Zur4ANGLU.qxd 2001.04.13 16:59 Page 1

THINKING Classroom

A Journal of Reading, Writing and Critical Reflection

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Departments

Letter from the Editor 3
Inna Valkova

Letters to the Editor 4
Our readers respond

What's New? 5
Conferences, meetings, seminars

Look Who's Talking 6
What can parents do to encourage critical thinking and active learning at home? Answers from Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Georgia, Lithuania

Teaching Tips 41
To Mark or not to Mark: That is the Question
Sergei Zair-Bek

Web Site Reviews 45
Online Opportunities for Young Writers
Donna Neutze

Book Reviews 47
Learning to Think Critically
Inna Valkova

Zur4ANGLU.qxd 2001.04.13 16:59 Page 2

THINKING Classroom

A Journal of Reading, Writing and Critical Reflection

Thinking Classroom serves as an international forum of exchange among teachers, teacher educators and others interested in promoting democratic teaching practices. The publication encourages professional development, research and reflection. *Thinking Classroom* features articles that foster learner-centered teaching strategies including critical and creative thinking, active and cooperative learning, and problem solving. The journal also publishes articles about the institutional structures that support these practices.

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Thinking Classroom is a publication from the Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking project.

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Features

Classroom Tales

Asking Questions 8
Igor Zagashev

Relevant Research

Bibliotherapy for Healing War Trauma in Children and Youth: Experience from Croatia 1991–1999 14
Arpad Barath and Ljiljana Sabljak

Lessons

Reading, Writing, Critical Thinking and Elephants: Constructing Meaning through Text 26
Ondrej Hausenblas

Writing Reproductions 32
Anara Alimbekova

Policy Matters

What is Critical Thinking? 36
David Klooster

Zur4ANGLU.qxd 2001.04.13 16:59 Page 3

Letter from the Editor

We are glad to greet you, dear readers, in this new issue of *Thinking Classroom*. Very little time has passed since the last issue, but it has proved to be extremely important for us. The editors responsible for the Russian version of the journal, Olga Varshaver (Moscow) and myself, Inna Valkova (Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan), have begun work.

Most important for us, perhaps, is that the mission of the journal has finally been defined. It happened in January 2001 in Lithuania, at the international meeting devoted to the publication. Representatives from almost all countries participating in the programme took part in the discussion.

The main thing we want our readers to understand through this mission statement is that it is here, on these very pages, that they can share new ideas, and tell others of their successes, fears, difficulties and doubts. Any road feels easier when travelling together, and the destination seems closer and more attainable.

We are also ready to publish articles written by those who disagree with us. Promoting lively discussions that contain reflections about complex problems helps us to understand different points of view and improve our own practice. We believe that the journal is a door that must always be open: open to new approaches, to the careful selection of what is valuable and has been achieved in the past, and open to the discussion and resolution of problems and controversies.

The range of our authors has grown considerably. In this issue you will find ideas from Russia about assessment and asking questions. A colleague from the US dwells upon what critical thinking is all about. Lessons from Kyrgyzstan and the Czech Republic offer the same strategy used differently. Anyway, the journal is in your hands.

At the meeting in Lithuania we learned that a number of participating countries sponsor national journals or newsletters that publish similar articles, and that some countries have begun to publish a national version of *Thinking Classroom*, including in them important local material. We are very glad that our family is growing so quickly. It gives all its members a chance to share our most interesting material and ideas … and new ideas keep coming in.

During our meeting in Vilnius we had a lot of discussions on what could make the journal even more attractive and useful to our readers. New ideas for rubrics include: "A Little Bit of History" (as we know, everything new is only forgotten old); "New Methods" (as our programmes develop, we all want to learn of new methods and strategies to enlarge our repertoire); "Questions and Answers" (readers would ask questions, and those who have already faced problems of this sort could offer their solutions and advice); and "1,000 Trifles" (although we know that there are no trifles in teaching; here we would put your favourite warm-up activities, or little tricks you use in class or during workshops, etc).

Everyone agreed that it would be good to hear the voices of our students. For example, in the rubric there might be a piece "I don't Want to Study" where students could tell readers about things they hate about school or university, and the changes they would propose.

We are also interested in parents' opinions. What do they expect from educational institutions and teachers today? In this issue you will already find parents' ideas about promoting critical thinking in children. We also liked the idea of introducing a glossary explaining the terms mentioned in the articles.

There are a lot of suggestions. Many of them are exciting. Now, dear readers, it is important for us to know your opinions about them. Or, maybe, you have other ideas to offer? As usual, we look forward to receiving your letters.

Inna Valkova

Zur4ANGLU.qxd 2001.04.13 16:59 Page 4

Letters to the Editor

I write in reference to the question raised by Meeli Pandis in the Autumn 2000 issue of *Thinking Classroom* regarding the term "developing countries".

For different reasons, I happen to agree with the Estonian Reading Association. The term "developing countries" and the division of the world between the "developed" and the "underdeveloped" or, later on, "developing", has always been controversial, especially for the ones labelled as "developing".

We do not believe we necessarily have to follow the same path as the "developed" countries, and we see ourselves as very diverse nations which cannot simply be understood in the light of some deficit theory or homogenised in one single category. Basically, the term was introduced through, and has remained alive in, the jargon of international agencies and in the parlance of the "developed" world.

Today the term has no meaning, and is not even used in most countries in the south. This is particularly true in the case of Latin America. The neo-liberal model, and the economic policies that go with it, is devastating our countries. The word "development" has virtually disappeared from our political dictionaries and from our expectations. We are now facing mere survival, growing poverty and social exclusion, and increased polarisation between the rich and the poor in our societies.

Alternative terms have been introduced in the last few years – "low-income countries", "the south", "the periphery", "emerging countries" – but none of these seem adequate. So I suggest that we avoid all these terms, and the conventional dual approach to the world that makes them necessary.

Rosa Maria Torres,
Instituto Fronesis,
Ecuador-Argentina
www.fronesis.org

I was so excited to read Donna Neutze's article on literature web sites, and especially pleased to learn about the All-Poetry Encyclopedia at http://www.everypoet.com/archive (*Thinking Classroom* No 2).

I am currently taking a children's literature graduate class and will be doing a presentation on poetry in a few weeks. This web site will add the perfect visual and technological component to my presentation.

I'll make sure I pass this information on to all of my classmates. What a great resource!

Jodie M. Youmans,
Townsend Elementary School,
Walton, NY, USA

Two lessons, by Alexei Belenov and Gleb Firsov, published in *Thinking Classroom* No 3 interested me so much that I immediately did two things. First, I tried them out in class. Being a physics teacher myself, I would have gladly repeated the whole of Alexei Belenov's lesson with my students; but, unfortunately, we have to stick to the curriculum which now prescribes other subjects. Second, I tried to think more deeply about the essence and value of research, and the difference between research in the natural sciences and in history.

Research aims to develop new knowledge about nature, society and thinking processes. It is based on a set of concepts and notions, as well as an accepted body of scientific/scholarly knowledge that plays a role in its preconditions or means. In this respect, I believe, research in the natural sciences and in history is similar – it is an integral system.

Next, any research activity involves scientific prediction. The nature of these predictions, in my opinion, differs in the natural sciences and in history. Researchers seek to model what is unknown, or not yet registered in human experience.

I have been reflecting for some time upon the idea of a "promoted experiment", and have developed several lessons with it. Alexei Belenov's physics lesson is a perfect model of such an approach.

Mehriban Akhmedova PhD,
Baku, Azerbaijan

Zur4ANGLU.qxd 2001.04.13 16:59 Page 5

What's New?

RWCT and Higher Education

On 17-19 January 2001, an international meeting was held in Vilnius, Lithuania. It was devoted to working out approaches and creating necessary resources for the successful introduction of the RWCT programme into the higher education system. Our hope is that this undertaking will be a natural continuation of the project, although it may be viewed as a separate programme.

Members of the leadership team – Kurt Meredith, Jeannie Steele, Charles Temple and David Klooster – conducted the meeting. Twelve people, representatives from Albania, Armenia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lithuania, Moldova, Russia and Uzbekistan all participated.

A deadline – the beginning of summer – was set for working out all of the most important aspects of the new programme. It was also decided to exchange material by e-mail, and to hold a seminar in the near future. By the end of 2001, a pilot course should be ready, to be used in early 2002.

Armen Khachikyan

RWCT web site: new resources, new opportunities

"The size and continuing growth of the Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking (RWCT) project are so great that creating a web site is an urgent need." This summarizes well the position of the group who met in Vilnius, Lithuania, in January to discuss the development of an on-line resource to support the project.

When people begin planning a site they face many problems, including what content and resources to showcase, the organization of information, the design of the interface, navigation structure, server, address, etc.

Mr David Robson, coordinator of Towson High Education network and publisher of **www.ed.Picks.com**, who was invited to Vilnius as an expert in this field, held a number of special sessions for all those interested.

His first talk touched upon already tested and widely used models, and appropriate software for creating, maintaining and using web sites. After the second session, at which the participants worked in small groups, the main functions and parameters of the future web site became quite clear.

It is planned that the web site will be available to users in two languages, English and Russian. It will provide a lot of information about the project and its various components, and will also offer useful resources, materials, references for teachers and faculty, educator-researchers, staff of in-service training institutes and others interested in project activities. The RWCT web site seeks to become an important tool for project support and promotion.

Paata Papava

News from Bulgaria

The RWCT project first appeared in our city in 1999. Now 56 humanities teachers are attending workshops. In January 2001 two secondary schools became pilot schools for testing new strategies in teaching Bulgarian language and literature, foreign languages, history and geography.

Experts from the Education Inspectorate of the Ministry of Education and Science showed the journal materials to teachers, and they decided to send their own lessons, with comments, to the editors.

Our foreign language teachers are interested in all problems connected with teaching methods, and in developing students' communication competence and their ability to express themselves in a foreign language. In November 2001 a conference will be held in our city entitled "Foreign Language Teaching: Accents, Strategies, Innovations".

You can either attend in person or indirectly, by sending your materials (lesson descriptions, scholarly papers, reports, children's work). Afterwards we intend to publish a collection of articles.

We strongly hope to establish contacts with RWCT schools in other countries, as well as with all teachers who try to experiment in their everyday practice, and value ideas in modern education and pedagogy.

Reneta Lazarova

Zur4ANGLU.qxd 2001.04.13 16:59 Page 6

Look Who's Talking

THE QUESTION:

What can parents do to encourage critical thinking and active learning at home?

Tatiana Buiskikh

Researcher at the Critical Thinking Laboratory, the American University, Kyrgyzstan

I have two daughters: one is fifteen, the other is eight. I once noticed that they did not get along as well as they could. They would quarrel, only listen to themselves, and pursue their own interests. This resulted in repeated fights, arguments and grudges. I got quite worried, as I know how important it is for them to be able to comprehend and value each other's opinions, and to compromise with each other and with the people around them.

I so much wanted to help my daughters! I decided that first they needed to define the problems they were facing, and that the definition had to precede the resolution. I then began asking questions about the situation developing between them, and suggested that they discuss this situation together.

At first the girls sounded sharp and unyielding, and their opinions were, or seemed to be, totally different, because they would not listen to one another. I began by asking questions: Why do you think so? Why, in your opinion, does your sister think differently? Might she be right to a certain extent? In what way? What is the basic disagreement between you? Is there any chance you could resolve this problem?

From that point on, my daughters changed. They do argue sometimes, but they try to listen to each other, and weigh all the pros and cons. They have learnt to discuss things, they have grown less obstinate and attempt to reach an agreement. Their relationship has improved considerably.

I am also happy that their arguments have become more logical and grounded, since each tries to convince her sister, knowing that the other will not reject the idea altogether, but will rather try to understand it. I hope that the experience they are gaining in the family today will help them later with relationships in the adult world.

Alla E. Lesina

School No 176, Tashkent, Uzbekistan

I have a seven-year-old son. A while ago, when telling something, he used to confuse all the details, lose track of his own narration, and omit important information.

In order to help my son define key concepts, we play the following game together: the boy is given a word, and he has to name ten characteristics, parts or qualities of the object, or notions it represents. It may be any word: a cupboard, a hen, a blizzard, etc.

After my impatient son produces ten of the most evident characteristics (or parts) of the notion, the adult partner boomerangs the image back to him, using only the qualities the child has mentioned. If the child has missed some important details, his partner should never add them. I assure you, this game offers hilarious entertainment.

Here's an example of what happened when I gave him the word "hen". My son said: talons, claws, beak, stomach, eyes, heart, skeleton, egg, wings and tail. So I described this peculiar animal accordingly: a hen's skeleton is roaming around on clawed talons. Because he is transparent, we see the creature's stomach with the heart attached to it, and a white egg next to them. This "hen" is fluffing its tail, blinking its eyes (Where are they located? That's another question.), and looking for something to peck at with its beak. It is completely featherless. It has no body, neck or head.

After a hearty laugh my son built up the missing parts. Then we discussed what he had actually tried to describe. The appearance? Inner structure? What made a hen different from other birds? Differences between animate and inanimate objects?

