Critical Literacy: Identifying Values and Beliefs

**Critical Learning**

- Values, interests, and beliefs are embedded in text
- The reader's role is to take a critical stance to become aware of those values, interests, and beliefs
- Readers can use questions to take a critical stance toward texts

**Curriculum Expectations**

**Reading**

1. **Reading for Meaning:** read and demonstrate an understanding of a variety of informational, literary, and graphic texts, using a range of strategies to construct meaning
   - 1.8 identify the perspectives and/or biases evident in simple texts and some teacher-selected complex texts and comment on any questions they may raise about beliefs, values, and identity

**Writing**

2. **Using Knowledge of Form and Style:** draft and revise their writing, using a variety of informational, literary, and graphic forms and stylistic elements appropriate for the purpose and audience
   - 2.5 explain how their own beliefs, values, and experiences are revealed in their writing (e.g., explain how their retelling of a school experience reflects their own attitude to the event) (e.g., analyse their writing to determine whether voices are missing that it would be appropriate to include; use peer feedback to identify relevant ideas or opinions that have not been considered in the text)

**Planning with the End in Mind**

**Criteria for Level 3 Performance** (Achievement Chart Category)

This lesson is preparing students to successfully meet the following criteria from the summative evaluation that follows this series of lessons:

- Demonstrates considerable understanding of perspective
- Makes inferences from text with considerable effectiveness (Knowledge and Understanding)
- Analyses perspective with considerable effectiveness (Thinking)
- Evaluates information sources with considerable effectiveness (Thinking)
- Reflects on strategies for deepening understanding with considerable effectiveness (Thinking)
- Communicates a perspective with considerable clarity and persuasiveness (Communication)
- Applies critical questions to a familiar type of text with considerable effectiveness (Application)

**Learning Goals** (Unpacked Expectations)

Students are able to:

- critically analyse short community texts from a variety of perspectives
- apply critical questions to community texts
- take action in response to critically analyzing a text

**Evaluation**

**Tasks**

- Critically analyse a text (e.g., local website, article about teens, advertisement)
- Respond to the text, in writing or oral presentation, as an action in response to the text (e.g., write a letter to the editor, re-formulate the text, make a speech)
- Keep a journal about how their own perspective, values, and beliefs shape how they read and respond to text
- Present thinking from their journal in a conference

**Tools**

The *rubric* should be shared and/or collaboratively developed with students early in the instructional trajectory.

**Instructional Components and Context**

**Readiness**

- Co-creating anchor charts
- Using questions to take a critical stance

**Literacy Strategies**

- Value Line
- Think/Pair/Share
- Think/Pair/Square
- Shared writing
- Concept attainment

**Assessment Tools and Strategies**

- Observation
- Oral feedback

**Terminology**

- Critical
- Motto
- Mission statement
- Values
- Diversity

**Collaborative Skills**

- Ensure equal voice by taking turns
- Use active listening strategies
- Take individual accountability
- Assume group role

**Next Steps**

- Critically examine school and community websites
Identifying Values and Beliefs  Lesson 2

Guiding Questions

• How does a reader critically question a text?
• How can we think critically without being negative toward text and their authors?
• How do values, interests and beliefs shape the writing of texts?

Minds On...

Whole Class ➔ Establishing Protocols for Critical Analysis

Approximate time: 15 minutes

Share a brief sample of your writing, invite student comments, and use these to segue into establishing norms for responding critically. Post as an anchor chart. Clarify meanings of “critical.” Provide samples of mottos from a range of sources, e.g., organizations or sports teams. Facilitate a discussion of purposes and form. Model in a Think-aloud how to make inferences from a motto about the group’s values and beliefs and how to adhere to norms for critical responses.

Small Groups/Pairs ➔ Critically Analyzing

Groups create and write a class motto on chart paper. Groups pass their motto to another group who responds to the question: “What do you think the writers value and believe?” This group records its thinking on the chart paper. Debrief by having groups read the motto aloud and report on their thinking. Post chart papers.

