improved or maintained at an appropriate level. 4) Presentation of final paper is not typed or neatly written. 5) Paper is less than two pages in length, double spaced.
Final Paper that receives an F:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Student does not meet on-time deadline for Final Paper. 2) Teacher comments and suggestions in rough draft have not been appropriately addressed in final paper. 3) Grammar has not been improved or maintained at an appropriate level. 4) Presentation of final paper is not typed or neatly written. 5) Paper is less than one page in length, double spaced.

Rationale

“In a democracy, free and universal schooling is meant to prepare *all* students to become literate adults capable of critical thinking, listening, and reading, and skilled in speaking and writing.” (*Standards for the English Language Arts*, NCTE / IRA, page 6)

“One of the most important functions of English language arts education is to help students learn to interpret texts—that is, to reflect on textual meaning from their own perspectives—and to evaluate texts—that is, to use critical thinking to identify particular text elements, such as logic, emotional appeal, and purpose.” (*Standards for the English Language Arts*, NCTE / IRA, page 23)

Standards

Throughout the National Council of Teachers of English and International Reading Association’s document entitled “*Standards for the English Language Arts*,” critical thought is consistently cited as a foundational perspective for many of the incorporated standards. Critical thought is a necessary step in the process of not only developing a student’s language skills, but in developing his or her personal stance on almost every subject matter. The NCTE/IRA state that, “we face new demands, new standards of critical thinking and expressive ability, that we are now beginning to meet.” (*Standards for the English Language Arts*, page 4) Consequently, students face “new demands” every day from a more globalized and media connected world and classroom. Students must have a strong foundation in critical thinking skills in order to compete in this global environment.

Furthermore, in the NCTE and IRA standards section titled, “How Students Should Be Able To Use Language,” the following is discussed:

“Critical language users bring original ways of thinking and novel interpretations to texts. While critical thinking is often concerned with making distinctions and marking differences, effective critical thinkers also draw connections among texts, their own responses to them, various bodies of knowledge, and their own experiences. Development of critical language skills enables students to provide informed opinions about texts they encounter, and to support their interpretations with multiple forms of evidence.”

In addition to the NCTE and IRA standards, the State of Georgia publishes its own standards in association with the State Superintendent of Schools office. The “Georgia Performance Standards,” as they are known, strive to, “...provide clear expectations for instruction, assessment, and student work. They define the level of work that demonstrates achievement of the standards, enabling a teacher to know “how good is good enough.” The performance standards isolate and identify the skills needed to use the knowledge and skills to problem-solve, reason, communicate, and make connections with other information.” (Georgia Performance Standards)

Several Georgia Performance Standards in particular (listed below) highlight the importance of critical thinking skills. And, either by implication via the definition of critical thinking, or in direct mention of it, many of the Georgia Performance Standards establish, in large part, the importance of critical thought in the Georgia classroom. Within the “Elements” section of many of the standards is the following statement: “Critical Component: The student produces persuasive writing and applies persuasive strategies acquired in previous grades to other genres of writing such as expository compositions,

historical investigative reports, and literary analyses, by raising the level of **critical thinking skills** and rhetorical techniques.” (Standard ELA9W2) This “critical component” is where a teacher is meant to recognize the basis of the standard. In other words, the teacher should work to emphasize the “elements” and “critical components” to achieve the appropriate result as described by the standard itself.

The following are a few of the English and Language Arts, Georgia Performance Standards that specifically address the importance of critical thinking skills:

Writing

1. **ELA12W1 & ELA12W2** “The student produces persuasive writing that clearly, logically, and purposefully applies persuasive writing strategies acquired in previous grades in other genres of writing and in a variety of writing situations such as expository compositions, historical investigative reports, and literary analysis, by raising the level of **critical thinking skills** and rhetorical techniques and the sophistication of the language and style.”

Listening, Speaking, and Viewing

2. **ELA12LSV1 & ELA12LSV2** “The student demonstrates an understanding of listening, speaking, and viewing skills for a variety of purposes. The student observes and listens **critically** and responds appropriately to written and oral communication in a variety of genres and media. The student speaks in a manner that guides the listener to understand important ideas.”

Important Vocational and Educational Skills

Learning to critically consider multiple genres such as: essays, opinion pieces, film, television, fiction and non-fiction, verbal arguments and many more, is an essential purpose of education. Exploring literature with an open mind and the ability to consider it critically is academically challenging and worth developing. In turn, applying critical thought to information from almost any source can develop specific intellectual skills that will allow a student to effectively compete and succeed in a competitive market that may include going to college, obtaining a technical education, or entering the workplace after high school.

Specific skills that developing critical thinking proficiency, such as the ones listed below, are beneficial to any pursuit a student decides to follow after high school. (Developed from, Salt Lake Community College, *Developing Critical Thinking Skills and Intellectual Standards*)

1. thinking independently
2. developing insight into egocentricity or socio-centricity
3. exercising fair-mindedness (respecting all viewpoints & opinions)
4. exploring thoughts underlying feelings and feelings underlying thoughts
5. developing intellectual humility and suspending judgment
6. refining generalizations and avoiding oversimplifications
7. comparing analogous situations: transferring insights to new contexts
8. clarifying and analyzing the meanings of words or phrases
9. evaluating the credibility of sources of information, evidence, and alleged facts
10. analyzing or evaluating arguments, interpretations, beliefs, or theories
11. comparing and contrasting ideals with actual practice

12. noting significant similarities and differences
13. examining or evaluating assumptions
14. distinguishing relevant from irrelevant facts
15. making plausible inferences, predictions, or interpretations
16. recognizing contradictions
17. exploring implications and consequences

In an article titled “*Developing Critical Thinking Skills*” (1990), William Daly, states, “The general skill levels needed in the work force are going up while the skill levels of potential employees are going down. As a result, this particular educational reform movement (critical thinking skills)...will remain crucial to the education of the work force and the economy's performance in the global arena.” Moreover, in his article “The Need for Critical Thinking,” Tim Bryce, managing director of M. Bryce Associates, observes that:

Aside from a means to release pressure, open **critical thinking** in the workplace provides several benefits:

- 1. Fertility of Mind** - Due to the repetition of the workplace, workers often fall victim to complacency. By forcing them to perform mental gymnastics, they must stay sharp and on top of their game. Open discourse actually becomes challenging and results in friendly competitive debate.
- 2. Commitment** - By creating a think tank environment, the employee realizes their voice is heard by management and, consequently, enhances their commitment to the company and the project. It also helps to thwart apathy and promotes participation. As an employee is allowed to speak more, they develop a sense of ownership of a project and a greater pride in workmanship. As such, it has a positive effect on staff morale.
- 3. Teamwork** - Open communications promotes teamwork by forcing people to realize they are working towards common goals and raises awareness of their dependencies on each other.
- 4. Problem Identification** - In terms of problems, nobody likes surprises. The sooner a problem can be identified, the sooner it can be addressed and solved. Establishing a punchlist of problems allows a manager to preemptively strike a problem before it festers and worsens. Get the problems on the table as soon as possible and chart a course of action to solve them.
- 5. Communications** - An open dialog provides a manager with the means to dispel rumors and misconceptions and keep the staff on track. Open discourse also allows the manager to easily spot a disgruntled employee.

