Critical Literacy: Is Reading Dangerous?  Lesson 1

Critical Learning
• Identifying the author’s point of view
• Understanding how contrasting images emphasize the author’s point of view
• Reflecting on how knowledge obtained through reading might influence a person’s sense of social responsibility

Curriculum Expectations

Reading
Read and demonstrate an understanding of a variety of literary, graphic and informational text, using a range of strategies to construct meaning

1.5 develop and explain interpretations of increasingly complex or difficult texts using stated and implied ideas from their texts to support their interpretations
1.7 analyze a variety of texts, both simple and complex, and explain how the different elements in them contribute to meaning and influence the reader’s reaction
1.9 identify the point of view presented in the texts, including increasingly complex and difficult texts; give evidence of any biases they may contain and suggest other possible perspectives

Learning Goals
(Unpacked Expectations)
Students are able to:
• identify and provide supporting evidence from a text of an implicit point of view
• explain how the author uses contrasting images to convey and emphasize point of view
• identify other perspectives
• describe their own responses to, and perspectives on a 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 the unit in which this lesson would be included:
• Demonstrates considerable understanding of concepts (Knowledge and Understanding)
• Makes inferences to identify implicit points of view with considerable effectiveness (Thinking)
• Explains how the author uses text elements to convey and emphasizes his point of view with considerable effectiveness (Thinking)
• Describe biases and missing points of view with considerable effectiveness (Thinking)
• Describe strategies used to make inferences with considerable effectiveness (Thinking)
• Use features of form to communicate clearly with considerable effectiveness (Communication)

Evaluation

Tasks
Listen to, read, or view a short text, using before, during, and after strategies. Use writing, speaking, or media literacy:
• in-role as the author, identifying the point of view and arguing that word choice and imagery effectively convey that perspective
• in-role as an individual whose perspective is not acknowledged, describing biases and gaps

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

Instructional Components and Context

Readiness
• Think/Pair/Share
• Think/Pair/Square
• Traffic Light
• Read Aloud
• Think Aloud

Literacy Strategies
• Anticipation Guide
• Value Line (Stand the Line)

Assessment Tools and Strategies
• Observation
• Checking for understanding

Terminology
• point of view
• perspective
• image
• contrast

Collaborative Skills
• Taking turns
• Listening attentively
• Listening without judgement

Next Steps
• Small groups share examples of current news issues
• Explore issues students find compelling, generate possible actions, identify obstacles to action
• Examine the role of proximity, i.e., how distance in time and space affects feelings of responsibility
**Guiding Questions**

- Does knowing something make you responsible for it?

**Minds On...**

**Individual/Pairs/Small Group ➔ Introducing Concepts**

Brainstorm things that are “dangerous.” Facilitate a discussion about what “dangerous” means, e.g., causing harm or injury, not necessarily physical; being under the control of something or someone else.

Explicitly teach the purpose of an Anticipation Guide strategy by modelling how to complete it. Students complete the Anticipation Guide individually and then share responses using a Think/Pair/Share strategy. Share the learning goals and guiding question. Take an informal poll of responses to the questions, using a Traffic Light strategy. Set aside the Anticipation Guide to be used in reflection.

**Action!**

**Whole Group ➔ Reading to Understand a Perspective**

Prepare students for a Read Aloud, e.g., by cueing them to practise active listening strategies and by creating a suitable ambiance, e.g., by dimming the lights. Read the title of the text, e.g., Atwood’s poem “It Is Dangerous to Read Newspapers.” Scaffold understanding and emphasize images by displaying relevant photographs during reading.

Students read the poem independently. Briefly discuss initial responses; responses to the title; and the point of view or perspective suggested by the title. Clarify/review what is meant by “point of view” and “perspective.”

Re-read the first two stanzas aloud. In a think-aloud, identify sets of contrasting images and model how to make inferences about the meaning of the contrasting image pairs. Invite students to share ideas.

A volunteer reads aloud the next two stanzas while students listen from the perspective suggested by the title. During reading, display two images: an adult reading in a comfortable armchair and guerrilla warfare. Facilitate a discussion of students’ responses to the contrast and what inferences they can make about them.

**Small Group ➔ Representing Understanding**

In a Think/Pair/Square, students share their understanding of the author’s perspective. As one student from each group re-reads the poem aloud, others highlight or mark with sticky notes other contrasting images that support and/or clarify the author’s message. Each group reaches a consensus about what the author’s perspective is and how to represent that perspective and supporting examples visually on chart paper, e.g., in a mind map. Post and facilitate whole group discussion.