In a Think/Pair/Share, students discuss: “Would it be easy or difficult for us as a class to decide on one motto? Why or why not?” Invite sharing of responses. Discuss the consultation and writing process required to develop texts such as mottos. Share learning goals.

Action!

Whole Class/Pairs ➔ Responding to a Community Text

Approximate time: 45 minutes

Read aloud a community text, e.g., the school’s motto or mission statement. Students infer the values and beliefs of the school community. Post the statement: “This motto/mission statement acknowledges the diversity in the school community.” Individually, students consider whether they agree or disagree and jot down their reasons. Students position themselves on a Value Line between strongly agree and strongly disagree. Once positioned, they discuss their reasons in a Think/Pair/Share with an elbow partner.

Small Group/Whole Class ➔ Critically Analysing Texts

Use Numbered Heads to form groups representing a range of Value Line positions. After a Think/Pair/Square to share their perspectives, students critically analyse the text using question prompts. Groups brainstorm how to revise the motto/mission statement so that it speaks for their class. List groups’ suggestions, noting themes and contradictions. Revise the motto/mission statement, using shared writing.

Each student draws a stakeholder role, e.g., student, graduating student, athlete, teacher, parent, by selecting a cue card. In groups, students explore in-role the degree to which the revised text represents their values, beliefs, and experiences. Students show how “close” or “far” the statement is from their values, beliefs, and experiences by positioning themselves in the room relative to the posted text. Facilitate a discussion of their reasons.

Distribute a yearbook to each group. Still in-role, students analyse the yearbook guided by question prompts. Hold up the yearbook and ask students to position themselves relative to it. Debrief by students sharing reasons for their position. Groups brainstorm recommendations for recognizing diversity in the yearbook. Record suggestions that can be used in taking action in a later writing activity.

Consolidation

Small group ➔ Concept Attainment

Approximate time: 15 minutes

Post critical questions used in the lesson as an anchor chart. Students Think/Pair/Square what the questions have in common. Debrief. Provide a data set of questions for students to sort into comprehension and critical questions. Provide testees.
### Critical Literacy: Identifying Values and Beliefs  
**Lesson 2**  
**Grade 9 Applied English**

#### Connections Menu
- Rubric
- Connecting Practice and Research: Critical Literacy Guide
- Connecting Practice and Research: Strategy Implementation Continuum