The need for critical thought in higher education may seem fairly obvious to many people. The ability to critically consider literature, science, math and other disciplines is an integral component of any college degree. However, as much as institutions of higher learning may struggle to foster critical thought in their students, often times they are unsuccessful. In Lion Gardiner’s “*Redesigning Higher Education*” (1995) Gardiner states, “Research shows that most universities are ineffective in fostering critical thinking. For example, in a three year study of 68 public and private colleges in California, though the overwhelming majority (89%) claimed critical thinking to be a primary objective of their instruction, only a small minority (19%) could give a clear explanation of what critical thinking is. Furthermore, though the overwhelming majority (78%) claimed that their students lacked appropriate intellectual standards (to use in assessing their thinking), and 73% considered that students learning to assess their own work was of primary importance, only a very small minority (8%) could enumerate any intellectual criteria or standards they required of students or could give an intelligible explanation of what those criteria and

standards were.” In reference to the outcome of this study, it should be quite compelling that beginning a student’s understanding and ability to use critical thought effectively, we (as teacher in high school) ought to start student’s introduction to critical thought as soon as practical. Including critical thought in all a student’s subject areas may even be appropriate. To this end, William Graham Sumner claims, “The critical habit of thought, if usual in society, will pervade all its mores, because it is a way of taking up the problems of life.” (Sumner, 1906, page 633)

Important Intellectual Traits

In addition to the important skills that critical thought may be seen to foster in the educational world and the business world, there are also many intrinsic values in critical thought that appeal to ones intellectual abilities. These should not be underappreciated in reference to any discussion on vocational or educational requirements. In the following considerations, adopted by the Salt Lake City Community College, in a statement to its appreciation of art classes, we can see many of the intellectual benefits of pursuing critical thought.

Intellectual Humility: Having a consciousness of the limits of one's knowledge, including a sensitivity to circumstances in which one's native egocentrism is likely to function self-deceptively; sensitivity to bias, prejudice and limitations of one's viewpoint. Intellectual humility depends on recognizing that one should not claim more than one actually knows. It does not imply spinelessness or submissiveness. It implies the lack of intellectual pretentiousness, boastfulness, or conceit, combined with insight into the logical foundations, or lack of such foundations, of one's beliefs.

Intellectual Courage: Having a consciousness of the need to face and fairly address ideas, beliefs or viewpoints toward which we have strong negative emotions and to which we have not given a serious hearing. This courage is connected with the recognition that ideas considered dangerous or absurd are sometimes rationally justified (in whole or in part) and that conclusions and beliefs inculcated in us are sometimes false or misleading. To determine for ourselves which is which, we must not passively and uncritically “accept” what we have “learned.” Intellectual courage comes into play here, because inevitably we will come to see some truth in some ideas considered dangerous and absurd, and distortion or falsity in some ideas strongly held in our social group. We need courage to be true to our own thinking in such circumstances. The penalties for non-conformity can be severe.

Intellectual Empathy: Having a consciousness of the need to imaginatively put oneself in the place of others in order to genuinely understand them, which requires the consciousness of our egocentric tendency to identify truth with our immediate perceptions of long-standing thought or belief. This trait correlates with the ability to reconstruct accurately the viewpoints and reasoning of others and to reason from premises, assumptions, and ideas other than our own. This trait also correlates with the willingness to remember occasions when we were wrong in the past despite an intense conviction that we were right, and with the ability to imagine our being similarly deceived in a case-at-hand.

Intellectual Integrity: Recognition of the need to be true to one's own thinking; to be consistent in the intellectual standards one applies; to hold one's self to the same rigorous standards of evidence and proof to which one holds one's antagonists; to practice what one advocates for others; and to honestly admit discrepancies and inconsistencies in one's own thought and action.

Intellectual Perseverance: Having a consciousness of the need to use intellectual insights and truths in spite of difficulties, obstacles, and frustrations; firm adherence to rational principles despite the irrational opposition of others; a sense of the need to struggle with confusion and unsettled questions over an extended period of time to achieve deeper understanding or insight.

Faith In Reason: Confidence that, in the long run, one's own higher interests and those of humankind at large will be best served by giving the freest play to reason, by encouraging people to come to their own

conclusions by developing their own rational faculties; faith that, with proper encouragement and cultivation, people can learn to think for themselves, to form rational viewpoints, draw reasonable conclusions, think coherently and logically, persuade each other by reason and become reasonable persons, despite the deep-seated obstacles in the native character of the human mind and in society as we know it.

Fair-mindedness: Having a consciousness of the need to treat all viewpoints alike, without reference to one's own feelings or vested interests, or the feelings or vested interests of one's friends, community or nation; implies adherence to intellectual standards without reference to one's own advantage or the advantage of one's group.

Summary

Today's teenager is inundated with more information than at any time before. We, as a society, simply know more facts and figures about more things than at any point in the past. With all this information to know, it is impossible for anyone to add it all to their knowledge base. We need to know "how to learn" more than we need to know "what to learn." That is to say, if a student learns the process of effectively considering information by critically considering it, the actual facts themselves become a means to an end. If a student critically thinks about whatever type of data he is presented with, he will more likely be able to "make sense" of it without becoming simply a repository for the data. Arguably, it is more important to successfully make sense of information, to find meanings and process thoughts, than to be a storage container of information.

In the past, knowing a great many facts may have been useful, but somewhere along the line we need to concentrate on critical consideration of information and not just its compilation. Steven Schafersman writes, "...it seems obvious that when the information content of a discipline increases, it becomes even more vital to spend time, not learning more information, but learning methods to acquire, understand, and evaluate this information and the great amount of new information that is not known now but will surely follow. Frankly, it is counterproductive to simply memorize and learn more new and isolated facts when future facts may eventually displace these." (*An Introduction to Critical Thinking*, Schafersman, 1991) Hence, the old proverb that if you teach a man to fish he is much better off than if you simply give him a fish, may also apply. If you teach a student "how to think" critically about a subject, then you give him the tools to apply to almost any subject.

Daily Lesson Plans

Introduction to Unit

Part 1 – In Class Discussion on Opinions and Thought Provoking Situations

In part 1 of the introductory activity, students will break up into small groups and be given specific scenarios to discuss within their groups. The groups will each come up with some group answers to the discussion topics and then present them to the class as a whole. The teacher will allocate appropriate time to discuss the topics that each of the groups considered and then the teacher will present some novel ways of thinking critically about information that the groups may not have addressed. The class as a whole will then discuss these ideas and any new thoughts students might have on the ideas the

teacher presented.

Part 2 - Writing about Personal Experiences

The second introductory activity will involve a writing response piece to a list of prompts provided by the teacher. They will include topics that each student may use to write about on an individual basis. The papers will be started in class after a teacher led discussion on the procedures for writing the response piece. The papers will be completed at home and brought to class the next day.

Day One (Monday)

50 minute class period.

3 Minutes: Attendance, Housekeeping

5 Minutes: Ask some general questions to the group:

“Are you an independent thinker?”

“Is there anything you have done today that was influenced by someone other than yourself?”