This simple game has helped my son a lot. He has quickly learned to focus on a certain category, define and identify relevant information, describe objects without missing important parts, and recognize the essential characteristics of an object or a phenomenon.

Zur4ANGLU.qxd 2001.04.13 16:59 Page 7

Paata Chorgolashvili

Maths teacher and PTA president, and consultant at the Centre for Pedagogical Innovation , Georgia

The Mtiebi Parent-Teacher Association and the authorities at our boarding school have decided to invite parents to our RWCT workshops. Parents are, in fact, customers in the business of teaching, so they should know and support the methods offered by the school. Besides, if parents use different methods at home our everyday efforts will be useless.

We support openness between parents and the school. This openness is reflected in our strategies and methods of teaching. Parents often want to know how this or that subject is taught in class. They are enthusiastic about visiting lessons and, as a result, are able to provide necessary help for their children at home.

This collaboration with parents extends beyond an interest in the academic success of their children. Parents strive to create a positive atmosphere in the family, and to teach their sons and daughters to value and respect different opinions.

They also want their children to be able to cooperate, to express mutual trust and to help one another. They want their children to be observant and to be able to listen actively which, in turn, leads to the development of communication skills.

You will read about how we achieve these goals in a future issue of the journal.

Alla Fontanova

Moscow, Russia

It is very important for parents to show children what they really value.

A child will never believe that we value his independence if we do not give him a chance to make even simple decisions on his own. We will never convince him of the importance of developing his own opinion if, at the same time, we laugh at his tastes and preferences. If parents pay attention mostly to the grades their child gets, he will come to believe that results in the record book are what is most important in life.

At some point I made the decision that my children's record books would never be criteria for me to use to assess their intelligence and level of education. It does not mean that I do not care how they study; but I attend more to what they think of the books they have read, things they have seen and learnt, why they think in this particular way, and what arguments they use to defend their point of view.

So, what can we, as parents, do to promote critical thinking in our kids? I believe we just have to show that we appreciate and support their attempts to think, to converse with them about their opinions, and to look for answers with them, and not only in textbooks.

We should listen attentively to our children, accept and discuss their ideas, and never hide our own likes and dislikes. Let us treat our children as our equals.

Vida Gudžinskienė

Vilnius Pedagogical University, Lithuania

It is very important to listen to what the child is saying, and not to sort out his thoughts. We adults are used to evaluating everything: "this is wrong", "this is right".

Children build their activities on their own experiences and understanding. I like to listen to the flow of their thoughts, to their vocabulary, to their arguments.

In helping children to develop critical thinking skills, the freedom to choose is of great importance. Children must be free to make choices, about both their means of expression as well as their actions.

And even if we are not very fond of "batman rivers", let them express themselves. Otherwise, hidden emotions can arise later in a negative form.

A question for next issue:

Tell us something interesting a student has said to you since you began using active learning and critical thinking methods. What made this statment interesting to you?

Zur4ANGLU.qxd 2001.04.13 16:59 Page 8

Classroom Tales

Asking Questions

Igor Zagashev

"It is better to ask some of the questions than to know all the answers."
James Thurber

"Like question, like answer."
(A proverb)

A question mark looks very much like a fishing hook, and we all know that hooks are used to catch fish. But is fishing an easy skill to acquire?

For those who wonder whether asking questions is a special skill, a skill that should be developed, I offer the following riddle about John and Bill. When I ask my students on the Development of the Intellect course to solve this problem, those who are skilled at asking questions generally find it easy; while the others struggle.

Here is the situation (I let them take notes): John and Bill are in a room. The door swings shut. There is a sound of broken glass. John looks at Bill. Bill is dead. What has happened to Bill?

We know that the fate of rhetoric is often tied to political and cultural shifts

In order to find the answer to this puzzle, you are welcome to ask any questions, except the most important one (What happened to Bill?). When answering students' questions the presenter should be truthful, but not particularly forthcoming. Experience suggests that some students will try to guess, while others will begin by recalling similar situations from films. But the one who is able to ask good questions is bound to win!

For those who wish to find the answer, there is a clue in the first paragraph of the article. Those who miss the clue will probably benefit from reading the article itself. The more impatient may, of course, look at the end of the article.

At the pedagogical college where I teach, professors work hard to help our students become excellent researchers. We want them to be able to plan a study, to gather information, and to differentiate between the main point and supporting details, and so on. At a recent workshop, the faculty tried to enumerate the skills involved in doing good research, discussing which of these skills needs to be developed first. My colleagues sought to arrange more than twenty abilities and competencies they had listed.

The majority of votes went to the ability to ask questions. Professors supported their choice with arguments like these: "The questions students ask are often too simple, and are primarily oriented towards the gathering of facts," or "Students are used to asking questions that demand mere reproduction." Psychological and pedagogical research, research undertaken to check these assertions, confirmed that faculty are not at all satisfied with the level of questions students tend to ask. Before continuing with this argument, however, it may be important to ask, do students really need to be able to ask questions?

The Importance of Questions

The psychologist V. Snetkov describes the communicated meaning of a question as "a totality of all possible answers implied by the question" (Snetkov, 1999, p. 92).

Consequently, **"a good question" is one that implies ample space for possible alternatives.** The same author points out a number of functions questions may serve. These include obtaining new information, clarifying the information already in hand, switching a conversation to a different topic, prompting for a correct answer, demonstrating one's opinion or assessment of a situation, and changing the mental and emotional state of the questioner (Snetkov, 1999, p. 93).

J. Gilford, a scholar who writes about the human intellect, tells us that "to live means to have problems, and to solve them means to grow intellectually." To this notion, the psychology professor L. Vecker adds: "Questions are a psychological reflection of the uncertainty of those object relations which will be opened and clarified by the whole thinking process to follow" (Vecker, 1998, p. 6). Consequently, a question "launches" a cognitive activity directed at solving problems and clarifying specific uncertainties. But **a question also helps to define and formulate the problem.**

With the help of questions, humans build bridges to the unknown. At times this unknown may look attractive, and at other times frightening. It is not by accident that the English word "question" has embedded in it the word "quest": that is, "a search connected with uncertainty and even risk-taking". So the origin of the word "question", at least in English, implies **a search in which the outcome is uncertain.** Since uncertainty is an integral part of the modern, rapidly changing world, it is of paramount importance that we who live here develop the ability to ask questions.

Alison King, in commenting on the issue of posing questions, tells us that "those who are able to think are able to ask questions". As noted earlier, some teachers judge their students' ability to think by the questions they ask. King concludes that asking thoughtful questions is a skill to be developed. Those who have not developed this skill ask rather primitive questions that are answered by a small effort of memory (quoted from D. Halpern, 2000, p. 139).

If people study without asking questions, meaning their own questions, formulated independently, they work without that sense of quest. In other words, when formulating a question, the person posing the question takes responsibility for the state of cognitive "hunger" that results. Finally then, questions are needed in order to orient ourselves in the world. The more skilled we are at asking questions, the better we know the way.

Conditions required for developing the ability to ask questions

Rosemary Smith, writing about school practices related to posing questions, points out that in classrooms children learn to expect that there is a correct answer to any given question, and if they are prepared and intelligent enough they will always be able to find it (Smith, 1999, p. 149). It is for this reason that a student who cannot answer a question, even if he has asked the question himself, feels uncomfortable and defensive. Also, we should not forget how difficult it is to get beyond limiting expectations and perceptions. For this reason, we suggest the schools work to create conditions that foster the development of the ability to ask questions.

- **Teachers should view a student's inability or struggle to answer a question as normal.** If we are not speaking about tests or other traditional forms of control, the mere fact of encountering difficulty in answering should be regarded as something positive. We all face difficulties as we seek to figure things out. We study in order to address such difficulties.
- A teacher should seek to use **open-ended, creative questions** that may have several answers and will promote further dialogue.
- Smith recommends using **Colombo questions** as often as possible (the type of questions asked by the famous detective in the TV series), questions beginning "By the way, I wonder …" and addressed, seemingly, to no one in particular (Smith, 1999, p. 149). In this way, a teacher shares his curiosities with children, and admits the difficulty of finding answers in their presence. The only condition here is that the difficulty should be real, not "staged", since theatrical shows of this kind seldom result in the desired ends.
- **A teacher should not put children on the defensive in asking them a question.** A hostile intonation can make a "Why?" question sound as if a teacher is, in fact, attacking the student.

• **Students should ideally have choices. In the best situations, students create these themselves.** A teacher organizes work so that students are able to collect a "bank" of questions that later defines the zone of the "quest", and the direction used in studying content.

For the past few years my scholarly interests have focused on the development of thinking in students of all ages. Below, you will find some methods and strategies that have helped many teachers and faculty develop in their students the ability to ask questions.

Methods and strategies for developing the ability to ask questions

1. The "Question words" strategy

This strategy is used when students are already familiar with the content or theme of a lesson, and have learnt a number of basic notions connected with the material being studied. Question words may help them to create the so-called "zone of interest".

The teacher asks students to list on the right of a chart ideas they remember in connection with the theme. The left of this chart is filled by various question words (no less than eight). After that, students are asked to formulate as many questions as they can using elements from both columns (five to seven minutes). This work may be performed individually or in pairs.

We know that the fate of rhetoric is often tied to political and cultural shifts

One caveat: students should not know the answers to their questions. Why ask if you know the answer? As a result, several question lists appear on the blackboard.

For example, in a course in *Pedagogical Psychology* we recently talked about conflicts that might arise in the classroom. My goal was to help students individually define those aspects of the pedagogical conflict that require study. Since in education (as well as in other spheres of life) a conflict is a fairly typical event, it was useful for students to specify what particular questions were of the greatest importance to them. I also sought to help students develop their ability to ask questions.

The session:

1. As homework the students were asked to recollect and describe in written form one or two situations of pedagogical conflict with unclear causes.

2. Having discussed the prepared situations in groups (ten minutes), on the right of the chart students list the main terms and notions they used during the discussion.

Question words	Main terms and notions
How?	Unjustified expectations
What?	Anger
Where?	Overflowing emotions
Why?	Misunderstanding
How many?	Rupture of relationships
Where from?	Stress relief
What kind?	Bad conduct
What for?	Conflict
How come?	Students
What is the connection between?	Teachers
What does … consist of? What is the function of?	Reconciliation

Using question words on the left of the chart, they then construct questions. Here are a few examples: "Why do teachers initiate conflicts more often than students?" "How much time is needed to settle the conflict?"

Then we ask students to discuss their lists and choose two (or four at the most) questions they consider the most interesting (productive, unexpected, deep, etc.) Before students read out the results of their work, they are asked to consider the criteria they used in making their choices. Not all answers will be well supported. At the beginning, some may say: "I just liked them – that's all." In this case the teacher may take a note of these questions and return to them later.

If the teacher uses this kind of activity to end the session, he/she may plan in the next session to use the students' questions. If the session begins with this sort of activity, the teacher may organize the remainder of the

work with relevant information so that students spend the session looking for answers to their own questions.

A teacher can get a little confused by the large number of questions which turn out to be too general, or by the abundance of questions he is not ready to or did not plan to discuss at this particular session. These "unanswered" questions may be addressed later, during discussions of the theme. In any case, using such a strategy, teachers are able to gather objective data about which issues are of particular interest to students. Generally, these salient issues become better formulated through the repetition of questions, and we hear the important issues as they are raised again and again.

2. "Thick and thin" questions

Take a look at this table, and you will understand the essence of this strategy.

?	?
This column is for questions that need long, expanded answers.	This column is for questions that demand an unambiguous, short, factual answer.
E.g: What connection there is between the seasons and human behaviour?	E.g: What time is it now?

The thin and thick questions strategy is widely known, and is used in education in the following situations:

- To organize paired learning. Having studied a topic, students are asked to think of three thin and three thick questions, connected with the material they have just learned. Then they work in pairs to check each other's charts.
- To start a conversation on the topic being studied. If you simply ask: "What is it about the topic we are studying that is especially interesting to you?" in this case, there is a risk that students will generate only superficial questions. But if, after a short introduction, you ask students to formulate at least one question for each column, you will understand more about which aspects of the theme are important to them.
- To define questions left unaddressed. Often students ask questions without considering the time it might take to answer them. Teachers may call such questions inappropriate or untimely. This strategy develops in students the ability to evaluate the length of potential answers.

3. The "Six W" strategy

Do you remember the children's game "Will you buy an elephant?" popular with those who love to annoy others? One child comes up to another and says: "Buy an elephant!" The second one answers: "I don't need an elephant!" But the first insists: "Everyone says 'I don't need an elephant', but will you buy it?" The goal, of course, is to leave your partner unable to find an answer, or to simply tire him/her out. This kind of dialogue can go on for hours. Apart from developing patience and self-control, it makes children look for words and ways of saying things that give them a chance of winning.

The "Six W" strategy is very similar to this game. "W" is the first letter of the question word "Why?" and has many shades of meaning, such as "What for? For what reason?" etc. Here is an example. After exploring the theme "Motivating Study", a professor of pedagogical psychology divides students into pairs. A dialogue then takes place between them:

"Why did you study the Motivating Study topic?"

