Critical thinking
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Throughout this resource, and in everyday life, students are asked to think in particular ways about trade and the economic world. The ability to think critically about these and other themes has become a leading feature of contemporary education. Critical thinking is strongly advocated by *The New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2007), particularly as part of the Thinking key competency. One way to understand critical thinking and reflection is as the capacity to ‘think the otherwise’ — the willingness and ability to explore and assess alternative arguments, ideas and positions. Developing critical thinking skills through effective questioning and inquiry helps students to better understand and critique the world and their relationship to it.

The amount of information about trade and the economic world, especially via the media, can seem overwhelming. Students need to be able to critique the sources that they are using, including those in the resource. Because this resource does not contain everything there is to know about trade and economic issues, students will need to seek further information from different perspectives, and evaluate that information.

Critical thinking is much more than just asking why or how questions. It helps to have a structure to consider what elements make up our thinking around issues.

*The Foundation for Critical Thinking* (http://www.criticalthinking.org/) has identified eight elements of how we might think about things:

- Purpose, goal or objective
- The question at stake
- Information about the issue
- Interpretation of information
- Concepts informing the issue
- Assumptions
- Implications and consequences
- Your point of view
- Eight elements of thinking

(From https://www.criticalthinking.org/ctmodel/logic-model1.htm#)
The Foundation notes that all thinking about issues or topics has been influenced by these eight elements. Thus, whenever we think, we think for a purpose within a point of view based on assumptions leading to implications and consequences. We use concepts, ideas and theories to interpret data, facts, and experiences in order to answer questions, solve problems, and resolve issues.

Thinking, then:
- generates purposes
- raises questions
- uses information
- utilizes concepts
- makes inferences
- makes assumptions
- generates implications
- embodies a point of view.

In this resource you will occasionally see this icon which is a prompt to ask you to pause and generate some questions that consider these eight elements and other aspects of critical thinking, such as media literacy and considering other values and perspectives. Instead of narrow questions just about information about an issue, consider questions about students’ viewpoints, concepts that might be behind ideas and the implications of decisions and viewpoints.

In the slideshow presentations, there are often questions that can act as prompts for class discussion in the teacher notes and in the last slide.

The following three guides for teachers give some ideas and strategies for promoting critical thinking in the classroom. Teachers can adapt them by selecting questions or learning experiences to use to help their students consider various perspectives, different sources of information and their own responses. Critical thinking leads to students making linkages with concepts. With this resource, teachers can consider their planning based around a social inquiry approach as detailed in the Building Conceptual Understanding in the Social Sciences: Approaches to Social Inquiry booklet. When it comes to asking strategic questions and reflecting on them teachers can use the resources in this section.

This resource uses a concept-led approach to support students to explore issues concerning trade.

Key concepts are highlighted in the table at the top of each section help you consider what concepts may apply to the issues being studied.

E.g: Human Rights
Critical thinking skills 1: Asking critical questions

Two leading researchers on critical thinking, Drs Richard Paul and Linda Elder, together with their colleagues, have made a vast array of critical thinking resources available on The Critical Thinking Community Website: www.criticalthinking.org. One aspect of these resources is the role of Socratic questioning — where teachers and learners draw out understanding by asking questions. Such questions can take a number of forms:

• Clarification e.g. could you put that another way?
• Probing assumptions e.g. please explain why/how...?
• Probing reasons, evidence and causes e.g. are these reasons good enough?
• Questioning viewpoints and perspectives e.g. another way of looking at this is...; does this seem reasonable?
• Probing implications and consequences e.g. what effect would that have?
• Questions about the question e.g. why is this question important?

Further examples of Socratic question prompts are given in a series of downloadable handbooks: http://www.criticalthinking.org/pages/k-12-instruction-strategies-amp-samples/613

Socratic questioning is a disciplined process that takes time to develop its skills — teachers and students benefit from repeated practice with asking critical questions, and keeping the conversation focused when there are many ideas being generated.

Strategy: Socratic seminar

One student-centred approach to this kind of questioning is called a Socratic seminar, which focuses on developing an enlarged understanding of a text through structured group discussion. The focus is on developing shared meaning, rather than proving a point. It works particularly well with texts that are open to interpretation such as film, cartoon, event or idea.

A Socratic seminar often begins with the discussion leader, a student or the teacher, asking an open-ended question. A typical Socratic seminar opening prompt is: What do you think this text means? This can be followed by more probing questions as listed above and in the links. The seminar can be led by the teacher or by students in smaller focus groups. It helps the student leaders of each seminar to have prompts and questions provided for them.

Texts from this resource that provide ample avenues for interpretation and discussion on various topics include:

1. The first page of the article ‘Clothes with a conscience: the slow-fashion revolution’ by Sarah Catherall.
2. The article Ethical shopping: Principles come before price in war against exploitation, by Andrew Laxon.

These are both in the resource box.

It is also very useful to spend time evaluating how this learning experience went. The following questions are to help students to think about the success of their seminar and also point the way forward for future seminars.

• At any point did the seminar revert into a debate/discussion rather than dialogue? If so, how did the group handle this?
• What evidence did you see of people actively listening and building on others’ ideas?
• How has your understanding of this text been affected by the ideas explored in this seminar?
• What would you like to do differently as a participant the next time you are in a seminar?