“Are you in school because you want to be? If you were not in school where would you be?”

“If you were not in school and could not get a job, what would you do to support yourself?”

“How many people in the world do you think wish they were sitting in your chair right now?”

10 Minutes: Small group activity. Break up into student selected small groups and consider the hardcopy handout (Appendix A) that the teacher provides. Specific instructions will be given to describe appropriate small group behavior and the requirements each group will have when reporting back to the class as a whole. The hand out will include a questionnaire along with some questions for the group to consider.

15 Minutes: Small groups report back to the group and identify answers they came up with. Teacher will request, by asking students to raise their hands, how they marked the first part of the worksheet (Appendix A) and then, if each group will report some ideas to the questions considered by the small groups.

10 Minuets: Teacher will lead the whole class discussion with the prompts below and write the answers down on the dry erase board.

1) What does it mean to think independently or “critically”?

2) Is it important for a society to have people who think critically?

3) Who do you know that thinks critically...or who do you see on television that you think is an independent thinker?

4) I want to pay special attention to statement #7 in the worksheet – “I think that I can conform to societal pressures and still be an independent thinker.” Do you have to be physically independent of everyone else to think critically? Can you decide to follow everyone else because it is what *YOU* decided that you want to do?

15 Minuets: Teacher will introduce Part 2 of the introduction to critical thinking by describing the assignment. Students should write, in a manner of their choosing (formal, response, free thinking) to some of the questions that they felt were important in today’s discussion. They may use the worksheet (Appendix A) to guide them in their writing to further discuss critical thinking. However, in addition, they should consider the following in their writing:

Is critical thought necessary in their daily lives?

If critical thought is important, who do they admire for thinking critically?

2 Minuets: Any questions or concerns over the assignment and refresh their memory that the writing assignment is due the next day.

Appendix A

Each individual member of the group should consider the following by themselves before talking as a group: (Circle the number on the spectrum you think represents your position the best.)

- 1) I am an independent thinker.

Totally Independent	1	2	3	4	5	Not Independent
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- 2) When playing with friends, I usually do what my friends think we should do.

Agree	1	2	3	4	5	Disagree
-------	---	---	---	---	---	----------
- 3) Most of the clothes that I wear are advertised on television.

Agree	1	2	3	4	5	Disagree
-------	---	---	---	---	---	----------
- 4) I decided to participate in the extra-curricular activities that I am part of.

Agree	1	2	3	4	5	Disagree
-------	---	---	---	---	---	----------
- 5) I watch/read media outlets that inform more than they provide opinions.

Agree	1	2	3	4	5	Disagree
-------	---	---	---	---	---	----------
- 6) I carefully consider my actions before I do them even if I decide to do what most people are doing.

Agree	1	2	3	4	5	Disagree
-------	---	---	---	---	---	----------
- 7) I think that I can conform to societal pressures and still be an independent thinker.

Agree	1	2	3	4	5	Disagree
-------	---	---	---	---	---	----------

Questions to consider in your group:

- 1) What advertisements have you watched or read and then bought the product in the ad?
- 2) In what ways do teachers and figures of authority determine what you think?
- 3) In what ways are you influenced by your friends?
- 4) Does TV or other entertainment influence what you think is important?

Day Two (Tuesday)

50 minute class period.

(Adapted from “readwritethink.org”)

Preparation: Select advertising materials from around your school or local community to illustrate fallacies in advertisements. You might choose to use school television programs (e.g., Channel One), donated team scoreboards or bulletin boards, vending machines, and personal clothing. Try to find an example of each of the fallacies students will examine during the first session.

Objective: The objectives of this session are to alert students to the fact that fallacies surround them and to help them recognize and identify fallacies in advertisements.

3 Minutes: Attendance, Housekeeping

30 Minutes: Instruction and activities

1. Present students with a few of the advertisements you have gathered from around your school or local community, and begin developing a list of the different advertisements they typically encounter in their lives.
2. Ask students to work in small groups to add other types of advertising to the list. Examples may include television commercials, billboards, sporting arenas, malls, magazines, movies, and clothing.
3. Still working in their small groups, ask students to brainstorm places where there are no advertisements. After about five minutes, have students share their ideas with the class and record them on chart paper. They should find that advertising is impossible to escape and ad-free zones rarely exist.
4. Ask students what the word *fallacy* means. [According to Webster's dictionary, a *fallacy* is an error in reasoning or a flawed argument. It's an argument that does not conform to the rules of logic, but appears to be sound.]
5. Introduce a few of the fallacies that you selected from *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy: Fallacies* website (<http://www.iep.utm.edu/fallacy/>), and explore how the reasoning for each appears to be correct but is, in fact, flawed.
The 10 most frequently used fallacies are:
 1. **Ad hominem** (meaning "against the person")—attacks the person and not the issue
 2. **Appeal to emotions**—manipulates people's emotions in order to get their attention away from an important issue

3. **Bandwagon**—creates the impression that everybody is doing it and so should you
 4. **False dilemma**—limits the possible choices to avoid consideration of another choice
 5. **Appeal to the people**—uses the views of the majority as a persuasive device
 6. **Scare tactic**—creates fear in people as evidence to support a claim
 7. **False cause**—wrongly assumes a cause and effect relationship
 8. **Hasty generalization** (or jumping to conclusions)—draws a conclusion about a population based on a small sample
 9. **Red herring**—presents an irrelevant topic to divert attention away from the original issue
 10. **Traditional wisdom**—uses the logic that the way things used to be is better than they are now, ignoring any problems of the past
6. Focus on a few of the advertisements in the school or on the list students developed, and have students try to identify the type of fallacy in each ad. For example, after viewing a commercial on Channel One, ask students what technique the advertisement uses to persuade them to purchase a particular product or think or act in a certain way. Assist them in recognizing the fallacy that exists in the advertisement.
 7. To further develop an understanding of fallacy and its purpose, engage the class in a discussion. This class discussion can be accomplished in numerous ways. Some students work better in small groups reporting back to the class, while others respond well to a teacher-lead discussion. Regardless of your approach, the purpose of the discussion is for students to become more aware of how prevalent advertising is in their environment and the persuasive influence it has on their thoughts and actions.
 8. Noting how prevalent fallacies are in advertising, students should also be aware of their impact on the individual person and the larger community. Ask students:
 - What might be the impact of being told we are never pretty, handsome, rich, clean, or good enough?
 - What might the abundance of fallacious advertisements be saying about us?
 - What about political ads?

If you have a computer with Internet access that can be projected for the entire class to see, link to a news website like CNN, a radio or television station, or an army recruiting site to find specific examples for the class discussion.

10 Minutes: Portfolio assignment

Have students respond to the following question in a journal or as a class discussion:

What does the casual acceptance of surrounding ourselves with fallacies say about us?

2 Minutes: Homework:

Ask students to bring in two or more examples of advertisements from different media sources that use one of the fallacies discussed.

Day Three (Wednesday)

50 minute class period.

(Adapted from “readwritethink.org”)

Preparation: Copy handout that students may use in small groups.

Objective: In this session, students will explore a website on fallacies and determine how fallacies are used in the advertisements they see around them.

