

13: The Power of Critical Thinking

*A 7–12 Lesson on Analyzing Information, Making Better Decisions,
and Thinking for Yourself*



Introduction for the Facilitator

This lesson helps students build **critical thinking**, or the ability to analyze, evaluate, and make thoughtful decisions based on evidence, logic, and reflection. In a world filled with opinions, noise, and fast-moving information, students who can think clearly and independently will always stand out.

Critical thinking goes beyond academics. It helps teens avoid misinformation, consider multiple perspectives, solve real-world problems, and strengthen their judgment. It also teaches them that asking questions is a strength—not a weakness.

Critical thinking is a core part of a student's **personal competitive advantage**, giving them the power to navigate school, work, and life with confidence. It supports the **lifestyle** they want to live, where they are intentional, informed, and rooted in curiosity and growth.

This lesson includes:

- **A Real-World Scenario** to explore critical thinking in action
- **8 Group Discussion Questions** with follow-ups
- **8 Journal Prompts** (draw or write)
- **10 thought-provoking Activities** to develop stronger thinking habits
- **A printable Worksheet** to reflect on and practice critical thinking skills



Real-Life Scenario

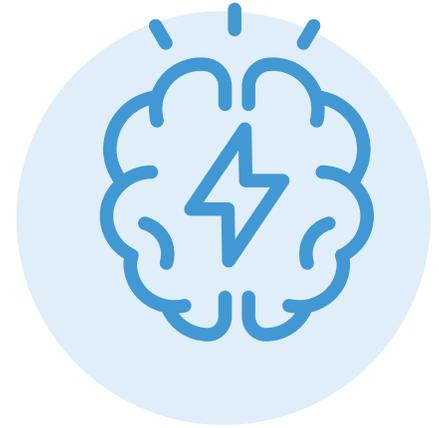
You're scrolling online and see a headline that seems shocking. You're tempted to share it, but something feels off.

Instead, you pause. Check the source. Ask yourself, "Is this accurate? Is there more to the story?"

You realize the headline left out important facts.

Instead of unintentionally sharing something false, you held back until you knew more.

That's critical thinking. It's slowing down, asking smart questions, and making thoughtful choices...even when it's easier to just react.



Group Discussion Questions

- 1. What does critical thinking mean to you?**
Follow-up: How is it different from just thinking fast or guessing?
- 2. Why is it important to ask questions instead of just accepting what we hear?**
Follow-up: What kind of questions do strong thinkers ask?
- 3. What's the difference between facts and opinions, and why does it matter?**
Follow-up: How can we tell them apart in conversations or online?
- 4. When have you changed your mind about something after thinking more deeply?**
Follow-up: What helped you shift your view?
- 5. How can emotions affect our ability to think clearly?**
Follow-up: What helps you stay logical even when feelings are strong?
- 6. How does considering different perspectives make us better thinkers?**
Follow-up: What's something you've learned from someone who disagreed with you?
- 7. How does critical thinking build your personal competitive advantage?**
Follow-up: Where might this skill give you an edge in life, school, or work?
- 8. What kind of lifestyle do you want to live?**
Follow-up: How does strong thinking help you protect and grow that lifestyle?



Journal Prompts

(Students can write or draw their responses depending on learning style or preference.)

1. **Write or draw a time when asking questions helped you make a better decision.**
2. **Describe a situation where you should've paused and thought more before reacting.**
3. **What's something you used to believe, but changed your mind about after thinking more?**
4. **Sketch a "critical thinking brain"—what habits or tools does it use?**
5. **Write about someone you know who thinks clearly and deeply. What can you learn from them?**
6. **What do you do when you're not sure what to believe? How do you decide?**
7. **What's one thinking habit you want to build: more patience, deeper questions, better focus, etc.?**
8. **How does critical thinking help grow your personal competitive advantage?**



Activities

1. **Fact or Opinion Sort**
Give students a mix of statements. They sort them into fact, opinion, or both and explain their thinking.
2. **Ask Better Questions Workshop**
Students practice turning simple questions into deeper ones (e.g., "What happened?" → "Why did it happen?" → "What could it mean long-term?")
3. **News Detective Challenge**
Students analyze a headline or social post for credibility. Who wrote it? Is it biased? What's missing?
4. **The "What Else Could Be True?" Game**
Share a scenario. Students brainstorm multiple explanations or angles. Discuss how expanding perspectives leads to better thinking.
5. **Decision-Making Ladder**
Teach a simple 5-step model: Pause, Gather Info, Ask Questions, Think Ahead, Decide. Practice it with low-stakes choices.
6. **Debate With Respect**
Small groups discuss a light debate topic (e.g., phones in class). Emphasize listening, logic, and thoughtful disagreement.
7. **Evidence Hunt**
In a paragraph or article, students highlight all statements supported by evidence and those that are just opinions or assumptions.
8. **Design a Thinking Checklist**
Students create a checklist for their own critical thinking process. Keep it posted or in notebooks.
9. **Mind Map a Tough Topic**
Choose a complex topic (e.g., climate change, social media use). Students create visual maps of causes, effects, opinions, and evidence.
10. **Reverse the Bias**
Take a biased or one-sided statement. Rewrite it to show balance or fairness. Reflect on the role of neutrality in strong thinking.



My Critical Thinking Blueprint

Name: _____

Helpful Words:

- **Critical Thinking** = slowing down to ask questions, check facts, and think clearly
- **Lifestyle Goal** = the kind of life I want to live
- **Personal Competitive Advantage** = the thinking habits that help me make strong, thoughtful choices

Directions:

Reflect with **words or drawings** to explore and strengthen your thinking process.

Use the back of this sheet if you need more space.

1. **A time I used critical thinking was:**

2. **Here's how it helped me:**

3. **A moment I wish I'd thought more clearly was:**

4. **My Critical Thinking Superpower helps me do these things:**

5. **One thinking habit I want to strengthen is:**

6. **Critical thinking helps me grow my personal competitive advantage by:**

7. **This is how critical thinking supports the lifestyle I want to live:**