The second answers: "I want to know various ways to motivate my students to study."

The first is not satisfied: "And why do you want to know various ways of motivating students to study?"

The second has to find a way out: "To make children interested in my course."

"And why do you want to make children interested in your course?"

The dialogue continues ...

In using this strategy, students have a rich opportunity to establish multiple links within a topic, and we know that new knowledge tends to become more meaningful if it has lots of links. This strategy also helps students comprehend reasons for studying a particular theme, and reflect upon their personal goals and the meanings they assign to the ideas involved. It is as if, through this strategy, they "ground" high-flying information so that it becomes practical and better connected with real life. As a result of this grounding, students too feel less "wobbly" and more self-reliant. In addition, the "Six W" strategy offers stu-

Zur4ANGLU.qxd 2001.04.13 16:59 Page 12

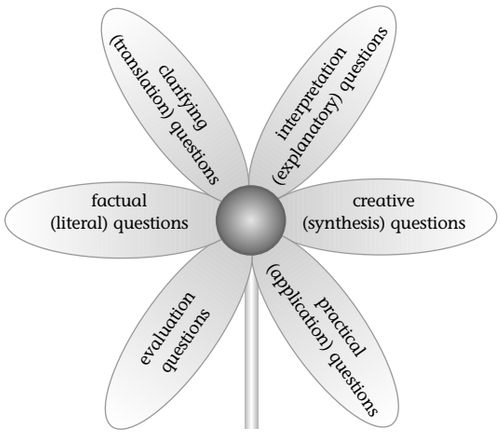
dents an opportunity to identify information and ideas that remain "still unknown" within a seemingly well-studied theme. All of their questions and answers should be noted. Remember, the only rule of this "game" is to make sure that no answers are repeated.

It sometimes happens that students, unable to answer a question, become irritated and say: "Why? Why? … Just because!" This response is to be anticipated. In fact, we have a special place for questions like this that provoke sharp answers, and we list them under a special heading, "Just because!" Identifying "Just because" questions may not look especially important, but once the notion was introduced in our class, student communication became much friendlier. The "Just because" category now often remains empty. Do you have any thoughts about why?

4. Question Daisy (or Bloom's Daisy)

A popular classification of questions based on the taxonomy of learning goals and levels of cognition was created in 1956 by a group of American psychologists and pedagogues under the direction of Benjamin Bloom (Shishov, Kalnei, 1999, p. 93). Since the word *Bloom* translates from German as "flower", participants in a seminar on "Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking" found it useful to visualize this piece of theory as a flower. Many participants in our workshops saw the theory as somewhat dry, and the flower image somehow made them happier. That is how we developed this flower and named it Bloom's Daisy.

Still, workshop participants often found it difficult to define questions in terms of Bloom's taxonomy, and often commented: "It all looks very nice, but we need practical material that we can try out and use." Through a variety of modifications, we tried to figure out a way of formulating questions so that they fit Bloom's classification. We also thought of various ways of using the daisy itself in our classes. As a result, we developed the Question Daisy, although people in Russia still call it Bloom's Daisy. The questions we placed on its petals, though grandfathered by Bloom, were in fact taken from presentations made by the American educators James and Carol Beers. Now ask me: "Who is the author of this strategy?"



So, here we have six petals that promote six types of questions.

- To answer **factual questions** people have to provide specific facts, or recall and reproduce specific information. These questions are often used for traditional checking of knowledge on tests, terminology exercises and dictations.
- To answer **clarifying questions** people usually begin with the words "Are you saying that …?" "If I understood you correctly …?" "I may be mistaken, but did you say …?" The goal of such questions is to give the first speaker an opportunity to clarify his remarks and to speak again. Sometimes these questions are asked in order to obtain information missing in the preceding statement but obviously implied by the speaker. It is very important to avoid a negative effect when asking these questions. To parody such an effect one might raise the eyebrows, open the eyes wide, and ask "Do you really think that …?"
- **Interpretation (explanatory) questions** usually begin with the word "Why?" In some situations (see above) these questions may be understood negatively, as a means of attacking others or protecting oneself. In other cases, they are useful in tracing cause-effect chains. "Why do leaves turn yellow in the autumn?" If the answer to the question posed is known, the question itself turns from interpretation into fact checking. This type of question is authentic, however, if the person asking the question expects some independence of thought in the answer.
- **Creative questions** are those which contain "if/then" and other attributes of condition, supposition or prediction.

"What would change in the world if people had three fingers on each hand?" "How might the plot of the film develop at this point?"

• **Evaluation questions** are aimed at setting criteria for the evaluation of certain events, phenomena and facts. "Why is this good and that bad?" "How does lesson X differ from lesson Y?"

• **Practical questions** are aimed at establishing the relationship between theory and practice. "Where can you observe diffusion in everyday life?" "What would you do if you were in the main character's place?"

Our experience in applying this strategy suggests that students of all ages (starting from the primary grades) understand the meaning of all of these questions, and can provide examples of their own.

If the Question Daisy is used in elementary/junior school, it may be useful to preserve its visual aspect, since children like writing their questions down on the petals. When working with senior students, it is better to work with the more formal classification scheme. Tasks might look like this: "Before reading the text about cactuses, make up one practical and one evaluation question. The text may help you answer them."

In workshops with in-service teachers and faculty from pedagogical and non-pedagogical educational institutions, it seems that the flower graphic does not embarrass the audience. Anna Mashkovtseva, a teacher of speech culture at Pedagogical College No 1 in St Petersburg, immediately used this strategy for revising material for her class. But in this case, she was interested in its value for students, and gathered data from her students about which questions proved to be the most difficult for them. In addition, she asked them how useful they found this work to be.

Here are the main results of her research.

Creative and practical questions present the greatest difficulty for students. All those asked (68 students) claimed that this work had been of great importance, that they understood and remembered the material better when they formulated questions themselves. This data is consonant with research undertaken by many scholars, including Palincsar and Brown (Palincsar and Brown, 1984). Moreover, Alison King found that students who master the technique of posing questions find themselves inquiring about a wide variety of situations (Halpern, 2000, p. 139).

Questions help us to understand any situation better. They also help us to consider different points of view. That is exactly what you were asked to do when figuring out the cause of Bill's death at the beginning of this article.

Now, do you want to know the answer to the riddle?

Bill was a fish, and died when the jar he was kept in was blown over by a sudden gust of wind when the door closed.

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Zur4ANGLU.qxd 2001.04.13 16:59 Page 14

Relevant Research

Bibliotherapy for Healing War Trauma in Children and Youth

Experience from Croatia 1991–1999

Arpad Barath and Ljiljana Sabljak

Introduction

Early research on war-related trauma in Croatia suggests that over 90 per cent of children who live in high-risk zones have been exposed to traumatic life events (Stuvland, Barath, Kuterovac, 1993). Alarmingly high numbers – UNICEF estimated 56 per cent of those in frontline cities – suffered or witnessed horrifying acts of violence and aggression, and required urgent professional assistance (UNICEF, 1995). These young people also needed help reestablishing the everyday activities that would make life again feel "normal".

At the outbreak of war, it became obvious that most traditional, office-based human service agencies were unprepared for emergencies of this kind. The pre-war system of professional training for those concerned with mental health did not offer any special training in "crisis intervention", and the level of disaster management skills was as low among professionals as among the vast majority of the public.

We know that the fate of rhetoric is often tied to political and cultural shifts

Moreover, large numbers of helping professionals were distressed by their own war-related problems, and exhausted by the routine work they were expected to do in such a "national emergency". Few felt capable of initiating large-scale outreach programmes for trauma work. In sum, the number of distressed civilians, especially children, women and the elderly, surpassed the number of staff available to provide professional help: hence the need to train large numbers of volunteers and para-professionals became clear.

Two observations gave those of us on the ground a glimmer of hope. First was the striking discovery that children, as opposed to their parents, sometimes demonstrated an unusually healthy strategy for coping with their fears and anxieties: they engaged in group play, such as storytelling, puppet shows, drawing and painting, and even certain basic forms of "psychodrama". Most of the performances were spontaneous, and permeated by certain elements of "magic" (for example, by candlelight). These "grass-roots" events were widespread, especially in settlements under heavy and lasting military attack, and generally met with tremendous support from the audience, an audience sometimes as large as the entire neighbourhood.

Public librarians also made a hopeful discovery. (Public libraries throughout the country remained open even at times and under conditions when most other institutions, such as schools and theatres, were closed.) In many frontline cities, the public libraries became one of the "safest" places for children and adults to visit. As a result, library attendance gradually increased during the years of heaviest warfare. In Zagreb for instance, library visits doubled in the three years from 1991 to 1993. Refugees and displaced groups were specially targeted for open library programmes. A survey of refugees and displaced persons visiting libraries in Zagreb in 1992 (N=384) found that 50 per cent were children, 68 per cent

Zur4ANGLU.qxd 2001.04.13 16:59 Page 15

were females of different ages, and only 32 per cent were persons with a higher education. Most striking was the finding that only 11 per cent of all those surveyed claimed to be regular library patrons before the war, nor had they possessed a sizeable personal or family library at home (cf. Sabljak et al., 1992).

These observations together suggested that *bibliotherapy* might represent a powerful tool for helping large numbers of distressed children and young people, both in the midst of the war and long after. As early as autumn 1992, special methods and tools for bibliotherapy were implemented in our first-wave crisis intervention programmes on an experimental basis. Programme leaders reached out to some 45,000 school-age children in 28 public schools throughout Croatia (Barath et al, 1992; Kuterovec, 1993).

One year later, in the autumn of 1993, we launched the first fully-fledged bibliotherapy programme through a network of 45 public libraries across the country. This programme became known as the "UNICEF Library Programme for Croatia: Step by step to recovery" and it touched some 25,000 children between the ages of six and 16 (Barath, Matul, Sabljak, 1996). The programme was then extended across the border, to include work with mixed groups of refugee children and their teachers in Slovenia (Barath, Bukovec, 1996). To help in these efforts, in 1999 we published a handbook for public librarians, teachers and parents with the title *Step by step to children's rights: A handbook for creative encounters with children in public libraries* (Barath, Sabljak, Matul, 1999). This guide has now been distributed to over 1,000 major public libraries throughout Croatia and abroad (for example Hungary, BiH).

Aims and principles

The magic of the spoken or written literary word, either by itself or in combination with music and movement, represents perhaps the first "therapeutic" tool in the cultural history of mankind. The term "bibliotherapy" comes into popular use in the mid-1970s, when it first emerges in the context of contemporary mental health and self-help literature (Barath, 1979). The term covers the effective use of carefully selected and specially presented literary works, which are psychologically significant, and may help in the process of recovery from a psychic trauma.

Clinical psychologists argue that bibliotherapy may have several benefits: including (1) strengthening *self-identification*; (2) encouraging *projection* as a special process of (unconscious) confrontation with one's own attitudes and the reactions of others; (3) working through painful experiences via *catharsis*; and (4) helping to gain an *insight* into one's own problems.

Different methods and techniques of bibliotherapy were adopted in our psychosocial aid programmes as prevention-based crisis-intervention modalities. These included story

making, storytelling, reading special texts for relaxation and visualisation, poetry reading, animation and drama. Literary activities were consistently used in conjunction with other methods and forms of art activity, such as dance/movement, music, drawing and painting.

The aim of the programme was to teach schoolteachers, public librarians, psychologists and volunteering parents simple techniques of art therapy and bibliotherapy that they could use in their communication with children. To this end, we used a "teaching of teachers" model to disseminate information and basic skills that promote therapeutic group work; the information and skills were then adapted to local needs and circumstances. Our overarching goal was to make art therapy and bibliotherapy interventions open to a wide public, and enable communities to plan and sustain such programmes.

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Before turning to a description of the intervention programmes, a few methodological issues should be noted. First, all of our programmes belong in the realm of public health action research, and involved collaboration with local teachers, librarians, school psychologists, social workers and lay helpers (Stringer, 1996). Second, the programmes should be considered as an open-ended sequence of interventions, starting with early crisis (trauma-focusing) interventions, and moving towards the ultimate goal to promote children's rights (UNICEF, 1990). Third, all programmes consisted of a series of complex creativity workshops, each of which combined bibliotherapy with other approaches of contemporary art therapy (Klingman et al, 1989; Wadeson, Durkin, Perach, 1989). Fourth, the programmes were launched with deliberately prepared written instructions, educational materials for programme facilitators, and work materials for participants (Barath, 2000). Finally, parallel to programme implementation, a full series of both quantitative and qualitative evaluation research tools were developed and used in order to assess the programme's acceptability, applicability and effectiveness under different circumstances.

Programme description

The first crisis intervention programme "Images of my childhood …" was launched on an experimental basis, in late autumn of 1991 in 15 public schools in Zagreb, with the permission of the Ministry of Education of Croatia. The programme was purely voluntary on the part of local schoolteachers. One year later (1992/93), the programme was implemented in 28 pilot schools throughout the country as part of the UNICEF Psychosocial "School Programme" for Croatia (Stuvland, Barath, Kuterovec, 1993). Themes were attached to specific goals as indicated in Table 1.