3 Minutes: Attendance, Housekeeping

40 Minutes: Instruction and activities

1. Review the fallacies discussed in Session 1 and how they were used in the advertisements students encounter in their school or local community. Make sure that students have seen an example of each of the 10 most frequently used fallacies. If they have questions about any of the fallacies, take time to show a few more examples or provide further explanation.
2. Divide the class into groups of three to four students each. Using three or four of the advertisements students brought in for homework (one from each student in the group), have them work together to identify the fallacies used in the different ads. Provide students with the “Finding the Fallacies That Surround You” (Appendix B) handout to complete while in groups.
3. As students are working, allow them to access The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy: Fallacies website, (<http://www.iep.utm.edu/fallacy/>) to find more information about the 10 most frequently used fallacies and also information about other fallacies that may apply to the ads they are examining.
4. Have each group share their examples with the class and indicate which fallacy each ad is using and why. You may also want to encourage other students to express their opinions on the different ads. This would be a good opportunity for class discussion and possibly debate.

7 Minutes: Portfolio assignment - Homework

In their portfolios, ask students to write for five minutes in response to the following question:

Where can you find an ad-free zone? Does one exist?

Day Four (Thursday)

50 minute class period.

Preparation: Write a nonsense poem (something that is not really a meaningful poem in any purposeful way...it looks and sounds similar to poetry, but may be a collection of words found in other text that were just put together) on the front board so students can read it as they come in the classroom. Move desks to groups of four.

Objective: In this session, students will explore what constitutes the 'meaning' of a poem (or any literature) and read about what Stanley Fish has to say about recognizing a poem.

3 Minutes: Attendance, Housekeeping

20 Minutes: Instruction and activities

1. Have students break up into groups of 4 and spend about 5 minutes having each student casually write about some ideas that the poem evokes in them. After individually writing about the poem, have them discuss, as a group, what the poem means to them.
2. Present their ideas to the class. As each group is presenting their constructed meanings to the nonsense poem, have the class comment on the group's ideas.
3. Discuss, as a whole class, some elements of a poem that often are considered when reading poetry.
 - 1) What does the title say about the rest of the poem? Is it an appropriate title in your opinion?
 - 2) Who is speaking?
 - 3) To whom? About what?
 - 4) Tone?
 - 5) Examples of abstract imagery?
 - 6) Examples of concrete imagery?
 - 7) Theme?
 - 8) Rhythm / Meter?
 - 9) Examples of rhetorical devices?
 - 10) Syntax?
4. Inform the students that 'poem' was not actually a poem. It was a nonsense group of words that you previously formed before the class. Discuss the following:
 - A) How does that make you feel? Do you feel cheated?
 - B) Does it matter if it was supposed to be a poem if it made sense to you?
 - C) Who "owns" the meaning to a poem? Is the author's prescribed meaning to a poem the only one that matters? What about your favorite song? How do you know what the author meant it to mean?

25 Minutes: Introduce Reading Text: *How To Recognize a Poem When You See One*, by Stanley Fish

1. Introduce the reading piece and have the students begin to read the text.

Introduce the following about Mr. Stanley Fish.

- Who is Stanley Fish?
- What does Stanley Fish write about?
- When did Fish write? What was going on at this time in history?
- Where is Fish from? Does this matter?
- Why is Fish of any concern?
- How did Fish get to his position (job) in life?

2 Minuets: Assign Portfolio writing piece

Homework: Write a brief (half page) description of your impression of the text.

Consider the following questions:

Do you sympathize with the students it in Mr. Fish's classroom?

What does Mr. Fish say about the "right" way to read a poem?

Is there more than one meaning to literature and can both be right?

Day Five (Friday)

50 minute class period.

Preparation: Break desks up into groups. Design a guided discussion / lecture on the meaning of Stanley Fish's work. Highlight his major points.

Objective: In this session, students will explore what the text meant to them and what identify some of Mr. Fish's main points.

3 Minutes: Attendance, Housekeeping

30 Minutes: Instruction and activities

- 1) **Found Poem:** Students should get into groups of 4 and write a found poem to describe the text from Stanley Fish. Teacher will explain the idea of a 'found poem' and what is expected of the students work.
- 2) Student groups will present their unique poems to the class.

12 Minutes: Teacher led discussion

Discuss Stanley Fish's essay, *How to Recognize a Poem When You See One*.

Use the following talking points:

- 1) Are people trained to read or interpret literature in a specific way? How did the students interpret the 'assignment' on the chalk board in Mr. Fish's classroom?
- 2) Do we create meaning where there is none when we read or view media? Is that bad?
- 3) What are the distinguishing features of literature? What makes a poem a poem, an essay an essay or a short story a short story?
- 4) What does it mean to reference a 'source'? If a source is referenced, can the meaning of a piece of writing become clearer? Is a poem something that can reference a source? Does a poem reference one's thoughts, experiences and feelings more than a specific source? Are experiences of the reader less important than a documented source?
- 5) If an author presents ideas that readers distort into a new meaning, is it the authors fault?
- 6) Is an author responsible for making sure a reader understands what is meant?
- 7) What type of literature may want to create clear understandings of meaning in its readers?

5 Minutes: Discuss Homework

Ask students to find the best definition they can of "Critical Thinking" and write it down. Provide the source of the definition.

Day Six (Monday)

50 minute class period.

Preparation: Independent writing time.

Objective: In this session, students will explore ideas about their own education. They will discuss what has made their education meaningful up until this grade level and how to continue to make it meaningful.

3 Minutes: Attendance, Housekeeping

30 Minutes: Instruction and activities

1. Students should take out some paper and be prepared to write independently for about 25 minutes. This writing will go into their journals. Students should consider the following:

What does it mean to be educated?

Included in this might be some possible writing points to have on the board:

- 1) What have been some good aspects of their education up until now?
- 2) What are some factual pieces of information that students might know a lot about?
- 3) What types of classes have they enjoyed the most?
- 4) Is their education something they are happy to talk with friends and family about?
- 5) Are they proud of their education?

7 Minutes: Defining “Critical Thinking”

Using student’s homework assignment, write on the board some concrete terms that might be used to define “Critical Thinking”

10 Minutes: Homework

Read “The ‘Banking’ Concept of Education” by Paulo Freire. Students may begin reading the homework during the remaining time in class.

Day Seven (Tuesday)

50 minute class period.

Preparation: Prepare dry erase board and markers for a “Chalk Talk” for the classroom.

Objective: In this session, students will discuss in small groups the “banking concept” of education through “chalk talk” and class discussion.

3 Minutes: Attendance, Housekeeping

15 Minutes: “Chalk Talk” on the word ‘Education.’ What does it mean and how do we go about becoming educated.

The teacher explains that chalk talk is a silent activity. You may comment on other student’s ideas simply by drawing a connecting line to the comment. The teacher hands a piece of chalk to everyone, or places them at the board. Students write as they feel moved to do so in reaction to the main topic, ‘Education’ or to other student’s comments. The teacher may add comments or highlight comments as necessary. (National School Reform Faculty, 2009)

Ideally, the discussion on the board will reflect some of the items that were discussed in Paulo Freire’s piece on “The Banking Concept of Education.” Possible phrases that the teacher might include:

- a. The teacher teaches and the students are taught.
- b. The teacher knows everything and students know nothing.
- c. The teacher talks and the students listen.
- d. Teacher chooses content, students adapt to it.
- e. Oppressive / Passive / Struggle / Problem-Posing / Banking / Receptacles / Praxis / Alienation

15 Minutes: Discussion

With regards to what was written on the board, some questions the teacher might use to start a discussion on “The Banking Concept of Education.”

