

Critical Thinking students

in Reading, Writing & Discussion



Note – *This is part of a Booklet on Global Education with a Research and Writing assignment on global issues,*

[Global Education: Research & Writing on Global Issues](#)

This includes a student assignment for researching and writing about a global issue, though any particular issue can be chosen. It includes assignment guidelines, learning objectives, class ideas, question and note-taking worksheets, critical thinking questions, writing guidelines and rubric, general objectives and themes in global education, and an extensive outline of global issues for research and study.

from **EducationForWorldSolutions.org**

a non-profit website, free of ads, dedicated to global education on world issues, with hundreds of links to information websites

Inquiry & Discussions

* Group discussions on Global or Humanitarian Issues can also be regarded as *Philosophical Discussion* in a *Community of Inquiry*, involving thoughtful questions and discussion, along with critical thinking and reasoning, assisted by a teacher as the facilitator.

This involves a teaching approach sometimes called *Socratic* or *Dialogic*, emphasizing the development of critical and creative thinking through student inquiry and dialogue, questioning and thinking, rather than just supplying information or answers.

Students ask both practical and ethical questions about critical issues, and they seek rational answers to these real-life issues. Teacher and students collaboratively delve into questions with research, discussion, reasoning and critical analysis. Emphasis is on *open questions* – with open-possible answers, yet there can be rigorous questioning and discussion about answers.

In this dialogic approach, questions and thinking are just as valued as any answers, because the process itself develops reasoning skills and student-acquired understanding, along with social & verbal skills such as cooperation and peaceful dialogue, all useful for vocational purposes and democratic participation. In addition, students become thinking, reflective, critical readers. They also develop self esteem and a self concept as thinkers and learners.

Students become –

Curious thinkers –by asking important and interesting questions

Collaborative thinkers –by engaging in group-shared questions

Caring thinkers –by listening to the ideas and feelings of others

Critical thinkers –by asking for reasons and supporting evidence

Creative thinkers –by building upon ideas and problem-solving

* The Socratic-dialogic approach can be modified for indep studies or research

In a classroom-community of inquiry & discussion

students learn to –

- collaboratively work together to understand complex issues, multiple perspectives, and together think of solutions
- ask questions and raise issues for discussion
- listen to and consider the views of others
- attempt to understand views different than their own
- explore and develop their own ideas, views, beliefs, values
- intelligently share, explain, and argue their point of view
- give reasons for what they think or believe
- share real-life examples or experiences relevant to discussion
- recognize shared experiences and values with other people
- question irrational assumptions, beliefs, and arguments
- rethink about their current beliefs or opinions
- evolve their ideas in the process of discussion and reasoning
- value the shared group rules for intelligent engagement

This class atmosphere –

- gives students an opportunity to self-express their thoughts, feelings and questions, and learn from a process of discussion
- develops student's abilities to question & communicate
- nurtures self-confidence as an intelligent social participant
- gives students a sense of shared goals, questions & concerns
- fosters rational reflection, discussion & self-expression
- develops critical reasoning and nurtures creative thinking

Controversial issues

- Issues are controversial when there are opposing beliefs or opinions about how to deal with them
- Differing views are often based on the person's different enculturation, experiences, interests, values, and learning
- Controversial issues often have a social, political, economic, and personal impact upon people's world-view and lives
- Controversial issues often arouse an emotional response, with sensitive and strong feelings about the issue
- Problematic issues present a real and practical context for developing critical reading and thinking skills
- Studying, discussing or writing about serious or sensitive issues help develop social empathy and thoughtful caring
- Learning about problematic issues is an important part of the educational and developmental growth of students
- Controversial and problematic issues evoke student thinking, reasoning and critical evaluation of different solutions
- Students should be encouraged to reach their own conclusions, based on research, reasoning and discussion
- In a summary or discussion of controversial issues, minority views should be objectively and fairly examined
- In writing about or discussing issues, students can look into the values implicit in any information, analysis, or proposal
- Controversial issues can bring to awareness and into self-reflection one's present values, morals, and conscience
- Controversial and problematic issues can inspire students to make positive actions and work on positive solutions

Discussion & debate

Ground rules

explain to students that the reason for agreeing to rules is to provide a safe and fair environment for all students to express their ideas

- everyone is *respected* to express their ideas, opinions, beliefs
- each person is *allowed* to speak without being interrupted
- *time limits* – no one is allowed to dominate the discussion
- ok to ask for a person's *reasons* for having an opinion/belief
- ok to *challenge* ideas, opinions, beliefs, but *not* the person
- use *respectful language*, without put-downs or stereotyping

Facilitation

- be encouraging of student ideas, thoughts, opinions & feelings
- encourage open-mindedness but also rational thinking
- be impartial, fair-minded, and respectful of diverse viewpoints
- protect the climate of respect, fairness, and non-prejudice
- try to be a role-model of intelligent & unbiased objectiveness
- stimulate the discussion with probing and inquiring questions
- keep the discussion focused on one question or issue at a time
- periodically summarize, restate, & write down ideas discussed
- periodically make connections between related ideas
- periodically mention questions or issues still unresolved
- periodically bring forth different or opposing viewpoints
- a facilitator can present information relevant to the discussion
- a facilitator can challenge any beliefs, assumptions or opinions

[Link to next chapter](#)