The second programme, called "Step by step to recovery" (Barath, 1993–1994)©, grew out of the earlier effort, but was built upon the structure and tradition of the 12-step, self-help approaches to moral and spiritual recovery (Brende, 1991). With this particular programme we made two important innovations. First, we moved the site of programme implementation from the school to a network of some 45 public libraries across the country. This was done because the school curricula were overloaded and little time for children's art therapy activities was available. Second, thanks to this shift, we were able to develop a fully-fledged bibliotherapy programme using local library resources and involving local library workers. Known as the UNICEF "Library Programme" this second-wave intervention programme, launched in Croatia (1994–1995), spread to different sites in the former Yugoslavia and to other countries, including Kosovo (1999).

"Paths to the future", the third programme, was launched in our same network of public libraries in Croatia (1996–97), and paralleled a programme in refugee camps in Slovenia (see Table 3). Our goal, in this case, was to promote the development of specific cognitive and social skills in refugee children. The challenge was to broaden our programme to include Creative Problem Solving (Parnes, 1992).

Our most recent effort, the *Children's Rights Art Program (in progress since 1998),* addresses three concerns central to children from war-torn areas of Croatia and elsewhere (Table 4).

Table 1. Thematic flow and specific goals of the first crisis-intervention programme: "Images of my childhood" (Barath 1991–1992)©

Workshop No.	Central Topic	Specific Goals
1	MEMORIES: "The paths of my life"	To empower positive memories from pre-war times
2	SPACES: "Where am I, & how do I feel?"	To improve the sense of security in here-and-now situation
3	TIME: "What has happened to me since...?"	To normalise biased attributions to traumatic personal events
4	WAR: "What is the smell, touch, and colour of war...?"	To promote idiosyncratic (metaphoric) thinking about the war
5	FEAR: "What am I afraid of, & how do I cope with it?"	To promote body awareness & acquiring skills for stress reduction
6	MESSAGES: "My dove of peace"	To promote constructive feelings & the sense of community
7	WISHES: "If I had a magic wand..."	To promote creative imagery & self-empowerment

Table 2. Thematic flow and specific goals of the second-wave prevention pilot programme: "Step by step to recovery" (Barath, 1993–1994)©

Workshop No.	Central Topic	Specific Goals
1	POWER vs. POWERLESSNESS	To promote self-empowerment & self-control
2	MEANING vs. MEANINGLESSNESS	To promote active coping with mental confusion
3	TRUST vs. SHAME & DOUBT	Recovery from fear from unknown others
4	"GOOD" vs. "BAD" ME	To promote self-awareness & critical thinking
5	BENEVOLENCE vs. ANGER	To promote impulse-control (acting-out) in anger
6	SAFETY vs. FEAR	To promote active coping with anxiety & fear
7	INNOCENCE vs. GUILT	To promote early (healthy) moral reasoning
8	PLEASURE vs. PAIN & GRIEF	To promote subjective well-being in here-and-now situation
9	LIFE vs. DEATH	To promote positive thinking about losses
10	JUSTICE vs. REVENGE	To promote the sense for social justice
11	HOPE vs. HOPELESSNESS	Search for personal purposes & goals
12	LOVE vs. HATE	To promote the feeling of love & tolerance for other people

Table 3. Thematic flow and specific goals of the third-wave prevention programme: "Paths to the future" (Barath 1994–1995)©

Workshop No.	Central Topic	Specific Goals
1	PERCEPTIONS: "Order vs. Chaos"	To promote perceptive skills, including body awareness
2	FEELINGS: "Man vs. Machine"	To improve healthy emotional functioning
3	THINKING: "Know vs. Unknown"	To promote effective (integrative) thinking
4	IMAGERY: " Dream vs. Reality"	To improve mental skills for dream work
5	IDEATION: "Abundance vs. Poverty"	To improve mental skills for idea generation
6	CREATION: "Building vs. Destruction"	To promote sense & skills for creative work (effort)
7	EVALUATION: "Success vs. Failure"	To promote sense for value standards & active coping with "audience"
8	HELPING: "Me vs. You"/ "We" vs. "They"	To promote basic interpersonal & inter-group communication skills in creative problem solving

Table 4. Thematic flow and specific goals of a children's rights promotion program: *"Step by step to children's rights""* (Barath 1996-1997)©

Workshop No.	Central Topic	Specific Goals
1	DISCOVERING THE SCRIPT	To promote visual communication & sharing with children
2	CURIOSITY & PLAY	To promote skills for constructive play with children
3	THE CHILD'S "MAGIC WORLD"	To promote empathic feeling & understanding for children's imagination
4	THE ART OF READING	To promote comprehension of children's messages via artistic expression
5	THE ART OF STORYTELLING	To promote rhetoric & dramatization skills in storytelling
6	CHILDREN & THE MEDIA	To promote media awareness & mass communication focused on children's creative activities & products
7	CHILDREN FOR CHILDREN	To promote the basic values & skills for self help and mutual aid among children

Intervention Strategies

Training Seminars for Teachers & Librarians. From the beginning all programmes used basic principles and models of contemporary public health intervention at times of mass disasters, including the "teaching-of-teachers" paradigm. According to this model, a series of short-term training seminars was organised, first for local schoolteachers and health professionals, and later for local teams of public library workers. These seminars were designed to enable participants to carry out the specific intervention programmes on their own, under local conditions using local resources. Using experiential learning (Borkman, 1976) methods, facilitators themselves became active participants in all or some workshops before beginning

work with children. Since 1991, over one hundred "teaching-of-teachers" training seminars have been organised at different sites in Croatia, and in other parts of the former Yugoslavia.

Workshops. All programmes used the themes described above, both for trainers and in working with children. Each workshop lasted 120 minutes maximum, and was structured as follows:

1. Introductory games (greeting, warm-up exercise)	15 minutes
2. Short introduction to the main goals of the workshop	15 minutes
3. Technical preparation of materials & tools	15 minutes
4. Exposure to a selected series of art and/or literary works	15 minutes
5. Incubation time (relaxation & visualisation exercise)	15 minutes
6. Time for creative art & literary production	30 minutes
7. Wrapping-up exercise (sharing & evaluation)	15 minutes

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The workshops were run with classroom-size groups of participants, with 30 persons maximum. Workshop leaders were specially trained, advised and encouraged to use and combine as many art therapy techniques as was sensible and available, according to their own choice (Warren, 1993). However, they were required to use at least three broad classes of creative activities (Barath, Sabljak, Matul, 1998): (a) *Visual arts and craft activities,* including drawing and painting, sculpting, mask making; (b) *Bibliotherapy activities,* including storytelling and story writing, reading and elaboration of selected literary works, puppetry and drama play; and (c) *Music and movement therapy activities*, including both passive and active therapy techniques, according to the local resources available.

Structure of bibliotherapy activities. Workshop leaders were specially trained to structure their bibliotherapy work systematically.

Step 1:	Reading of the selected literary text.
Step 2:	Group-talk promoting the loose reconstruction of the "story".
Step 3:	Discovering the main patterns of emotional reactions of leading figures in the story, and elaboration on these discoveries.
Step 4:	Exploring the relevance of the story to their personal lives, sharing their own experiences.
Step 5a:	Searching for conclusions, proverbs, and general rules (for older children), or alternatively
Step 5b:	Asking for a piece of visual art production, a short written message, or an improvised drama play (applicable to all age groups).

Materials

By and large, volunteers produced materials for the programme, mainly from local resources. The only financial support for programme development in Croatia came from UNICEF, and covered only a fraction (some 5 per cent) of the total material and services costs. Materials needed to support the program included handbooks for facilitators, demonstration slides with famous works of art, and audio and video cassettes, as well as books for the bibliotherapy itself. (Barath, Matul, Sabljak, 1996a, 1996b; Barath, 1997; Barath, Sabljak, Matul, 1998).

Development of programme supplements

From the beginning, five basic principles guided the development of programme supplements:

1. Thematic selection: Group facilitators only provided suggested readings as part of the model exercise. Leaders were encouraged to develop their own "readings", according to local needs and cultures of programme beneficiaries.

2. Complex (multimedia) approaches to art therapy: All programme facilitators were encouraged to combine the traditional methods of "bibliotherapy" (mere "reading" of literary texts) with other modes of therapeutic communication, including story writing and storytelling, puppetry, drama and theatre.

3. Respect for age, gender and cultural differences: This concept was emphasised in all our "teaching-of-teachers" training seminars.

4. Using and mobilising local resources: Programme facilitators were empowered as they used their own intuition and built upon support from the local community.

5. Accountability and sustainability: We wanted to be more than just another, short-term (parachuting) psychosocial aid programme for children affected by war. Rather, we sought to be an integral part of a complex community effort that included the continuous development and transformation of local public libraries into one of the leading institutions in the maintenance and promotion of local culture and literary traditions.

The text below illustrates the kind of focused reading and/or story-telling materials used in particular workshops.

Text Box 1. Excerpt from a child's autobiographical sketch suggested for general use in workshops *MEMORIES: The Paths of my childhood … Croatia 1992–1993* (Baráth, 1994, p. 185)

"… First I should tell something about myself. My name is Anka D.,I was born 8 March 1983 in the hospital in Vukovar. I spent my childhood in Lovas, a village 20 kilometres from Vukovar. I grew up with my close family, my mother Vunka, born on 2 March 1963, in Vukovar, and my father Stipo, born in Lovas on 13 September 1958, my brother, born on 2 March 1985, and my father's parents … My love for my parents was a great success. Everything was all right until this merciless war came along. It chased me out of my village, destroyed all my good luck , and I lost my father. My mother used to see my father up till 14 October 1991. Then they (…) told us he'd been killed, on 28 December 1991. Mother, my brother, my father's parents, and I were forced to leave Lovas. Chased away and shamed. And that was the end of my childhood, on 29 December 1991. On that day, we all found ourselves chased and shamed, so we came to Zagreb…"

Anka D. (10), from Lovas

Similar life stories were combined and supplemented with related visual arts, readings and video materials, adjusted to age groups, as shown in the next table.

Programme evaluation

Both qualative and quantitative strategies were used for evaluation. Quantitative research tools were enlisted to check the effectiveness of programme interventions against standard psychometric criteria, such as traditional measures for *post-traumatic stress disorders* (PTSD). Virtually countless local, national and international exhibits of children's art work and literary meetings, among many other initiatives, provide sound qualitative data.

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Results

Quantitative evaluation studies were conducted parallel with programme implementation, at different sites and with different pilot samples of beneficiaries.

Table 5 presents the main evaluation scores of the first-wave crisis intervention programme in Croatia (1992–93) with a nationwide representative sample of elementary school-age children from both "high-risk" and "low-risk" areas, for the time being. The criterion measures presented below were set to psychometric diagnostic standards for PTSD (Stuvland, 1992).

The findings clearly show that this specific programme, in combination with other approaches (for example, individual counselling), produced relief in around one third (35 per cent) of children with initial high-level PTSD scores.

The next table (Table 6) shows the main findings of another kind of evaluation research, a semantic analysis of children's visual art productions across the seven workshops of the first-wave crisis intervention programme.

The *catharsis* we predicted became evident in children's art productions. As the programme continued, their work became progressively loaded with trauma symbols, even as the political picture brightened. Our statistics clearly suggest that the load of children's art work with clinically significant visual signs and symbols changed during the course of the programme, reflecting an

Table 5. Population rates of children (N=5,628) with high vs. low PTSD scores before (T1) and after (T2) the application of the first-wave art and bibliotherapy-crisis intervention programme in Croatia (1992–1993)

Criterion groups in follow up	Population rates (%)	Tests on change		Signif. (p)
		D-score	t-test	
High PTSD-Intrusion scores before (T1)	27.1			
High PTSD-Intrusion scores after (T2)	17.4			
Change*		-35.8	23.7	0.001
High PTSD-Avoidance scores before (T1)	20.5			
High PTSD-Avoidance scores after (T2)	16.4			
Change*		-20.0	14.7	0.001
Low PTSD-Intrusion Scores before (T1)	9.7			
Low PTSD-Intrusion scores after (T2)	8.2			
Change*		-15.5	10.3	0.001
Low PTSD-Avoidance score before (T1)	11.3			
Low PTSD-Avoidance score after (T2)	12.7			
Change*		+12.4	6.0	0.001

* Change scores (D) calculated according to formula:
((Rates after T2) – (Rates beforeT1)/Rates beforeT1))

Table 6. Frequency distribution of trauma symbols and teachers' average Semantic Differential (SD) ratings of children's drawings from the first-wave crisis intervention art and bibliotherapy workshops (3,710 rated art works, 1992–1994)

Workshops	Trauma Symbols (av. frequency)	SD-measures (in z-scores)		
		Evaluation	Potency	Activity
1. MEMORIES	4.76	0.37	0.54	0.35
2. SPACES	5.47	0.13	-0.27	-0.05
3. TIME	5.48	0.29	-1.37	-0.06
4. WAR	7.19	0.55	-2.11	-0.09
5. FEAR	7.19	0.52	-2.12	-0.09
6. MESSAGES	3.87	0.85	1.29	0.74
7. WISHES	4.17	0.58	1.32	0.53

inverted U-shaped "cathartic" learning curve of aesthetic expression. Regarding SD-factor scores, the programme has proven its effectiveness on all three criterion scales of connotative meaning, as children's art productions again filled with the more positive emotions of self-empowerment, and active coping.