#### Minds On ...
- Norms (Protocols)
- Anchor Chart
- Think-aloud
- Think/Pair/Share

#### Action!
- Read-aloud
- Value Line
- Numbered Heads
- Think/Pair/Square
- Question Prompts

#### Consolidation
- Concept Attainment
- Data Set
## CRITICAL LITERACY RUBRIC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge and Understanding</th>
<th>Level 4 Advanced</th>
<th>Level 3 Proficient</th>
<th>Level 2 Developing</th>
<th>Level 1 Beginning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrates conceptual understanding</td>
<td>• Demonstrates a thorough understanding of perspective</td>
<td>• Demonstrates considerable understanding of perspective</td>
<td>• Demonstrates some understanding of perspective</td>
<td>• Demonstrates some understanding of perspective</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thinking</th>
<th>Level 4 Advanced</th>
<th>Level 3 Proficient</th>
<th>Level 2 Developing</th>
<th>Level 1 Beginning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Use of processing skills, e.g., inferences</td>
<td>• Makes inferences from text with a high degree of effectiveness</td>
<td>• Makes inferences from text with a high degree of effectiveness</td>
<td>• Makes inferences from text with some effectiveness</td>
<td>• Makes inferences from text with limited effectiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses critical/creative thinking processes</td>
<td>• Analyses perspective with a high degree of effectiveness</td>
<td>• Analyses perspective with considerable effectiveness</td>
<td>• Analyses perspective with some effectiveness</td>
<td>• Analyses perspective with limited effectiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflects on strategies for deepening understanding</td>
<td>• Reflects on strategies for deepening understanding with a high degree of effectiveness</td>
<td>• Reflects on strategies for deepening understanding with considerable effectiveness</td>
<td>• Reflects on strategies for deepening understanding with some effectiveness</td>
<td>• Reflects on strategies for deepening understanding with limited effectiveness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Application</th>
<th>Level 4 Advanced</th>
<th>Level 3 Proficient</th>
<th>Level 2 Developing</th>
<th>Level 1 Beginning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Applies knowledge and skills in familiar situations</td>
<td>• Applies critical questions to a familiar type of text with a high degree of effectiveness</td>
<td>• Applies critical questions to a familiar type of text with considerable effectiveness</td>
<td>• Applies critical questions to a familiar type of text with some effectiveness</td>
<td>• Applies critical questions to a familiar type of text with limited effectiveness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Communication</th>
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<th>Level 3 Proficient</th>
<th>Level 2 Developing</th>
<th>Level 1 Beginning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Responds to a news report by clearly and persuasively presenting a perspective in a self-selected form</td>
<td>• Communicates a perspective with a high degree of clarity and persuasiveness</td>
<td>• Communicates a perspective with considerable clarity and persuasiveness</td>
<td>• Communicates a perspective with some clarity and persuasiveness</td>
<td>• Communicates a perspective with limited clarity and persuasiveness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Minds On…

Norms (Protocols)
A protocol is a code of conduct and a form of etiquette. Sometimes, protocols are called norms. These are agreed-upon standards and patterns of behaviour. Collaboratively establishing these “rules” or guidelines helps students engage in the class, take ownership, understand the expectations of the classroom community, and practise important skills, e.g., taking turns and listening without judgement. Unless these are explicit, norms are part of the hidden curriculum.

Anchor Chart
An anchor chart is a strategy for capturing students’ voices and thinking. Anchor charts are co-constructed. By making students’ thinking visible and public, they “anchor”, or stabilize and scaffold classroom learning. Anchor charts should be developmentally appropriate and clearly focused, accessible, and organized.

Think-aloud
A think-aloud is an instructional scaffold that models thinking processes, making the invisible visible. In a think-aloud, the teacher verbalizes how effective readers process the text, e.g., by monitoring comprehension and using strategies to construct meaning. A think-aloud is a form of explicit instruction that requires teachers to be aware of their own thinking processes and that helps students think about their thinking. Developing metacognitive awareness is an important aspect of learning.

This think-aloud is part of an instructional sequence based on the gradual release of responsibility model. See Strategy Implementation Continuum

Think/Pair/Share
Bennett and Rolheiser (2001) describe Think/Pair/Share as “one of the simplest of all the tactics” (page 94). As pointed out by Bennett and Rolheiser and Think Literacy (page 152), students require skills to participate effectively in Think/Pair/Share:

- active listening
- taking turns
- asking for clarification
- paraphrasing
- considering other points of view
- suspending judgement
- avoiding put-downs.

These skills can be modelled and explicitly taught. During group work, teachers can provide oral feedback and reinforce expectations.

Bennett and Rolheiser (2001) note additional considerations:

- the level of thinking required in a Think/Pair/Share
- accountability and level of risk, e.g., are all students expected to share with the whole group? (page 94).

See Think Literacy Cross-Curricular Approaches, Grades 7-12, pp. 152-153.

Action

Read-alouds
- share the joy of reading and create a shared experience
- engage students, e.g., those for whom narrative is an entry point
- build background knowledge
- model fluent reading, e.g., phrasing, pronunciation, emphasis
- model, in a think-aloud, use of reading comprehension strategies
- introduce concepts
- increase vocabulary
- build listening skills
- make abstract concepts and explanations concrete
- expand students’ familiarity with a range of texts
- can serve as a springboard to discussion, writing, or hands-on experiments.