- a. How do we usually think of Education in our school?
- b. What does Paulo Freire mean by the “Banking Concept” of education?
- c. What does he suggest instead? **Answer:** “Problem-Posing” education.

- d. How would “Problem-Posing” education work in an English (Math, Science, Social-Studies) class?
e. What do the words “Praxis” and “Alienation” mean?

Praxis is the process by which a theory, lesson, or skill is enacted or practiced. It is a practical and applied knowledge to one's actions.

Alienation: Marx's theory of alienation, the separation of things that naturally belong together, or antagonism between things properly in harmony. (Paulo Freire uses the term ‘alienation’ as Marx described the word. Who is Karl Marx? **Karl Heinrich Marx** (May 5, 1818 – March 14, 1883) was a German philosopher, political economist, historian, political theorist, sociologist, communist and revolutionary, whose ideas are credited as the foundation of modern communism.)

- f. Does Paulo Freire speak in his own essay like he was making “deposits in a bank?” What type of language separates his essay from the “banking concept?”

15 Minutes: Portfolio writing time.

Students will write in their portfolios considering the following questions. Students will be notified that other students will be reading their responses the next day.

1. What classes have I had that seemed similar to the “Banking Concept” of education?
2. What classes have been similar to the “Problem-Posing” concept?
3. If I were to design a class, which of the two concepts would I implement?

2 Minutes: Answer any Questions

Day Eight (Wednesday)

50 minute class period.

Preparation: Break up the desks for small group discussions.

Objective: In this session, students will discuss in small groups the response papers that they wrote the day before. Students will also discuss what makes a good comment.

3 Minutes: Attendance, Housekeeping

20 Minutes: Small group workshop on ‘grading’ each other’s paper.

Students will break up into even numbered groups and trade papers. Students will read another students writing and, on a separate sheet of paper, write some comments that they think would be good “teacher type” comments to write on a paper. I want students to imagine they are the teacher and must grade their classmates work in a way that provides “problem- posing” suggestions rather than a “banking” or objective approach - where a grade is simply assigned to the writing. All the comments posed by students should be positive and constructive. They should help lead the writer to thinking about the topic in a different light.

25 Minutes: Class discussion on what each student brings to a discussion.

The idea behind this discussion is to highlight that each individual (student) is not to be looked at as a 'receptacle' that must be filled by the teacher, but rather a 'co-worker' in discovering new ideas and information that may encourage learning by others. That is to say, one student's perspective may prove thought provoking for another who has not thought that way before. Understandably, this may prove difficult to achieve, however, I'd like to start a class discussion where the class focuses on one classmate at a time. The following questions and points are discussed:

- a. What knowledge, or perspectives, does each of you bring to the class? For example: some knowledge, or perspective, that I bring to the class:
 1. Knowledge of what it is like to grow up in the mid-west.
 2. The perspective of a 40 year old based on many years of school.
 3. The knowledge of having read many books.
 4. The experience of working as a journalist at CNN for 5 years.
 5. The experience of working as a chief flight instructor for 10 years at a large flight school.
 6. Someone who has an intense love of watching films.
- b. What kinds of experiences have shaped how you view literature, math and science? Do you think that your opinions are affected by those experiences?
- c. What if you were _____ (fill in a famous name), what experiences would you be most influenced by?
- d. Do your experiences have to influence you, or can you choose to not be influenced by them?
- e. Who do you think looks at the world in a similar way to you? Why? Who looks at it completely different?

2 Minutes: Answer any Questions

Day Nine (Thursday)

50 minute class period.

Preparation: Prepare the vocabulary words and definitions in advance.

Objective: It is my objective to give students some time to consider an individual's example of the previous discussion. They will read during most of the class today and consider how Richard Rodriguez's experience with education is similar to Paulo Freire's essay.

3 Minutes: Attendance, Housekeeping

10 Minutes: Vocabulary discussion. Words used in the next reading segment.

Ask the class to help define the following words. If no one seems to know a definition, the questions should be asked, how might we find one?

- a. **Scholarship:** Noun- learning; knowledge acquired by study; the academic attainments of a scholar.
- b. **Inevitable:** Adjective- unable to be avoided, evaded, or escaped; certain; necessary: *an inevitable conclusion.*
- c. **Empathy versus Sympathy:** Empathy: Noun- the intellectual identification with or vicarious experiencing of the feelings, thoughts, or attitudes of another. Sympathy: Noun- the fact or power of sharing the feelings of another, esp. in sorrow or trouble; fellow feeling, compassion, or commiseration.
- d. **Irony:** Noun- a technique of indicating, as through character or plot development, an intention or attitude opposite to that which is actually or ostensibly stated.
- e. **Bureaucrat:** Noun- an official who works by fixed routine without exercising intelligent judgment.
- f. **Ghetto:** Noun- any mode of living, working, etc., that results from stereotyping or biased treatment: *job ghettos for women; ghettos for the elderly.*

35 Minutes: Reading - Part I of “The Achievement of Desire” by Richard Rodriguez.

- (5 Minutes)
 Before students begin to read the essay, consider what the author means by the first sentence of the work. Teacher will pose to the whole class, the question: What does Richard Rodriguez mean by his first sentence in “The Achievement of Desire:”
 “I stand in the ghetto classroom – “the guest speaker” – attempting to lecture on the mystery of the sounds of our words to rows of different students.” (Richard Rodriguez)

The students need to have some time, not homework time, to consider the life example that Richard Rodriguez discusses in his work, “The Achievement of Desire.” 30 minutes will be set aside for them to read this essay. What they do not finish in class, they may read at home.

2 Minutes: Homework - verify the students should finish reading the Rodriguez essay.

Day Ten (Friday)

50 minute class period.

Preparation: Download and study the desired vocabulary game from online.

Objective: Students will continue to read Richard Rodriguez’s essay, “The Achievement of Desire,” Part II. After reading, the students will relax playing a vocabulary game.

3 Minutes: Attendance, Housekeeping

25 Minutes: Reading - Part I of “The Achievement of Desire” by Richard Rodriguez.

Students will read to themselves the second half of “The Achievement of Desire.”

22 Minutes: Vocabulary Game.

Choose a vocabulary game from the activities listed at:

www.coe.uga.edu/~smago/Vocabulary_Games/ExpansionsIndex.htm (Smagorinsky, Teaching English by Design)

The next week will consist of teaching how to write an essay using a progressive portfolio.

Day Eleven (Monday)

50 minute class period.