The next two statistical tables (7a, 7b) show the effectiveness of the second-wave intervention programme, at two different sites of implementation, i.e. in Croatia and Slovenia.

By far the best gains were recorded in the Croatian study sample on the criterion scales of coping with Hopelessness, Guilt, and Meaninglessness, while virtually no improvement was recorded in the series of other criterion measures focusing on Anxiety, Distrust, Revenge, Death and Hate, as psychological constructs. The Slovenian pilot study recorded more positive results. In

Table 7a. Summary evaluation scores on the effectiveness of the second-wave art therapy programme with representative samples of school-age children in ten frontline cities in Croatia (1994–95) (N=3,000)

PTSD-12 Scales	Mean scores/therapy Before (T1)	After (T2)	Tests on change: (t-test)	(p)
1. Powerlessness	3.72	2.45	3.14	0.00
2. Meaninglessness	3.52	2.68	2.11	0.04
3. Distrust in others	2.37	2.25	0.28	0.77
4. Self-blame	2.82	2.25	1.42	0.16
5. Anger	2.95	2.72	0.52	0.61
6. Anxiety/fear	3.05	2.55	1.54	0.13
7. Guilt feeling	2.30	1.45	2.75	0.00
8. Grief	2.57	1.65	2.66	0.01
9. Death concern	1.02	1.15	-0.44	0.66
10. Revenge	4.25	3.6	1.49	0.14
11. Hopelessness	2.55	1.22	4.17	0.00
12. Hate	2.85	2.62	0.72	0.48
TOTAL PTSD-12	34.12 ›	27.1	2.94	.005

Table 7b. Summary evaluation scores on the effectiveness of the second-wave art therapy programme with mixed Bosnian refugee and domicile groups of children and adults in Novo Mesto (Slovenia, 1994–95) (N=153)

PTSD-12 Scales	Mean scores/therapy Before (T1)	After (T2)	Tests on change: (t-test)	(p)
1. Powerlessness	3.81	2.60	5.82	0.00
2. Meaninglessness	4.83	3.08	5.46	0.00
3. Distrust in others	3.70	2.83	3.34	0.00
4. Self-blame	3.45	2.94	2.00	0.00
5. Anger	4.30	3.66	2.22	0.00
6. Anxiety/fear	3.81	3.02	3.64	0.00
7. Guilt feeling	3.00	2.49	1.91	0.05
8. Grief	3.38	2.13	5.88	0.00
9. Death concern	3.11	2.36	3.45	0.00
10. Revenge	3.64	2.83	3.41	0.00
11. Hopelessness	3.64	2.60	4.93	0.00
12. Hate	4.31	3.06	4.73	0.00
TOTAL PTSD-12	40.45 ›	28.44	6.97	.00

this case, virtually all age groups (from six to 60 years of age) were invited to participate in and benefited from the programme and a positive change on all 12 criterion scales at the level of statistical significance ($p < 0,05$) was evident.

Qualitative results

For the purpose of this case report, the following major qualitative results deserve special attention:

- **Children's Art Work and Poetry:** An immense number of children's creative productions in fine art & poetry demonstrated the programme's impact both on themselves and those close to them (Pintaric, 1992; Matul, 1992–1993, 1993–1994). The collection of art works (drawings, paintings, sculptures) consists of several hundred thousand items, the majority of which are stored and catalogued at two sites: (a) at the City Libraries of Zagreb, and (b) at the Association for Developing Voluntary Work, Novo Mesto (Slovenia). One of the most famous collections of children's art work from the midst of the war in Croatia (1991–1992) has been relocated to the USA, and since 1995 stored in Tampa, Florida, Tampa University College of Arts and Humanities, Museum of Arts.

• **Drama work:** One of the most outstanding achievements of the entire programme was the introduction of various means and methods of story making and storytelling, in the combination of therapeutic drama plays, psychodrama, sociodrama, and a wide use of "play-back theatre" techniques. Participants were provided with the opportunity not only to improve their own competence for multicultural communication via role playing, but also to express their own personal emotional and moral injuries in a safe environment. Two scripts were drawn from children's improvised drama productions, both with Bosnian refugee children to Slovenia. One was called *Steps - from powerlessness to love: A drama in twelve pictures* (Barath, 1995)©. The other script was called *Fear in us, and how to cope with it ...* (Barath, 1996)©. The first play was based on a real-life story of unaccompanied refugee children from Bosnia who not only faced the horrors of war, but also faced growing up in an imaginary foreign country and totally alien culture. The second play was based on a rather simple story of a group of gipsy children who got lost in the forest while searching for one of the most valuable belongings of the entire community, a beautiful white horse. They find help from an old gipsy hermit, who teaches them old folk songs as a message for the lost horse. The first piece was actually put on stage by a mixed group of programme participants, with its premiere theatre performance in Novo Mesto, on 26 May 1995. Since then, the drama has gained an extraordinary popularity, both on national and international levels, with over 40 performances on different stages in Slovenia, Italy, Austria, and elsewhere.

• **Impact on local voluntary sector.** From the beginning, the programmes were accepted and regarded both by the nonprofit sector and local government at virtually all sites of their implementation. To this end there was the mobilisation of a great many local and national voluntary organisations, which gave grassroots assistance to this uncommonly innovative community development project. In Slovenia, for example, the project gave birth to the establishment of a unique local voluntary youth organisation, called Lastovke© (Swallows), which brings together participants from across different age, gender and ethnic backgrounds and current residential status (Barath, 2000).

• **Impact on library work.** As far as Croatia is concerned, the impact of this project may be most visible in the transformation (paradigm shift) of the entire institutional system of public libraries from mere "service-like" day-to-day activities towards community action. This particular project helped a great many local libraries to become central institutions for creative encounters between children, young people and their teachers in their free time. They became open places for children's art exhibits all the year round. They became places for improvised plays, recitals and concerts, by and for children; and, most important, safe places to play.

Discussion

Wide-ranging, public health oriented art-therapy programmes are badly needed to help children cope in creative and meaningful ways with violence, military conflict, and related ethnic animosities. This call has been echoed, in the last ten years, by a great many leading mental health professionals and specialists in trauma psychology (McIntyre, Krippner, 2000).

We know that the fate of rhetoric is often tied to political and cultural shifts

In the very broad range of "creative therapies" (Warren, 1993), methods and special techniques of bibliotherapy may deserve special attention, from both a theoretical and a practical point of view. First, storytelling and story making surely represent one of the oldest fabrics of our lives. "Good stories", like our dreams, are rich in symbolic imagery and enable us to address, highlight and control personal experiences and unconscious "truths". Second, bibliotherapy is the only psychological tool that promotes "reading". It also promotes the process of problem finding (detection) and problem solving (discovery) in the landscape of shared cultural experience (Halasz, 1983). Last but not least, bibliotherapy seems to be an extraordinarily powerful tool for promoting cross-cultural

communication between persons and groups who share traumatic experiences, but who are unable to express themselves directly, in "their own words", in a creative and meaningful way (Hasz, 1995)

In this paper, four grass-roots art therapy programmes have been described. The significance of these and all other programmes like them should be evaluated according to five criteria: (a) originality and flexibility; (b) acceptability; (c) applicability-replicability; (d) effectiveness; and (e) productivity.

Regarding innovation, our first pilot programmes asked for fundamental changes in the entire system of elementary school education, to make more room for children's artistic and literary activities both in the school and in the community. When this goal appeared largely unacceptable, a radical shift in program development was made. Instead of local public schools, the public libraries were appointed to become the site of art therapy interventions and communication with children of all ages.

At present, the basic aims and methods of our "library" are popular both among library workers and among schoolteachers in Croatia.

We know that the fate of rhetoric is often tied to political and cultural shifts

As far as the effectiveness of our efforts is concerned, we feel safe both with the quantitative and qualitative evaluation scores gained so far with our model programmes. Further research seems badly needed to discern the specific effects of the bibliotherapy approach in treating childhood trauma, either due to war or other acts of violence against children (James, 1989).

Conclusions and recommendations

(a) Organised art and bibliotherapy activities with children, both during and after war operations, appear to be therapeutically useful and socially acceptable to children and their caretakers.

(b) Large numbers of library workers may be mobilised and trained in a relatively short time, for an integrative and effective use of creative therapies as tools for communication, education and for helping large numbers of distressed children at a time of disaster.

(c) Care should be taken in the planning and large-scale management of similar psychosocial aid programmes in order to prevent their early marginalisation by both governmental and political authorities and by the public at large.

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Zur4ANGLU.qxd 2001.04.13 16:59 Page 25

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Zur4ANGLU.qxd 2001.04.13 16:59 Page 26

Lessons

Reading, Writing, Critical Thinking and Elephants

Constructing Meaning through Text

Ondrej Hausenblas

In the schools of the Czech Republic the analysis and interpretation of text, both literary and non-fiction, is generally realised through individual reading or research, rather than through a group process of discussion and negotiation.

In this situation, the "meaning" of a text is usually considered as something definite, an opinion stated by literary experts or by textbook authors. Possible differences in understanding and interpretation offered by students are often considered an unwelcome diversion from the "official" meaning.

Early in their schooling, even in the primary grades, students lose their independence and the will to make the meaning their own and to share their opinions with others. They are seldom asked about their own experiences with the text; nor are they encouraged to compare their interpretations. Questions set by teachers are usually designed more for control of basic comprehension of content rather than for steering students to find their own interpretation.

To decide on appropriate methods of instruction to be used in classrooms for older students, we need to focus first on what model of literary discourse the children usually experience in the first six grades of school. To this end, teachers might ask themselves the following questions:

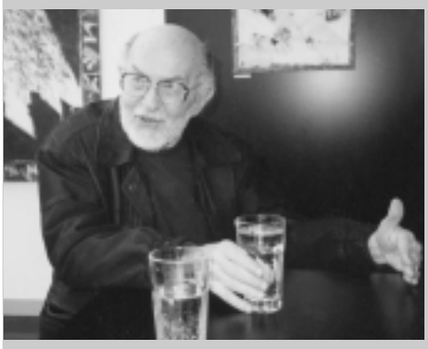
1. Have the students in grades 1-6 inferred from the teachers' attitudes that to find a definite "right" interpretation is the goal of reading lessons? Or, conversely, **did they learn that the goal of instruction is to enjoy reading and to share their impressions?**

2. Where does the notion of the "right meaning" come from? Do the children learn to seek a consensus about the meaning? **Is diversity of opinion tolerated or encouraged?** Or is the correct meaning discovered in full only by the teacher's final interpretation?

3. **How does the teacher help those students who lack a reading background?** Do they get special coaching in their individual attempts to get into a poem or a story?

4. Do the students get enough time to struggle and negotiate the interpretation of

Coffee with Macourek



In March 2000, Ondrej Hausenblas, Pat Bloem and a few friends met and interviewed the Czech children's author and scriptwriter Milos Macourek.

This urbane, chain-smoking writer talked about his long career, and his signature Max and Sally stories. Children love the hilarious Max and Sally, two third-grade rapscallions who, with the help of their magic telephone, get in and out of countless scrapes.

Macourek's style is marked by long, conversational sentences, "like the flow of a river, with no stops," Macourek explains. "My granny told folk tales in that style."

As a boy, he lived with his grandmother in Kromeriz, taking daily walks through the serene palace park, past peacocks, swans and goldfish. Coming home, he'd discover another fantasy world through her stories.

The world Macourek now creates in his children's books is more zany than serene, but through his words our own world becomes a more humane place.

Zur4ANGLU.qxd 2001.04.13 16:59 Page 27

a text? **Is there enough time for individual reflection and the exchange of ideas?**

Our teachers traditionally spend considerable time and energy teaching students the definitions and examples of well-established poetic forms, like metaphor, repetition and gradation. Far fewer let the students identify these specific forms in the text; and even fewer teachers ask students to infer, connect and generalise from these formal structures to the overall character of the particular text. And in none of these methods do we specifically seek to enhance the reader's experience and joy of reading.

We need strategies that work both for the class and for the individual, strategies that encourage interpretation, but also allow students to build with and on another reader's interpretations. **Students need opportunities to experience how their personal understanding of the meaning of a text is created, how their understanding develops, and how it differs from or agrees with other readers' views and understanding.** They also need opportunities to realise how cultural attitudes are related to reading.