**Consolidation**

**Whole Group ➔ Conceptual Understanding**

Students position themselves along a value line stretching from “I agree passionately with the author” to “I passionately disagree.” Split the line and walk one half parallel to the other so that student pairs can share perspectives and attempt to influence each other’s viewpoint.

Re-form the value line, giving students an opportunity to revise their position.

Discuss students’ responses to the poem. Revisit the guiding question. Discuss the meaning of “responsible,” noting its relationship to “respond to” and the sense of moral obligation. Apply to a range of situations, e.g., finding a lost wallet, a crime, bullying, viewing a documentary, e.g., “A Dangerous Truth,” and censorship of news media. Brainstorm possibilities for action.

**Individual ➔ Reflection**

Students individually complete the “After” column on the Anticipation Guide. Debrief, discussing any shifts in thinking. Students write reflection prompts in their journal.

**Pause and Ponder**

**Materials**

- a short poem that focuses on issues of social responsibility
- images, e.g., photographs from magazines that reflect the poem

**Connections Menu**

Rubric

Connecting Practice and Research:

- Critical Literacy Guide
- Strategy
- Implementation Continuum

A→L By observing and making mental notes, you can be responsive during the Action! and Consolidation.

A→L Teachers should be sensitive to students’ experiences.

**Vocabulary**

Comparing and Contrasting

Reading Comprehension Strategies

A→L Circulate, checking for understanding and providing oral feedback on group interactions.

A→L Wait Time

A→L Check for understanding
## Connections Menu

- **Learning Goals**
- **Rubric**
- **Connecting Practice and Research: Critical Literacy Guide**
- **Connecting Practice and Research: Strategy Implementation Continuum**

## Minds On ...

- **Critical Literacy**
- **Traffic Light**
- **Anticipation Guides**
- **Think/Pair/Share**

## Action

- **Read Aloud**
- **Active Listening Strategies**
- **Vocabulary**
- **Make Inferences**
- **Comparing and Contrasting**
- **Think-aloud**
- **Think/Pair/Square**
- **Reading Strategies**

## Consolidation

- **Value Line**
- **Wait Time**
- **Reflection Prompts**
<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>
<th>Strand</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Understanding concepts relevant to critical literacy, e.g., perspective, contrast, imagery</td>
<td>Demonstrates a thorough understanding of concepts</td>
<td>Demonstrates considerable understanding of concepts</td>
<td>Demonstrates some understanding of concepts</td>
<td>Demonstrates limited understanding of concepts</td>
<td>Depends on form of communication selected: Oral Communication, Writing, Media Literacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Thinking</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Use of processing skills:</td>
<td>Makes inferences to identify implicit points of view with a high degree of effectiveness</td>
<td>Makes inferences to identify implicit points of view with considerable effectiveness</td>
<td>Makes inferences to identify implicit points of view with some effectiveness</td>
<td>Makes inferences to identify implicit points of view with limited effectiveness</td>
<td>Depends on the form of text selected: Oral Communication, Reading, Media Literacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of critical/creative thinking processes:</td>
<td>Describes strategies used to make inferences with a high degree of effectiveness</td>
<td>Describes strategies used to make inferences with considerable effectiveness</td>
<td>Describes strategies used to make inferences with some effectiveness</td>
<td>Describes strategies used to make inferences with limited effectiveness</td>
<td>Depends on the form of text selected: Oral Communication, Reading, Media Literacy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
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</table>

To report by strand: **Knowledge and Understanding**: The strand may be Oral Communication, Reading, or Media Literacy depending on the form of text selected for the evaluation. **Thinking and Communication**: The strand may be Oral Communication, Writing or Media Literacy depending on the form of communication selected for the evaluation. The texts and forms of communicated may be teacher- and/or student-selected.
Critical Literacy: Is Reading Dangerous? Lesson 1

Learning Goals
See, the Grades 7 and 8 Differentiated Instruction Educator’s Package Enhancements, 2008, Facilitator’s Guide: Assessment for Learning, pp. 7–9 for an explanation of learning goals.
Critical Literacy: Is Reading Dangerous? Lesson 1 Grade 7 Language

Minds On...

Critical Literacy
In this lesson, students practise taking a critical literacy stance by:
• exploring what is meant by perspective, or point of view
• identifying a narrator’s perspective
• examining how an author uses images and contrast to convey perspective and influence the reader
• imagining other perspectives
• describing their own perspective.

Additional resources on critical literacy include the following:
• Grades 7 and 8 Differentiated Instruction Educator’s Package Enhancements, 2008, Literacy Strategy Cards
• Grades 7 and 8 Differentiated Instruction Educator’s Package Enhancements, 2008, Facilitator’s Guide: Literacy
• Dr. Allan Luke: The New Literacies, 2007 webcast

Traffic Light
See the Grades 7 and 8 Differentiated Instruction Educator’s Package Enhancements, 2008, Facilitator’s Guide: Assessment for Learning, pp. 7–9 for an explanation of learning goals.