Preparation: Review: *Writing to Learn*, from Purdue University
(<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/671/01/>)

“This pedagogical approach values writing as a method of learning. When students write reactions to information received in class or in reading, they often comprehend and retain the information better. Writing can also help students work through confusing new ideas and apply what they learn to their own lives and interests. Also, because students write more frequently, they become more comfortable with writing and are able to maintain or even improve upon their writing skills. WTL assignments are typically short and informal and can be performed either in or out of class. Examples include writing and reading journals, summaries, response papers, learning logs, problem analyses, and more.” (Online Writing Lab, Purdue University, 2009)

Objective: Students will begin to understand the elements related to writing a progressive portfolio essay. The point here is to introduce the scaffolding required to teach writing an essay based on their ideas in the student generated portfolio they have been keeping.

3 Minutes: Attendance, Housekeeping

30 Minutes: Presentation on writing an essay. (Mindful of Dr. Smagorinsky’s comments on lectures: “While in general I don’t feel that lecturing accomplishes what teachers think it does, I do see occasions where it’s useful for students to be provided with relevant facts as aids...” (Smagorinsky, *Teaching English by Design*) I believe it is important to give the students the basics of constructing an essay – it may involve a lecture based discussion on techniques and tools that students will find helpful.

PowerPoint presentation on writing an essay and thesis sentence: (Adapted from Purdue University, Online Writing Lab, 2009)



Talking About Writing
- OWL Purdue Univer:

[Double Click Icon for embedded PowerPoint Presentation – Electronic Version]

The *Talking About Writing* PowerPoint presentation is 'embedded' in this word document, however, if there are problems accessing the presentation, the link for *Talking About Writing* may be followed at: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/755/01/>

17 Minutes: Thesis statement discussion. Using the following outline (adapted from Erin Karper, Online Writing Lab, 2008) present how to write a thesis statement. Students should be prompted to ask questions and develop some sample thesis statements with the class as a whole.

Tips and Examples for Writing Thesis Statements

1. Determine what kind of paper you are writing:

- An **analytical** paper breaks down an issue or an idea into its component parts, evaluates the issue or idea, and presents this breakdown and evaluation to the audience.
- An **expository** (explanatory) paper explains something to the audience.
- An **argumentative** paper makes a claim about a topic and justifies this claim with specific evidence. The claim could be an opinion, a policy proposal, an evaluation, a cause-and-effect statement, or an interpretation. The goal of the argumentative paper is to convince the audience that the claim is true based on the evidence provided.

If you are writing a text which does not fall under these three categories (ex. a narrative), a thesis statement somewhere in the first paragraph could still be helpful to your reader.

2. Your thesis statement should be specific—it should cover only what you will discuss in your paper and should be supported with specific evidence.

3. The thesis statement usually appears at the end of the first paragraph of a paper.

4. Your topic may change as you write, so you may need to revise your thesis statement to reflect exactly what you have discussed in the paper.

Thesis Statement Examples

Example of an analytical thesis statement:

An analysis of the college admission process reveals one challenge facing counselors: accepting students with high test scores or students with strong extracurricular backgrounds.

The paper that follows should:

- explain the analysis of the college admission process
- explain the challenge facing admissions counselors

Example of an expository (explanatory) thesis statement:

The life of the typical college student is characterized by time spent studying, attending class, and socializing with peers.

The paper that follows should:

- explain how students spend their time studying, attending class, and socializing with peers

Example of an argumentative thesis statement:

High school graduates should be required to take a year off to pursue community service projects before entering college in order to increase their maturity and global awareness.

The paper that follows should:

- present an argument and give evidence to support the claim that students should pursue community projects before entering college

Day Twelve (Tuesday)

50 minute class period.

Preparation:

Objective: Students should garner practice writing a thesis statement in small groups.

3 Minutes: Attendance, Housekeeping

30 Minutes: Small Groups

Students should break up into small groups to work on putting together a thesis statement.

(Adapted from Read Write Think, *Creative Outlining-From Free-writing to Formalizing*, 2009)

1. Have students read through their portfolio papers and underline or highlight intriguing insights they wrote in response to Paulo Freire's or Richard Rodriguez's essay.
2. Have students look for the threads of a thesis idea in the making—a true and an original insight into the texts. Have them summarize and re-write these ideas from their portfolios onto a separate paper.
3. Ask students to look for separate points, claims, or insights in their portfolios that may be synthesized or unified into an all-encompassing understanding of the texts.
4. Have each student draft a thesis idea gleaned from his or her body of reflection portfolio works on an index card.
5. Each small group will be a mini-workshop to help the students put together the thesis.
6. Tell the students you will evaluate each of their thesis ideas to determine that they are progressing on the right path with their thesis statements.

18 Minutes: Group Discussion

Come back together as a class and discuss some of the student's thesis statements. If students are not all that willing to share the thesis statements they have made with the class, teacher should review some ideas for creating a strong thesis statement.

Example Review: The writers of *Writing Analytically* (David Rosenwasser and Jill Stephen) recommend that you ask yourself the following questions as you go through the process of generating a main claim, or thesis, for your essay:

- What kinds of patterns or implications emerge when I look closely at my evidence?
- What kind of evidence and support do I need to support my tentative thesis?
- What kind of evidence cannot be adequately accounted for by my tentative thesis?
- How can I explain the mismatches between my thesis statement and my selected evidence?
- How can I rewrite my thesis statement in order to accommodate the evidence that doesn't fit?

This practice of constantly readjusting the thesis statement to match the evidence and analysis will ultimately lead you to write a polished and defensible thesis statement in your final draft.

2 Minutes: Answer any questions

Day Thirteen (Wednesday)

50 minute class period.

Preparation: Prep vocabulary words and review discussion topics.

Objective: Students will be introduced to topics that will be discussed in the reading, "The Loss of the Creature," by Walker Percy.

3 Minutes: Attendance, Housekeeping

10 Minutes: Vocabulary discussion. Words used in the next reading segment.

Ask the class to help define the following words. If no one seems to know a definition, the questions should be asked, how might we find one?

- Access:** Noun- a way or means of approach.
- Assumption:** Noun- something taken for granted; a supposition: *a correct assumption*.
- Preformulation:** Noun- to previously have to devised or developed, as a method, system, etc.
- Dialectical:** Adjective- of, pertaining to, or of the nature of logical argumentation. Noun- the art or practice of logical discussion as employed in investigating the truth of a theory or opinion.
- Stratagems:** Noun- any artifice, ruse, or trick devised or used to attain a goal or to gain an advantage over an adversary or competitor: *business stratagems*.
- Authentic:** Adjective- not false or copied; genuine; real: *an authentic antique*.
- Ethnologist:** Noun- a branch of anthropology that analyzes cultures, esp. in regard to their historical development and the similarities and dissimilarities between them.
- Sovereignty:** Noun- freedom from external control. An autonomous state.

20 Minutes: Class Discussion to prepare for reading, *The Loss of the Creature*.

In this class discussion the teacher will lead the class in thinking about how there are various ways that people see situations and their lives. The following questions should be used by the teacher to guide the discussion.

1. How many people have 'discovered' something? What was it you discovered? How did it make you feel? Did you tell anyone about your discovery?
2. If you discovered it, does it make any difference if you were not the first person to discover it?
3. Can someone discover something that has already been discovered by someone else?
4. How many of you have been 'surprised' by a good time. That is to say, has anyone gone into a situation (vacation with family, playing with a siblings friends, a dinner trip with parents) that they do not expect to have a good time at and ended up having a good time?
5. Did your expectations of the event allow you to have a good time?
6. Have you gone to a movie you did not think you would like and end up liking it?
7. Have you gone to a movie you wanted to see and not liked it?
8. What kind of surprises have you come across lately?