Let us therefore look at interpretation as a collective process. The investigative approach of the students to text, their questioning of a text, their experience with a text, and their agreement about possible interpretations should be generated from their curiosity and their need to share their understanding and feelings with others. Such efforts are further enhanced by their attempts to express their own stories or emotions in writing.

Let's look at what this notion of negotiated or constructed meaning might look like in practice. I offer here some concrete ways of working with a group of students in middle school (from 12 to 16 years old).

The selected text, written by a popular children's book and screenplay writer, Milos Macourek, is short; and its structure is both familiar and apparent. However, the content of the text is not trivial. On the contrary, under the pretext of being a fable, which appears to address a child reader, there is a profound and perhaps troubling real-life experience.

The construction of the text enables the reader to interpret this experience, thanks to tangible but not stereotype expressive forms and elements.

To what extent can a child and an adult reader understand the wisdom of this mod-

From *Laska a delove koule* by Milos Macourek. Reprinted with permission of Amulet publishers, Prague, Czech Republic. Roman numerals have been added at the ends of the main parts for later work with the text in class.

The Elephant

Quite small ears are no use: someone with small ears can hardly hear anything and never even knows whether or not his wristwatch is still working. However, ears that are too big are also a nuisance. Elephants have huge ears, and you have no idea how much they suffer. (I)

When elephants are still small, their ears are about as big as yours. They can hear a train whistling in the distance and a bumblebee flying around. They hear birds singing and rain pattering down; they can hear everything, and they do not find this anything special. Actually, what is so special about it?

Nevertheless, as elephants grow up, their ears get bigger and bigger, and they can hear more and more. They enjoy it at the beginning, and they say to each other, did you hear that plaster flaking off the wall? Where could it be, there are no walls around here?

But they keep growing. Their ears begin to resemble small town squares, and they can hear so many things that it is not possible to count them. (II)

Two big elephants are walking in tall grass; there is nothing moving for as far as the eye can see. A small elephant might say that everything is completely silent, but the two big elephants can hear the noise of a lift, and shouting in a corridor, loud radios, crockery being broken, crying and reproaches, a door slamming, a baby crying, swearing, gunshots, and an ambulance wailing; they can hear everything on their walk through the tall grass, where nothing moves as far as the eye can see.

They would like to have a chat, these two elephants, but they cannot; they cannot hear what the other is saying, and they cannot bear this, and they run to get some cotton wool to put in their ears; but where can you get enough cotton wool for such enormous ears? There are too many elephants, and there is too little cotton wool in the world - we would have to produce only cotton wool in order to satisfy all the elephants - and the elephants, the older they grow, the more furious they become; I would not want you to meet a furious old elephant. You can recognise him from far off; he runs through tall grass, because he thinks he can escape the sound; and then he realises that there is no way he can, and he starts trumpeting with his trunk in the air, making a big noise in order to interrupt what he cannot bear to listen to, at least for a short while. (III)

At this moment the big elephants wish they were small, which the small elephants will never understand. (IV)

ern "fable"? Is the message a sad one? Is it about resignation? Hope? Is it really, after all, a children's story or an adult piece? It is a pity that we - readers of this magazine - cannot share our views and answers immediately. But a class of students can.

How is it that a parent's and a child's understanding of such a story at bedtime might differ so radically? How diverse might be the understandings of students of different ages, and how similar or dissimilar might be the interpretations within one classroom? What questions about such a text could help the child and the student to find the text more interesting?

We know that the fate of rhetoric is often tied to political and cultural shifts

It would seem that to elicit those understandings a teacher might well choose a direct approach, i.e. to ask open-ended questions of a higher order. But in literary discussion one seeks more than content-based questions and responses. The meaning of the story develops throughout the text in a specific way. There are certain clues in the text that help the reader to create meaning by herself/himself. As teachers, we want children to be able to find those clues, and to learn how to look for them. Sharing their findings can help students to create the meaning for themselves. What kinds of questions help students locate key words, sentences and means of expression?

For work with the text, we prefer procedures that suppose that readers – the students – themselves find the answers to questions posed by the teacher. **We seek questions that invite readers to check the validity of their answers and interpretations through comparison and exchange.** If we want students to engage in meaningful dialogue, it is essential that the teacher resist the urge to check or supplement answers, and that she understand her position as a facilitator, who assists the students in gaining knowledge through reading, analysis and discussion. The questions posed by the teacher serve not only to bring the readers nearer to finding their own evolving understanding of the text, but also to model the discourse known as literary conversation. In this sense, it is of the utmost importance that students are invited to add their own questions when they arise.

We take care that the basic types of activities respect the ERR framework. It is important that students have the opportunity to find, share and discuss their expectations. Then we offer tasks focused directly on reading the text. For reflection, we use a method of free writing that encourages students to combine their previous experiences with the experience and knowledge gained through engagement in this text. We work according to a **guided reading method**, where the passages from the text are read one after another (see roman numerals in the text).

Our experience in Czech schools suggests that it is important that the teacher does not judge whether particular images, questions, and opinions are appropriate and correct. Moreover, it is essential that he or she does not force children to accept what they "should have known for a long time", what is "right", or what they should think. **Children should be given enough space and confidence so that they feel free to think and express themselves.** During the stage of individual as well as common reflection, the teacher should refrain from summarising the meaning of the text on the children's behalf, or stating what has been achieved. Such a summary, because of the teacher's authority, is likely to be seen as the hallmark of "correctness" and the value of the children's own judgements is likely to be lost. The students must also be sure that in this kind of interpretative work there will be no "bad marks".

We offer here far more tasks than it is possible to do in, say, two lessons; the teacher can select, depending on the number of students and amount of time given, or distribute the tasks among groups of students. However, it is vital that the lesson contains a wide variety of tasks.

The lesson: An example

Introduction

The teacher announces that we are going to read a fable about elephants. Think now, before reading the fable, about the characteristics of the elephant – what people think of them or say about them, about the circumstances of elephants' lives – and try to predict what the moral of this fable about elephants might be.

Free writing and sharing for evocation

1. Have students write for approximately seven minutes about "What moral the elephant fable might offer us". They might start with the sentence: "I think that the moral of the fable will be ..."

2. When finished, they share their predictions with a partner.

Commentary

The children will probably think of the strength of the elephant or of his long life. The connection between the big ears and the capacity to hear unwanted evidence about the sadness of people's lives, is Macourek's invention. The moral of the story challenges readers to reflect on the difference between traditional and modern genres and of the explicit and the implicit in literature.

Directed reading for the realisation of meaning

The first part of the text is distributed.

Students read and reflect on Part I of the text. They write answers to each of the following questions, and then the answers are put into a chart on the blackboard:

3. What stance is the author taking in the narration? Is he talking as a real storyteller, or as someone who is chatting with us, or as a biologist who values scientific precision, or as someone completely different? Which words and sentences from the text tell us this?

For example, one girl wrote: "A real storyteller would have probably started with words like 'Once upon a time ...'."

The teacher writes the students' answers on the chart. (Fig 1)

Commentary

Macourek´s sentences are long and show little variation in syntax; they are similar to speech. The personal and engaged tone at the beginning of the story can at first be interpreted as a means of establishing an adult-child discourse, or as fairy-tale narration etc. As we read on, however, the tone takes on an adult meaning when we consider what is said about life.

4. Try to predict what will come next, what the author will say. Write your prediction down in the form of brief notes on your paper.

The second part of the text is distributed.

5. When you read Part II, try to imagine what you can hear in it, what you smell, and how you feel.

6. What did you hear and smell, and how did you feel?

7. Have your predictions about the continuation of the fable come true?

8. What audience was the fable written for? How can you tell? Write it down. (Fig 2)

9. Try to predict what will happen next. (We can tell you that the whole fable can fit on one page.) Try to give reasons for your version of the continuation – which words or moments in the text give you clues?

Commentary

It is mainly hearing that is addressed in this part. The point is that the text uses words about sounds. Finding the way the message is delivered is an important experience for students seeking to develop their own writing.

The third part of the text is distributed.

When you read the first paragraph in Part III, try to visualise what you are reading as if it was a film …

Read the questions afterwards:

10. Did Macourek surprise you, or did you anticipate his next move?

11. Which point in the text did you find most "film-like"? From which passage might you make an exciting film? Why do you think so? How did the author present that moment?

Commentary

The author led us into the problems and accidents of human life. But his text still focuses entirely on hearing. We strongly infer the tragedy, even reconstruct the place – this quality of the description can be revealed by comparing it to a film sequence.

12. What has changed during the three sections that we have read? The easiest change to find is: ***small elephants ⇨ adult elephants***

We know that the fate of rhetoric is often tied to political and cultural shifts

Zur4ANGLU.qxd 2001.04.13 16:59 Page 30

Write down as many pairs like this one as possible.

Students share their findings.

13. Which changes do you find important, and what is their purpose in the text? For example: ***the "small ears–big ears" difference shows us the difference between "hearing a little–hearing a lot".*** (Fig 3)

Commentary

As the reader becomes more adept at grasping the way the author works with conventions, she/he also becomes more able to note the change in perspective, from a childish to an adult approach to life. For the students the adult perspective may remain distant; but finally, through the last part of the text, they see it. Where in a fable the moral usually stands, we focus our attention on the strong statement the author has made.

14. In Part IV the author concludes the story in one sentence. Before we read the conclusion, try to write a brief and wise ending for the short story. Then we will compare it with the one created by Macourek.

The fourth part of the text is distributed. In Part IV we will read how Miloš Macourek concluded his story.

15. Was the end of the fable predictable or surprising? Was your expectation about the moral of the fable (from the first task) met?

16. What was the fable about?

17. Was the fable meant primarily for children or for adults? Tell each other why you think so. Was it really a fable? Try to remember or have a look at your answer to question No 8.

A student in another class wrote:

"First it seemed to me that it was for small children because there are small elephants in it; but now I think that it is meant for adults."

Do you agree with him? Why?

18. Try to suggest a possible title for the fable. Everyone, try to think of a suitable title. Then we will put them into the chart. (Fig 4)

19. What style does the author use for his writing? Try to make a short description of the style of each of the parts of the text (I–IV) and put it down in Fig 5. For example for Part I: ***"ordinary, relaxed conversation".***

Then you can put the descriptions together and compare them.

Commentary

This set of questions also helps students to notice the previous steps and reflect on their previous thoughts about the meaning of the story. (In this respect the task is partly Reflection.)

We know that the fate of rhetoric is often tied to political and cultural shifts

Tasks for reflection

20. Free writing:

Take a sheet of paper and a pencil, and in ten minutes each write a short statement about what you could do in order to alleviate the suffering of big elephants.

Possibilities for presenting student work.

Students create an exhibition of their writing on "How I liked the elephant lesson and what ideas about the fable came to me". In it they can add pictures of elephants and the charts that have been filled in together during the lesson.

Conclusion

A literary work has an immediate meaning. Each time a text is read, from the very moment it is written, its meaning may change. The meaning that the reader is able to find in the text depends not only on his/her reading and experience, but also on the historical, cultural and social situation of the moment. The school should acknowledge that texts are not immutable, and recognise how **meaning is created at the very moment of reading.**

Moreover, we as teachers should master methods that will enable readers to reflect clearly on their own sometimes fragile and gradually built understandings. Even the history of literature is more than the study of fact. We seek schools where instruction in cultivated reading will reign. The change we promote should be based not only on priorities in education, but also on an understanding of the processes of reading and the qualities of readership.

Charts for the tasks

Fig 1. What stance is the author taking? (Question 3)

Narrator	Which words tell us this?	Somebody who is chatting with us	Which words tell us this?
Biologist	Which words tell us this?	Someone else	Which words tell us this?

Fig 2. What audiences is he writing for? How can you tell? (Question 8)

Fig 3. Important changes and their purpose? (Question 13)

1.	4.
2.	5.
3.	6.

Fig 4. What other titles could the fable have? (Question 18)

1.	4.
2.	5.
3.	6.

Fig 5. In what style are the particular parts of the text written? (Question 19)

Part I	Part III
Part II	Part IV

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Zur4ANGLU.qxd 2001.04.13 16:59 Page 32

Lessons

Writing Reproductions

Anara Alimbekova

This article by Anara Alimbekova, which was first published in the journal *Russian Language and Literature in Schools in Kyrgyzstan* , was received enthusiastically by teachers seeking new directions in education. The article is reprinted here in a slightly abridged form.

In order to develop language fluency, students are taught to summarise and retell what they have read. According to widely accepted methodological principles, these "reproductions" enable students to present their ideas using standard forms, to enrich their vocabulary, promote the development of logical thinking and curiosity, widen their horizons, teach them to work independently and help them to overcome learning difficulties.

These reproductions are undoubtedly of great importance, as they help learners develop skills. Why then are students so unenthusiastic about this work?

"Why do most students hate writing reproductions?" This is the question I asked myself every time I began preparing for a speech development lesson. The answer was clear: school reproductions are boring, and students feel that they are being asked to clone someone else's ideas.

The task varies very little: restate the text briefly, in detail, or in part … but essentially the task remains the same: students are asked to reiterate *somebody else's* ideas, find the main emphasis in somebody else's text, restate someone else's plan. In other words, we ask them to follow the already developed logic, and simply follow the teacher's instructions. No creativity, no imagination. What a bore!