(Adapted from https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/teaching-strategies/socratic-seminar).
Critical thinking skills 2: Media literacy

Many of the ideas that students have about trade and the economic world come to them via the media — through advertising, Facebook and newspapers, for example. Media literacy involves the skills of accessing, analysing and assessing messages conveyed by the media. In particular, it involves understanding how power is used to position people in particular ways and frame debates. Debates concerning fair or ethical trade run throughout this resource and there are many examples of media that are promoting similar messages. These messages should not be taken as impartial, and students can be given guidance to ask the following questions about how certain ideas are presented through media.

Questions include, for example:
- What social, cultural, historical, and political contexts are shaping the message and the meaning I am making of it?
- How and why was the message constructed?
- How could different people understand this information differently?
- Whose perspective, values and ideology are represented, and whose are missing?
- Who or what group benefits and/or is hurt by this message?

(National Council for the Social Studies, 2009).

Media literacy also has a participatory dimension, that is, students creating media messages as part of their community involvement and social action. The Center for Media Literacy’s basic framework offers five questions and tips for the deconstruction and construction of media messages, which can be seen in full here: http://www.medialit.org/reading-room/questionstips-qtips.

A summary of the idea can be conceptualised in this diagram about deconstructing an advertisement:

The people analysing the advertisement should ask:
- What are the key messages in this advertisement?
- Who made this message and why?
- What media/format techniques are they using to get my attention?
- How might different people read different things from this message?
- What values and perspectives are present, and what are missing?

All media have a message that is for a specific audience and is meant to gain profit/power/influence.

The people making the advertisement should ask:
- What is the purpose and who are we trying to reach with this advertisement?
- What media/format techniques can we use to get their attention?
- Could our message be misread in any way?
- What values and perspectives are we presenting?

Strategy: Message evaluation

Ask the students to pair off into twos and then form a group of four people with two pairs. Each pair in each group is to create an advertisement for a product. As an alternative to creation, they can choose an advert from a magazine. Once they have created or chosen it, they fill out the ‘Creator’ table below. Then they give their advert to the pair in their group and take the advert that pair has created. Each pair then fills out an Analyser table. Once they have done this, they regroup and for each advert they discuss the matches and mismatches between what the producer wanted and what the audience interpreted.

Creator of the advert
- What do I really want to get across in this advert?
- What creative techniques have been used to attract the attention of any readers?
- Who’s my target audience — what age, gender and other factors?
- Are the values or viewpoints of my company evident in this advert?

Anaylser/Audience of the advert
- What is the main message of this advert?
- What creative techniques have been used to attract my attention?
- Would other people understand the main message differently to me? If so, how?
- What values or viewpoints are presented here, and about what?
Critical thinking skills 3: Exploring values and perspectives

One aspect of critical thinking is exploring values and perspectives. The BCUSS Approaches to Social Inquiry book notes that exploring values as part of a focus of learning requires special attention. Values need to be understood as both individual and collective and something that can have a very real impact on the lives of people. An initial task in learning about values is to distinguish values from perspectives.

Social studies values terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Terms</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Values</td>
<td>Deeply held beliefs about what is important or valuable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viewpoint</td>
<td>An opinion or point of view</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values position</td>
<td>A stance taken in regard to an issue or proposal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perspective</td>
<td>A world view or ideology</td>
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*From Keown (2005)*

The New Zealand Curriculum (2007) states (p.10) that through their learning experiences, students will develop their ability to:

- express their own values
- explore, with empathy, the values of others
- critically analyse values and actions that are based on these values
- discuss disagreements that arise from differences in values and negotiate solutions
- make ethical decisions and act on them.

A social inquiry approach to any of the issues presented in this resource, should allow for students to consider the values and perspectives different people and groups hold, and also to form an individual response to those values.

**Strategy: Structured academic controversy**

The aim of this strategy is to develop an appreciative understanding of the range of values and perspectives embedded in a controversial issue.

1. Organize students into four-person teams comprised of two dyads (two-person groups).
2. Each dyad reviews materials that represent different values and perspectives on a charged issue. In order to ensure that the class understands the complexity of the issue, it may be helpful to have teams consider different values and perspectives.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>For example:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Team 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dyad 1: the teacher selects material that highlights the producers' perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dyad 2: the teacher selects material that highlights the government's perspective</td>
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<tr>
<td>Team 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dyad 3: the teacher selects material that highlights the workers' perspective</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dyad 4: the teacher selects material that highlights the consumers' perspective</td>
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</table>

3. Dyads then come together as a four-person team and present their views to one another, one dyad acting as the presenters, the others as the listeners
4. Rather than refuting the other position, the listening dyad repeats back to the presenters what they understood. Listeners do not become presenters until the original presenters are fully satisfied that they have been heard and understood.
5. After the sides switch, the dyads abandon their original assignments and work toward reaching consensus. If consensus proves unattainable, the team clarifies where their differences lie.

(Adapted from [http://teachinghistory.org/teaching-materials/teaching-guides/21731](http://teachinghistory.org/teaching-materials/teaching-guides/21731))

This learning experience could be used for exploring the issues concerning sweatshops. In the presentation Sweatshops Part 2 there is information that covers the issue and in the work sheet ‘The power of the individual’ there is information on the Rana Plaza collapse in Bangladesh. Several viewpoints are presented and there are links to further information. The teacher can provide material and each dyad is instructed to consider the changes in the past four years since the disaster according to a specific perspective. The perspectives can include those of the Bangladeshi Government, monitoring officials, families of the deceased, international clothing chains and consumers. After examining all the changes, the class can evaluate if the changes have been sufficient for this type of disaster not to ever happen again.