16 Minutes: Homework

Explain the homework assignment. Tonight I would like you to write in your portfolio's about an event or occurrence that surprised you – or – about something you have discovered. Some topics you might consider in your writing:

- How did you become surprised by this event? What led to your discovery?
- Did you get frightened by the surprise? Was the discovery concerning or exciting?
- Was the surprise or discovery exciting?
- Have you ever gone on a trip or vacation and felt like you discovered it, or were surprised by it, for the first time? Did you find a restaurant or activity that you have gone back to again and again while on the trip?
- What was fun about it? Why did you go back again?
- Even though you have done it many times, why was it still fun?

1 Minute: Homework. Students should bring a highlighter to class tomorrow.

Day Fourteen (Thursday)

50 minute class period.

Preparation: Bring in highlighters in case some students do not have any.

Objective: Students will read in class.

3 Minutes: Attendance, Housekeeping

40 Minutes: During class, students will read the essay, *The Loss of the Creature*, by Walker Percy.

Teacher should make sure that every student has a highlighter and should discuss some topics that might be worth highlighting while reading the essay.

1. Anything that you are not sure you understand.
2. Highlight something that is surprising to you.
3. Highlight anything you can relate to that seems important in the essay.

7 Minutes: Quick discussion and Homework

Does anyone want to share anything they highlighted? Finish reading the essay if you did not finish in class.

Day Fifteen (Friday)

50 minute class period.

Preparation: Arrange room for small group discussions. Review essay and discussion material. Decide on a vocabulary game from online selections.

Objective: Students will break into small groups to discuss the segments of the essay that they highlighted. Students will use small group discussions to better understand the material.

3 Minutes: Attendance, Housekeeping

20 Minutes: Small Groups

Students will break up into small groups to discuss the following ideas about their papers.

1. Walker Percy uses example after example in his essay, *The Loss of the Creature*. Why does he use so many examples?
2. What are some of the examples and how do they differ from each other?
3. Do the examples seem to be in a logical order? Does one example lead to the next?

20 Minutes: Class discussion on Walker Percy's essay.

The examples used by Walker Percy in his essay are unique and, I believe, the students will find them interesting. Using the basis of the group discussions, the class as a whole will meet to further discuss what Percy meant by his examples of the *Loss of the Creature*. Consider the following talking points:

1. Discuss what the groups came up with as examples.
2. What does Percy mean by the "creature?" What is the creature? How does Percy suggest we lose the creature?
3. Why does Percy discuss the idea of "loss" in this essay so much?
4. Is Walker Percy making an argument in this essay? What is he getting at?
5. Consider the following phrases that Percy uses in his essay, what does he mean by them?
 - a. "the loss of sovereignty"

- b. “symbolic packages”
 - c. “consumer of experiences”
 - d. “dialectic”
6. Who has been to the Grand Canyon? Is anyone familiar with the tour packages that exist? In what ways have you experienced the Grand Canyon? Have you only seen pictures? Did you take a trip on a donkey through the canyon? Did you ‘discover’ the canyon?

7 Minutes: Homework

Write in your portfolio this weekend about your reactions to Walker Percy’s essay. Consider the following:

Did I learn anything from this essay?

How have my life experiences been similar to Percy’s examples in his essay?

Is there anything left to discover in this world?

How can I have the excitement of ‘discover’ going to a place that has been well traveled?

Day Sixteen (Monday)

50 minute class period.

Preparation: Review material for discussion on difficulties students have as writers.

Objective: Discuss stumbling blocks to writing and some possible solutions.

3 Minutes: Attendance, Housekeeping

30 Minutes: Class discussion on anxiety about writing.

Adapted from Purdue University’s online writing lab.

(<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/567/01/>)

Symptoms and Cures for Writer's Block

Because writers have various ways of writing, a variety of things can cause a writer to experience anxiety, and sometimes this anxiety leads to writer's block. Often a solution can be found by speaking with your instructor (if you are in school), or a writing tutor. There are some common causes of writer's block, however, and when you are blocked, consider these causes and try the strategies that sound most promising:

Symptom

You have attempted to begin a paper without doing any preliminary work such as brainstorming or outlining...

Possible Cures

- Use [invention strategies](#) suggested by a tutor or teacher
- Write down all the primary ideas you'd like to express and then fill in each with the smaller ideas that make up each primary idea. This can easily be converted into an [outline](#)

Symptom

You have chosen or been assigned a topic which bores you....

Possible Cures

- Choose a particular aspect of the topic you are interested in (if the writing situation will allow it...i.e. if the goal of your writing can be adjusted and is not given to you specifically, or if the teacher or project coordinator will allow it)
- Talk to a tutor about how you can personalize a topic to make it more interesting

Symptom

You don't want to spend time writing or don't understand the assignment...

Possible Cures

- Resign yourself to the fact that you have to write
- Find out what is expected of you (consult a teacher, textbook, student, tutor, or project coordinator)
- Look at some of the strategies for writing anxiety listed below

Symptom

You are anxious about writing the paper...

Possible Cures

- Focus your energy by rehearsing the task in your head.
- Consciously stop the non-productive comments running through your head by replacing them with productive ones.
- If you have some "rituals" for writing success (chewing gum, listening to jazz etc.), use them.

Symptom

You are so stressed out you can't seem to put a word on the page...

Possible Cures

- Stretch! If you can't stand up, stretch as many muscle groups as possible while staying seated.
- Try tensing and releasing various muscle groups. Starting from your toes, tense up for perhaps five to ten seconds and then let go. Relax and then go on to another muscle group.
- Breathe deeply. Close your eyes; then, fill your chest cavity slowly by taking four or five short deep breaths. Hold each breath until it hurts, and then let it out slowly.
- Use a calming word or mental image to focus on while relaxing. If you choose a word, be careful not to use an imperative. Don't command yourself to "Calm down!" or "Relax!"

Symptom

You're self-conscious about your writing, you may have trouble getting started. So, if you're preoccupied with the idea that you have to write about a subject and feel you probably won't express yourself well...

Possible Cures

- Talk over the subject with a friend or tutor.
- Assure yourself that the first draft doesn't have to be a work of genius; it is something to work with.
- Force yourself to write down something, however poorly worded, that approximates your thought (you can revise this later) and go on with the next idea.
- Break the task up into steps. Meet the general purpose first, and then flesh out the more specific aspects later.

10 Minutes: Vocabulary game.

Choose a vocabulary game from the activities listed at:

www.coe.uga.edu/~smago/Vocabulary_Games/ExpansionsIndex.htm (Smagorinsky, Teaching English by Design)

Day Seventeen (Tuesday)

50 minute class period.

Preparation: Review material on writing a rough draft.

Objective: To scaffold writing a rough draft paper based on the portfolio writing they have done.