Let us take a closer look at the teaching methods associated with these reproductions. Perhaps the basic idea is not so bad, and we should not dismiss it altogether. Perhaps these older methods can be combined with new strategies. In so doing, perhaps these lessons will be lively and interesting to all students, and not only, as is usually the case, to those who are the most patient and diligent.

When using directed reading strategies in my literature classes, I noticed that children were inspired by tasks such as taking part in the lives of the characters, imagining themselves in the place of either good or bad characters, describing their feelings, and their inner and outer selves. My students thought of themselves as the writers' co-authors, they became stimulated in their reading activity, their attention, and in their reflections.

And after such lessons, it occurred to me: "Why don't I try to promote this same kind of involvement when students write reproductions? If they become co-authors," I reasoned, "not a single student should remain an indifferent outsider. My goal will be to help them realize the meaning of the text in the context of their own ideas." It was in this way that the idea of the strategy I call "directed reproduction" was born.

While preparing the directed reproduction lesson, designed to increase fluency, the teacher subdivides the text into parts (and marks "stops"). Using Benjamin Bloom's system of cognition skills, questions are then assigned to each part. The questions should be largely conceptual, in order to stimulate student thinking, and should foster synthesis, analysis, understanding, application and evaluation.

Experience suggests that the questions the teacher has identified are not always the ones that are most the productive. Sometimes student inquiries actually determine the course of the lesson, since student ideas are less constrained and sometimes more original. In other words, teachers should improvise when the need arises, and look for opportunities to let the students lead.

Before offering students such a lesson, it is important to create a special atmosphere, to

Zur4ANGLU.qxd 2001.04.13 16:59 Page 33

fill the classroom with inspiration and trust. To promote this atmosphere, teachers, together with the children, develop "golden rules" for promoting active work in our lessons. The rules are as follows:

- participate actively in all kinds of work;
- listen to each other without interrupting;
- never laugh at each other;
- be tolerant and patient;
- respect different opinions.

I remember the day I first entered the class, inspired by this new idea of mine and announced: "Reproduction".

My students groaned. I looked out upon a sea of frustrated, disappointed faces and heard them say: "Do we really have to?"

But as soon as I began the lesson the atmosphere in the classroom changed: the children participated, their eyes sparkled, they became deeply engrossed in what was going on. That lesson, as well as those that followed, proved to be a great success. The students were delighted. Now they even look forward to the next reproduction.

You don't believe it? Well … try it and see for yourselves!

Here is an example of a "directed reproduction" for the ninth grade. It is based on the text: "Fight at Sea" (after Tatyana Tess). The style of the text is narrative: it contains elements of speculation and description. I have split the text into parts, so that there are several "stops". The questions were compiled in advance.

At the beginning of the lesson, I read the title of the text and asked: "How do you understand the word 'fight'? Can you think of any synonyms?"

The children answered with various words: struggle, battle, brawl, quarrel, attack, duel. Each wrote his/her ideas on a sheet of paper.

Then I read the title once again, "Fight at Sea", and asked: "What might this text be about? And the children answered: "A fight between man and nature," "A battle between ships," "A fight between sea animals," "The struggle of the sea against human beings," "A fisherman may fight with a fish," "A Fight with pirates," "A battle between submarines," "A fight against sharks". When the students began repeating answers, we stopped the process of guessing and sharing.

Now it was time to listen to the beginning of the text. I read:

It was the first voyage of Alexander Kotlyarov as captain, the first voyage he had undertaken since being made captain of the tanker *Rostov*. His first voyage across the Black Sea, calm and kind, breathing summer warmth, sparkling with mighty azure.

The children listened attentively, expecting to find evidence to confirm their ideas. Having reached the first stop, I asked my questions. From this point on our conversation followed a regular pattern: teacher's question – paired discussion – taking notes on paper – group discussion.

- What does the captain of the tanker look like? In pairs, discuss his appearance. Put your opinion down on your piece of paper. Discuss your answers with your group. ("Young, slender, bearded," "Tall, bulky, strong," "Powerful, fair-haired, strong.")
- What did the sea look like? ("The Black Sea was calm and quiet," "Kind and azure," "Peaceful, quiet, powerful.")
- Who can explain the meaning of the word "tanker"? ("A tanker is a cargo ship

for carrying oil products." "Not only oil products but dry cargo as well.") The teacher produces the correct version: a tanker is a ship designed for transporting liquid cargo without special packing.

• What title can we give to this part of the text? Have we learned anything important from it? (Having discussed the title in pairs, each student has to write down his/her own version; then we discuss their answers with the whole group, getting versions such as: "The first voyage," "A young captain," "Captain Alexander Kotlyarov's first voyage".) The teacher should not write anything on the blackboard; otherwise students may simply use her model, and little independent, creative work will result. My goal is to have the students rely less on the teacher, and more on their own decisions.

• Can you predict what will happen next? ("It is quite difficult but I guess something is bound to happen as it is his first voyage." "The tanker will be attacked by pirates." "There will be a storm." "The tanker will run out of control." "A storm is sure to break out.")

• Then I ask an additional question: "Who knows, or thinks he knows, how ships and boats depart from a port?" ("They weigh anchor and get under way." "They cast off.")

I continued reading until the second stop.

Then the first bell rang out from the foredeck: it meant that the anchor lying deep on the bottom had just been dug out. Then came the second bell: the anchor had left the bottom. It was being hauled out now; and the moment it emerged from the water the third bell would ring out. But all of a sudden there was complete silence. No bell.

I continued talking with the students.

• Why didn't the bell ring a third time? What has happened? ("There was an accident." "Something has gone wrong with the captain, he may have fallen ill or got too excited." "The anchor has dropped back down on to the bottom.")

• Let us write a possible title for this paragraph. ("Moment of expectation," "Getting ready for departure," "The bell is silent.")

I went on reading until the third stop.

The captain waited. But no, the bell was silent. The pause seemed endless. At last the third mate's voice could be heard. The voice was hoarse; the captain heard strange, new tones in it. The third mate reported: "The anchor is not free. There is an object on it." The anchor had already emerged from the water, and was now hanging like a huge lobster. The object clinging to it was threateningly familiar. The captain recognised the shape: round, rapacious, full of hidden, evil power …

• What could it be, clinging to the anchor? ("An octopus," "A shark," "A monster," "A mine," "A sea animal," "A bomb," "A squid.")

• What title would you give this paragraph? ("The anchor is not free," "A terrible find," "There is an object on the anchor," "The mate is confused.")

We went on reading to the fourth stop.

There was an aviation bomb hanging from the anchor fluke. In deep thought, the captain looked at its black fins. His tanker had just taken on board thousands of tonnes of petrol. The captain was thinking not only of his ship but also of all the other tankers full of petrol and oil which were docked around them.

The captain went over to the telephone. He had to let the port authorities know what had happened. He picked up the receiver. "How long would it take the bomb disposal squad to come over?" The bomb could explode any minute. Who could predict when an animal would show its fangs? The captain looked at the shore.

And the longer he looked at the peaceful scene, at the boats moored in the port and the carefree people waiting on the quay, the clearer became the decision that was taking shape in his head.

• Describe the object hanging from the anchor. ("Big," "Terrible," "Rapacious," "Malicious," "Full of hidden power," "With black fins," "Barbed," "With hidden wickedness.")

• What will the captain do? ("He will take his ship out to sea, farther from the shore." "He will drop the bomb into the sea and let it sink." "He will unfasten the anchor chain." "He will go out to sea and wait for the bomb disposal squad there." "He will go out to sea and make the bomb harmless.")

We went on reading.

He decided not to wait for the bomb disposal squad from Sevastopol, and instead to leave the port immediately. He would go out to sea, and try to sink the bomb in the open waters.

The tanker went out several miles from the shore. The captain gave the order to

lower the chain gradually, so that the bomb would slowly go below the surface. And then he gave the order to go into reverse. He hoped that the strong current created, once the anchor reached it, would push the bomb away.

And again they started hauling out the anchor. But again the sailors saw the evil face of the bomb appearing from behind the anchor fluke. The guest from the dark did not want to leave.

I asked a question aimed at enriching the students' vocabulary.

- What names does the author give to the bomb? ("The guest from the dark," "The bomb with an evil face.")
- What title would you give the passage? ("Unsuccessful attempt," "The captain's plan," "The guest from the dark does not want to leave.")
- What do you think might happen next? ("The captain will go on trying." "He will cut the anchor chain." "He will tell the crew to leave the ship and stay on board alone." "He will try again." "He will order the crew to get into the lifeboats and will stay to wait for the bomb disposal squad.")

We read the second paragraph from the end.

"Maybe the anchor was lowered too deep into the water?" thought Kotlyarov. "What if we bring it up again closer to the surface?" The deeper an aviation bomb goes into the water, the less the danger it is. But if it remains close to the surface and, thus, close to the ship, when it gets disentangled from the anchor it could easily strike the hull. And then … But there was no other way out. The captain decided to take the risk.

- What did the captain decide to do? ("He decided to take the risk; there was nothing else to do." "He decided to try again.")

The titles my students gave to this paragraph were: "The captain's risk," "Another attempt".

The last paragraph.

And everything was done all over again. The sailors stared at the anchor chain rising out of the water. Yard by yard it was raised. And at last the wet metal anchor flukes appeared from the glistening blue. There was no bomb on them. The anchor was free.

I asked a factual question:

- How did the fight in the sea end?
- The titles suggested by the students for the last paragraph were as follows: "The anchor is free," "The fight is over," "There is no bomb," etc.

I asked the children to think about the captain's character, judging it by his actions (they discussed it in pairs and then in the whole group).

After the discussion I read the whole text for the second time, without stopping. Then the students worked on the final versions of their plans (individually, using the general impression they got from the second presentation of the text). I then asked them:

- Write a reproduction and continue it with a written description on how this episode characterises the young captain.

And the students began writing the reproduction, this time in essay form.

The "step-by-step" reading of the text, questions evoking the readers' prediction, variety of plans reflecting individual perception of the story, the discussion of the ethical and psychological aspects of the story – all this accounted for the success of our efforts. My students worked with great interest. And each of them had his/her own personal feeling and opinion about the collision described in the text.

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Questions from the Editor

1. In a typical Directed Reading Activity we ask students to predict what they think will happen next? Some teachers who have used this strategy wonder if that question somehow diminishes the text. Are we encouraging students who like to be correct to prefer stories that are predictable? How can we as teachers help students understand the pleasure of being wrong, and of not being able to predict?
2. In both of these lessons, the students' enthusiasm for the text is built on their personal connections to the subject matter. How might teachers foster such connections in other content areas, for example history or one of the sciences?

Policy Matters

What is Critical Thinking?

David Klooster

From Kansas to Kazakhstan, from Michigan to Macedonia, school teachers and university professors are seeking to encourage critical thinking among their students. We know that critical thinking is a good thing, a skill that will enable us to better cope with the demands of the 21st century, and give us an important perspective on much of what we learn about and do.

But what *is* critical thinking? I hear the question from teachers just beginning to experiment with new pedagogical approaches, as well as from students and teachers who have been working in critical thinking classrooms for a long time. The term is difficult to define, because it includes so many skills, activities and values. What are we talking about when we talk about critical thinking?

The literature about critical thinking offers many definitions of the term, not all of them in harmony. Because we seek a description that speaks to teachers from elementary school to university, within varying cultural settings, a very flexible definition may be necessary. Despite the diversity of educational contexts that readers of this journal find themselves in, I believe we can develop a definition of critical thinking that will move our conversation forward.

Before we try to define the term, let's consider some kinds of thinking that are not critical thinking. Probably we can agree that mere memorizing is not critical thinking. Memorization is an important mental ability, one that all learners need; but it is quite a different skill from critical thinking.

When we realize that machines such as computers also have memories – better memories than almost all people have – we know that memorization by itself is not adequate thinking. Yet for many traditional teachers, memory is the most highly valued kind of thinking in school, and many tests and examinations probe only for the extent of a student's memory. Those of us interested in critical thinking are searching for something more complex.

Another type of thinking that is different from critical thinking is the mental task of comprehending ideas. Again, this is an important school skill. In a science or maths classroom, or in a history or literature classroom, there are times when students need to work hard to comprehend what the teacher or the text is saying. Comprehension, especially of difficult material, is a complex mental operation.

For example, when a student works to comprehend a Shakespeare sonnet, or struggles to wrap her mind around the Extreme Value Theorem in calculus, the student is engaged in a complex intellectual task, but in the first efforts to comprehend the material, the student is not yet a critical thinker.

Some teachers would argue that genuine comprehension always requires critical thought, because the learner must translate someone else's ideas into his or her own language and mental construct. Yet, when we work to comprehend someone else's thinking, the first phase of our thought is passive: we are receiving what someone else has already thought. Rather than creating something new and individual, we are accepting what someone else has already created.