Anticipation Guides are not diagnostic tests. They reflect the process of understanding key concepts, e.g., adjusting predictions, deepening and clarifying understanding. Effective Anticipation Guides include provocative and ambiguous statements that provide a range of entry points and opportunities for rich discussion. Use Anticipation Guide statements as touchstones throughout the lesson, and return to them as part of the consolidation of learning. See Think Literacy Cross-Curricular Approaches, Grades 7-12, pages 20-23.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ANTICIPATION GUIDE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before lesson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
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<tr>
<td>-------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reading is a safe and peaceful activity.</td>
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<tr>
<td>War is never justifiable.</td>
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<tr>
<td>You can have an effect on world events and issues.</td>
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<tr>
<td>When you know something is wrong, you must try to rectify the situation.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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 in 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, pages 152-153.

Read Aloud
A read-aloud is a planned oral reading of a text that relates to the topic of study. 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 how to model strategies
- 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.

Active Listening Strategies. See the Listening Guide

Vocabulary
Educational research supports effective vocabulary-building practices:
- Knowing a definition is not synonymous with understanding a word.
- Word knowledge is built incrementally.
- Be selective about academic vocabulary to include in a word wall or vocabulary-building activities. Limit words to those essential to the unit and to those students will use during teaching-learning activities.
- Include proper names.
- Students need to hear words being used in context and to practise using words themselves in context about a half-dozen times.
- For multi-syllabic words, pronounce words clearly while cueing students to word parts so that they both hear and see words.
- Associate words with visual symbols and with words students already know.
- Use colour and clustering, e.g., concept maps and mind maps, to show connections between words.
- Gradually build understanding of the multiple meanings of words.
- Use semantic maps to focus on related words, explanations, what it isn’t, word roots and prefixes and suffixes, word history (how it came to mean what it does).

Resources for vocabulary building:
**Action**

**Make Inferences**
Making inferences is sometimes called “reading between the lines.” Making inferences refers to integrating knowledge of text with prior knowledge and experience in order to draw conclusions. Unlike predictions, inferences are not necessarily confirmed or refuted by the end of the text.
See Think Literacy Subject-Specific Examples: Language/English, 7-9, pages 2-6.

**Comparing and Contrasting**
Marzano, Pickering and Pollock (2001) argue that identifying similarities and differences which “might be considered the ‘core’ of all learning” involve “mental operations [that are] basic to human thought” (14). The authors suggest the following instructional approaches:
- teacher-directed explicit instruction
- student-directed divergent-thinking activities
- using graphic or symbolic forms, e.g., Venn diagram or comparison matrix, to represent similarities and differences
- classifying (grouping items based on similarities), creating metaphors (recognizing abstract or nonliteral relationships) and creating analogies (A:B::C:D).


**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 student 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/Square** is one of many variations on Think/Pair/Share. Once students have become proficient at Think/Pair/Share and the strategy is efficiently embedded in classroom routines, this strategy can be followed by a Think/Pair/Square in which a pair of students joins another pair to share conclusions or reach consensus about an issue.
Consolidation

Value Line
Students position themselves along a “line” between two opposite, extreme opinions to represent an opinion 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.

Wait Time
Attention to wait time during discussion that involves making sense of high-level concepts, making personal connections, and taking a critical stance towards potentially sensitive or emotional issues can support thinking and oral communication. See the Grades 7 and 8 Differentiated Instruction Educator’s Package Enhancements, 2008, Assessment for Learning Strategy Cards for an explanation of wait time.

Reflection Prompts
To reflect is to think about oneself, to consciously revisit one’s actions, words and thoughts, mull them over; and evaluate them. Responding to question prompts which serve as triggers or springboards, helps students move from narration or description to the critical thinking that involves assessment and goal-setting.

Double-entry journals, in which students narrate and describe on one side and reflect on the other side can help them make the distinction. Students can also make an entry on one side and respond to their own entry on the other side at a later date.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>“IT IS DANGEROUS TO READ NEWSPAPERS” REFLECTION PROMPTS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did you change any of the answers on your Anticipation Guide?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Which ones, if any?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why or why not?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you agree with the author, Margaret Atwood, that once you know about a problem, you are involved in situation?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why or why not?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is it important for readers and viewers to figure out an author’s point of view?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why or why not?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describe a specific information source where identifying the author’s point of view is important. (For example, name a specific movie, website, or television show, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using the specific example you describe above, explain why being able to figure out the author’s view helps the reader/viewer evaluate the information.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>