3 Minutes: Attendance, Housekeeping

30 Minutes: Discuss with class what the requirement is for the rough draft paper. Consider the following to frame the paper: (Adapted from the UGA First Year Composition Guidelines, located at: <http://web.english.uga.edu/newsite/fyc/portfolios/portfolios.html>)

1. Your first step in writing this rough draft essay is to brainstorm, free write, map, or journal on the following topic:

What are the most important or interesting or helpful or distinctive things I've learned or confirmed by reading the selections for this course?

- a. *How to Recognize a Poem When You See One*, Stanley Fish
- b. *The Banking Concept of Education*, by Paulo Freire
- c. *The Achievement of Desire*, Richard Rodriguez
- d. *The Loss of the Creature*, Walker Percy

2. Next, answer this question:

What is in my portfolio (and elsewhere) that I can use to show/demonstrate these things?
Where can I find my supporting evidence in my portfolio and in the selected essays?

Your answer to the first question will provide the foundation of your thesis claim, while your answer to the second question will direct you to the evidence you'll need to support your claim.

All of the material you have written for this class and all of the material you have included in your Portfolio will provide the evidence, that is, the supporting details and quotes, which you'll need to fully develop your body paragraphs. **Providing plenty of specific evidence to support clear topics** is, as always, the foundation of a strong essay.

17 Minutes:

Day Eighteen (Wednesday)

50 minute class period.

Preparation: Independent writing time for students.

Objective: To allow students time to begin writing their rough drafts for the portfolio essay.

3 Minutes: Attendance, Housekeeping

47 Minutes: Students should spend independent time working on organizing and writing their essays. If they have questions they may come up and ask me at the front to go over any difficulties.

Day Nineteen and Twenty (Thursday & Friday)

50 minute class period.

Preparation: Prepare to meet with each student and review their work. Independent writing time for students.

Objective: To allow students the opportunity to explain their concepts to the teacher and in doing so further develop where they are headed with their papers.

3 Minutes: Attendance, Housekeeping

45 Minutes: Set aside a time over the next couple of days for each student to have a conference with the teacher about the direction they are going with their papers. Students should have a thesis statement they are happy with and at least three examples to highlight their thesis in the essay. Students may go over an outline of these requirements or the actual paper as they have written it so far. On Monday of next week they will hand in their rough draft paper for comments from the teacher.

On Monday of next week, partly to give the teacher time to comment on the student's rough draft essays, and partly as an motivational technique to promote reading, students will bring in material from periodicals or books that they would like to read in class. Towards the end of the class they will engage in a vocabulary game from www.coe.uga.edu/~smago/Vocabulary_Games/ExpansionsIndex.htm.

2 Minutes: Homework. Bring in appropriate reading material for independent reading time tomorrow.

Day Twenty One (Monday)

50 minute class period.

Preparation: Bring in interesting periodicals or short stories in case students don't have any. Be prepared to finish grading any of the papers that students have written.

Objective: To allow students free time to read and mentally 'separate' from their writing. I consider this to be extremely important for the students. It is time to distance themselves from their writing in order to get a fresh perspective when they receive their papers with teacher comments on them.

3 Minutes: Attendance, Housekeeping

20 Minutes: Independent reading time.

27 Minutes:

Choose a vocabulary game from the activities listed at:

www.coe.uga.edu/~smago/Vocabulary_Games/ExpansionsIndex.htm (Smagorinsky, Teaching English by Design)

Day Twenty Two (Tuesday)

50 minute class period.

Preparation: Have all comments and suggestions written on the students papers for return to them in class.

Objective: Allow students time to digest the teacher's comments and begin thinking of revisions for their final paper.

3 Minutes: Attendance, Housekeeping

30 Minutes: Students should break up into small groups and discuss with each other anything they feel comfortable bringing up in a small group about the comments on their papers.

Day Twenty Three (Wednesday)

50 minute class period.

Preparation: Have all comments and suggestions written on the students papers for return to them in class.

Objective: Allow students time to digest the teacher's comments and begin thinking of revisions for their final paper.

3 Minutes: Attendance, Housekeeping

45 Minuets: Review by means of guided discussion, with the whole class, some strategies for converting the rough draft to a final paper. Consider the following guidelines from Perdue University's Online Writing Lab:

Steps for Revising Your Paper

When you have plenty of time to revise, use the time to work on your paper and to take breaks from writing. If you can forget about your draft for a day or two, you may return to it with a fresh outlook. During the revising process, put your writing aside at least twice - once during the first part of the process, when you are reorganizing your work, and once during the second part, when you are polishing and paying attention to details.

Use the following questions to evaluate your drafts. You can use your responses to revise your papers by reorganizing them to make your best points stand out, by adding needed information, by eliminating irrelevant information, and by clarifying sections or sentences.

Find your main point.

What are you trying to say in the paper? In other words, try to summarize your thesis, or main point, and the evidence you are using to support that point. Try to imagine that this paper belongs to someone else. Does the paper have a clear thesis? Do you know what the paper is going to be about?

Identify your readers and your purpose.

What are you trying to do in the paper? In other words, are you trying to argue with the reading, to analyze the reading, to evaluate the reading, to apply the reading to another situation, or to accomplish another goal?

Evaluate your evidence.

Does the body of your paper support your thesis? Do you offer enough evidence to support your claim? If you are using quotations from the text as evidence, did you cite them properly?

Save only the good pieces.

Do all of the ideas relate back to the thesis? Is there anything that doesn't seem to fit? If so, you either need to change your thesis to reflect the idea or cut the idea.

Tighten and clean up your language.

Do all of the ideas in the paper make sense? Are there unclear or confusing ideas or sentences? Read your paper out loud and listen for awkward pauses and unclear ideas. Cut out extra words, vagueness, and misused words.

Eliminate mistakes in grammar and usage.

Do you see any problems with grammar, punctuation, or spelling? If you think something is wrong, you should make a note of it, even if you don't know how to fix it. You can always talk to a Writing Lab tutor about how to correct errors.

Switch from Writer-Centered to Reader-Centered

Try to detach yourself from what you've written; pretend that you are reviewing someone else's work. What would you say is the most successful part of your paper? Why? How could this part be made even better? What would you say is the least successful part of your paper? Why? How could this part be improved?

(Adapted from: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/561/05/> Perdue University, OWL, 2009)

2 Minutes: Homework

Revise your rough draft and use the suggestions we talked about to finalize your paper.

Day Twenty Four (Thursday)

50 minute class period.

Preparation: Prepare classroom for small group discussions.

Objective: Allow students the time to workshop their rough draft papers in small groups in preparation for their final paper.

3 Minutes: Attendance, Housekeeping

45 Minutes: Small group time that will be less supervised by the teacher to allow for students to feel free to ask classmates about their revisions and work out any questions. Groups or students may wish to ask the teacher questions or advice.

Day Twenty Five (Friday)

50 minute class period.

Preparation: Prepare a game or fun event for the last day of the unit.

Objective: End of unit – let kids relax and have fun as a class.

3 Minutes: Attendance, Housekeeping

40 Minutes: Hand in final paper and let students decide on a game for the last day of the unit.

7 Minutes: Challenge students to think critically in their life. Give an example of how they might not always just go along with the 'group.' They are all independent thinkers and should take a certain amount of pride in following their own decisions.