Suggestions for incorporating read-alouds into instruction include:
- rehearsing reading aloud text to maximize fluency and expression
- introducing the story by title, author and topic
- creating an atmosphere conducive to listening
- pre-planning the focus of instruction, i.e., the purpose for reading aloud that particular book
- pre-planning open-ended questions to stimulate imagination and critical thinking
- sharing illustrations
- controlling the pace so that students can absorb what they’re hearing
- encouraging students to talk about the book after the reading to make connections to their own knowledge and experience.

Value Line
Students position themselves along a “line” between two opposite, extreme positions or stand, on an issue. In doing so, they also position themselves relative to other students. The line is then either folded in half or split so that half the line walks back to face a partner from another position on the line. Partners discuss the reasons for their stand before volunteers share with the whole group. Usually, students are given an opportunity to revise their position after discussion, emphasizing that discussion may influence their thinking.

Numbered Heads
Numbered heads is a strategy for flexible grouping and other purposes. Grouping students by number, e.g., all number 1’s form a group, is a way of forming groups randomly. It also permits reconfiguration, e.g., for Jigsaw, by employing a different grouping principle, e.g., groups consisting of numbers 1, 2, 3 and 4. Numbers are also a procedure for individual accountability, e.g., call on students with a particular number to report or fulfill other roles.

Think/Pair/Square
Think/Pair/Square is one of many variations on Think/Pair/Share in which two pairs of students who have engaged in Think/Pair/Share or other pair activity, join another pair of students so that four students can share their thinking. Think/Pair/Square is a way to build from partner work to group work.
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Action

Question Prompts
• Who created/produced the text? How do we know?
• What does the author want the reader to know, think or feel? How do we know?
• What view of the world does the text convey? Why do we think this?
• How does language work to influence my thinking?
• What points of view and perspectives are missing? How significant is their omission?
• What information does the author leave out? How significant is it?
• Who is most likely to read this text?
• Who is most likely to benefit from this text?
• Why was this text produced?
• What knowledge of the world beyond the text is necessary in order to make sense of the text?
• Is this text consistent with what I know? Do I need to seek another source of information?
• Is the text fair? Why or why not? What action do I need to take?

Source: Differentiated Instruction for Literacy GAINS, Critical Literacy: Reading Beneath, Behind and Beyond the Text #3, EDUGAINS.
See also questions in the Antidiscrimination Education Handout, English, 9-12 Resources, Resources from the Ontario Curriculum Unit Planner website, The Ontario Curriculum Unit Planner (OCUP), Ministry of Education.
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Consolidation

Concept Attainment
Concept Attainment is an inductive thinking strategy that encourages students to look for patterns in data sets and to formulate and test hypotheses based on those patterns. Students compare a set of examples and non-examples to generate a hypothesis about a pattern of critical attributes. Data Sets can consist of words, images, sounds, movements, and so on. Students then use additional examples and non-examples to test and modify their hypothesis.

Source: Grades 7 and 8 Differentiated Instruction Educator’s Package Enhancements, 2008, Literacy Strategy Cards

For an example of a concept with attainment professional learning session, see Grades 7 and 8 Differentiated Instruction Educator’s Package Enhancements, 2008, Facilitator’s Guide: Literacy pp. 3-7

Data Set

Concept Attainment – Using Questions to Take a Critical Stance
1. How does language work to influence my thinking?
2. What is the main idea?
3. Is this text consistent with what I know?
4. What are two examples that support the main idea?
5. What view of the world does the text convey?
6. What pattern of organization does the text use?
7. Whose perspectives are omitted?
8. What is one stylistic technique the author uses?
9. Is the text fair? Why or why not?
10. Which word or phrase seems to you most important? Why?
11. How might the incident or story have ended differently?
12. Describe one of the characters.

Testers
a. What assumptions does the author make about my values and beliefs?
b. To what extent do you believe the narrator?
c. Why is the title effective?