It is not until the newly understood ideas are tested, evaluated, expanded, and applied that the student engages in critical thinking. I believe that both memorization of facts and comprehension of concepts are necessary preliminary activities for critical thinking. But by themselves they do not constitute critical thinking.

A third kind of thinking that is different from critical thinking is creative or intuitive

Zur4ANGLU.qxd 2001.04.13 16:59 Page 37

thinking. Athletes, artists and musicians all use their minds in complex ways; but when they perform at a high level, their thinking is rarely self-conscious. They are not conscious of their own thought processes.

Consider a professional athlete, such as the great Czech hockey star, Jaromir Jagr (who wears the number 68 on his uniform, to commemorate the events of the Prague Spring of 1968). When he is about to make a shot at the goal, does he consider: "Is now the right moment? What other ways of considering the situation might I find? How would other great players consider this moment? Would Wayne Gretsky shoot now, or would he wait? Would he pass the puck to another player, or would he take the shot himself?"

If Jagr's thought processes were this deliberate and self-conscious, he would never score a goal. Although his decision to wear the number 68 on his jersey is an example of critical thinking, his decision about when to fire the puck is not. Likewise, artists and musicians use complex mental operations that are not wholly conscious or deliberate. Their intuitive thinking is valuable, certainly, but it is not critical.

So how can we define critical thinking? I offer a five-point definition of the term.

First: critical thinking is independent thinking.

In a critical thinking classroom, each person forms his or her own ideas, values and beliefs. No one can think critically for you. Critical thinking is work that you can do only for yourself. Therefore, individual ownership of thinking in the classroom is a precondition for critical thinking. Students must feel the freedom to think for themselves, to decide complex questions for themselves.

Let me offer an example to illustrate this point. Some years ago I taught American Literature in a university in Slovakia. My students there held a great deal of information in their heads about many American writers. They especially knew a great deal about Walt Whitman. They knew when he was born and when he died. They knew the titles of all his important works. They knew his position in literary history – who influenced him and whose work was in turn influenced by his. They knew the major themes of his poetry. They could recite the opening lines of his famous "Song of Myself".

But they had never actually read the poetry. All of their knowledge was drawn from the lectures of an earlier professor – someone who had read the poems and told his students what to think. When I put the actual poems of Walt Whitman before my students, they needed to learn new skills to be able to read the works for themselves and to form their own opinions about his work.

Critical thinking is not necessarily original thinking, since it is possible for a person to adopt an idea or belief from another person and still feel it wholly to be their own. We find pleasure and power in the sentence "I agree with you", and of course the critical thinker will sometimes find himself in agreement with others.

After my students in the Slovak university had themselves read Whitman's work and reflected on it and discussed it with others, they sometimes agreed with critics whose published work they read, or with their classmates, or even with their former professor. But it was crucial that each thinker should

Zur4ANGLU.qxd 2001.04.13 16:59 Page 38

decide for himself or herself, that each should think independently. Independent thinking is the first, and perhaps the most important, quality of critical thinking.

Second: information is the starting point for critical thinking, not the end point.

Students need to know a great deal before they are motivated and able to think for themselves. We sometimes say "You can't think with an empty head." In order to develop complex thoughts, we need a good deal of "raw material" – facts, ideas, texts, theories, data, concepts.

Sometimes my students in the American university seem to have the opposite problem to students in Slovakia – they seem not to remember enough of their previous learning, and each new writer, each new poem seems something wholly new. I need to work with them to develop mental road maps and frameworks of knowledge and depths of factual information so that they can apply their critical skills in productive ways. I do not argue that critical thinking is a substitute for traditional learning of facts, but neither do I want to say that simply learning the facts is adequate.

Our work involves more kinds of work than teaching critical thinking: we also teach students to comprehend and retain information of many kinds. Teaching critical thinking is one responsibility, among several others, of the teacher.

Students of every age, from the first grade to the university, can think critically, because all of them already have rich life experiences and deep resources of prior knowledge. As they learn more, they are able to become more sophisticated thinkers, but even very young children are capable of independent, critical thinking (as those of us who have children know very personally). Critical thinking is the work that students and teachers and writers and scientists actually do with the facts that they have learned. Critical thinking takes traditional learning and makes it personal, meaningful, useful and permanent.

Third: critical thinking begins with questions, with problems to be solved.

Human beings have a basic curiosity towards the world. We see something new, and we want to know about it. We see an interesting place, and we are curious to go there. The philosopher and chemist Michael Polanyi notes that "As far down the scale of life as worms and even perhaps amoebas, we meet a general alertness of animals, not directed towards specific satisfaction, but merely exploring what is there: an urge to achieve intellectual control over the situations confronting them" (quoted in Meyers, p. 41). Curiosity, then, is a basic characteristic of life. We are more accustomed to seeing it in young elementary school children than in students in the secondary school or university, and that is a sad indication of the result of most schooling on young minds.

Yet authentic learning at every level is marked by the urge to solve problems and to answer questions that arise from the learners' own interests and needs. John Bean says "part of the difficulty of teaching critical thinking, therefore, is awakening students to the existence of problems all around them" (p. 2).

The Brazilian educator Paulo Freire argues that we need to replace traditional education, or "banking" education, in which teachers make "deposits" in the minds of

students, with "problem posing" education, in which students grapple with significant problems from the world around them. Students learn best, he argues, when they identify genuine problems in their own experience – problems of economics, social structure, and political power – and use the resources of the classroom and the school to investigate solutions. Because of his insistence on the analysis of oppressive power and his conviction that education can liberate students from this oppression, Freire's work is called "liberatory pedagogy".

The American philosopher of education John Dewey suggests that critical thinking begins with students' engagement with a problem. "The most significant question which can be asked about any situation or experience proposed to induce learning is what quality of problem it involves" (p. 182). According to Dewey, problems stimulate our students' natural curiosity and encourage critical thinking. "Only by wrestling with the conditions of the problem at hand, seeking and finding his own way out, does [the student] think" (p. 188).

The work of the teacher, then, in preparing for class is to identify the problems of students, and as they become increasingly oriented to this new way of beginning to investigate ideas, to help students formulate their own problems. Critical thinking pedagogy becomes a purposeful and productive activity, not simply "school work", as students engage in the practical intellectual work of formulating solutions to the problems they face in the world. As students gather data, analyze texts, consider alternative points of view, and brainstorm possibilities, they are seeking solutions to the problems that concern them.

The Canadian professor Ralph H. Johnson defines critical thinking as "a particular kind of activity of mind which enables its possessor to arrive at sound judgment about something proposed to him for action or belief" (p. 1). Johnson's definition stresses the role of critical thinking in deciding questions, in solving problems.

Fourth: critical thinking seeks reasoned arguments.

Critical thinkers develop their own solutions to problems, and they support those solutions with good arguments and convincing reasons. They recognize that more than one possible solution exists, and therefore they work to demonstrate why their preferred solution is logical and practical.

An argument consists of four basic elements. First, the argument makes a *claim*. This claim (also called a thesis, or main idea, or central position) is the heart of the argument, the one most important idea of the thinker. The claim is supported by a series of *reasons*. Each of the reasons, in turn, is supported by *evidence*. The evidence can be statistical data, textual details, personal experience, or other kinds of evidence recognized as legitimate by the audience. Underlying the claim, reasons, and evidence is the fourth element of argument: the *warrant*. The warrant is the underlying belief or assumption that the speaker or writer shares with the audience, the assumption that justifies the entire argument.

For example, a writer might argue that graffiti artists have a right to paint their signs on public buildings (claim), because their signs are statements of their personal belief (a reason) and because sometimes graffiti is aesthetically pleasing (another reason). The writer would then offer evidence, perhaps a statement from the country's constitution about the right of free speech, or from a political philosopher who states that each human being has a right to express himself or herself, and the writer might include samples of graffiti that have artistic merit. Underlying this argument would be the warrant or assumption that free speech is an especially important human right.

Often, good arguments also acknowledge that other competing arguments exist (counter arguments), and the thinker will concede or refute these opposing views. An argument is always made stronger by acknowledging that other views are possible. For example, our defender of the rights of graffiti artists would strengthen his argument by acknowledging that property owners also have rights that should be protected, and that some compromise might be achieved between the rights of the artist and the rights of the person who owns the building that becomes that artist's "canvas".

By creating such arguments, critical thinkers challenge the authority of texts, traditions, and majorities, and resist manipulation. This emphasis on using reason to make complex decisions about actions or values is at the heart of many definitions of critical thinking. Robert Ennis, for example, defines critical thinking as "reasonably deciding what to do or believe" (quoted in Johnson, p. 1).

Fifth and finally: critical thinking is social thinking.

Ideas are tested and improved as they are shared with others. The philosopher Hannah Arendt says "for excellence, the presence of others is always necessary." As we discuss, read, debate and disagree, and enjoy the give and take of ideas, we engage in a process of deepening and refining our own positions.

Teachers of critical thinking, therefore, employ a number of classroom strategies that encourage thinking in the presence of others, including group work, debates, discussion, and the publication of student writing in a variety of forms. Although the first element of my definition of critical thinking stresses the importance of independence in thinking, this final point emphasizes the social dimensions of critical thinking, because the critical thinker finally works in a community of others, engaged in tasks larger than the construction of the self.

Critical thinking teachers therefore work to nurture the attitudes that facilitate the productive exchange of ideas, attitudes such as tolerance, careful listening to others, and assuming responsibility for one's own positions. In all of these ways, teachers of critical thinking strive to bring learning inside the classroom closer together with life beyond the classroom. Because teachers ultimately work to create an ideal society, they strive to make classroom life a mirror image or reflection of life beyond the classroom, and helping students become critical thinkers is one step in attaining larger social and cultural goals.

According to this definition, critical thinking can be realized in many school activities, but I would argue that writing offers the greatest promise, for teachers and students alike. Writing forces students to be active. Writing makes their thinking visible and accessible. Writing is independent thinking, and it requires the writer to employ his or her existing knowledge. When students write, they construct reasoned arguments for their positions. Good writing seeks to solve problems and provide answers for readers. Writing is an inherently social activity, because the writer is always conscious of the presence of the reader.

Writing is hard work for students, the hardest work they do. Of course, requiring students to write also creates more work for teachers; but because the results of student writing are so important, many teachers consider the additional work to be worthwhile. Teachers can coach students in their work, creating a process of brainstorming, writing, revising, editing, and publishing, and thereby teach them how to do this difficult work effectively.

Students themselves come to value this work when they know that their teacher really cares about what they say, and when they have opportunities to share their work with classmates, parents, and other members of the community. For all of these reasons, I believe that writing is the strongest tool for teaching critical thinking.

The challenge I face in my own teaching is turning this definition of critical thinking into practical, daily classroom habits. As a teacher engaged in the process of transforming my pedagogy from traditional, curriculum-centred education to progressive education, focused on the needs of my students and of my society, I am always searching for ways to organize the work my students and I do in the classroom. My hope is that this work will help to produce citizens of my community who are well informed and better able to contribute their ideas, their energies, and their lives to the betterment of our world.

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Zur4ANGLU.qxd 2001.04.13 16:59 Page 41

Teaching Tips

Editors' note: In Issue 2 of *Thinking Classroom* we referred to a technique called *jigsaw* – the rearranging of groups to create opportunities for all students to serve as both learners and teachers. This term was first used by E. Aronson, C. Stephen, J. Sikes, N. Blaney and M. Snapp in an article called *The Jigsaw Classroom* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1978). The activity is also described in a new publication by Doug Buell entitled *Classroom Strategies* (Newark, DE: International Reading Association, 2000).

To Mark or not to Mark: That is the Question

Sergei Zair-Bek

"How do we check for critical thinking in our students?" "How do we evaluate and assess it?" "Are there any special content-based strategies for doing so?"

After a teacher workshop on critical thinking in St Petersburg, the author of this article was accosted by teachers asking these questions. Let us try to analyze if the teachers' demands were well grounded, and if we should really offer them a means of "checking" critical thinking via their content areas.

I'd like to begin by suggesting that there may be no clear, quantitative criteria for evaluating critical thinking in general. Attempts to quantify critical thinking would resemble attempts to quantify and assess, for instance, communicative culture or civil consciousness in a student.

First, it is difficult to evaluate and assess students' knowledge when we speak of questions that have no single correct answers.

Second, when a teacher expects not a correct, but a sensible, answer, the result of a student's work in class becomes less important than the process itself. Accordingly, we have to assess not only the result achieved, but also the way a child thinks and explains.

Moreover, teachers who seek to imbue in students a responsibility for their own learning – who understand that this process is, in fact, lifelong – invite students to become partners in the assessment process. Ideally, these children develop a clear idea of their own achievements and the need for continuing work and constant self- improvement.

In teaching critical thinking, educators deal with an approach to the learning process that is basically new to the East European systems of education, an approach that assigns a totally different role to both teacher and student. We also believe that this new approach is technological: that is, it is replicable, and will offer positive results in both student learning and in the development of his/her personality. But as an "educational technology", we would expect, according to important scholarly research (Кларин М.В., *Инновации в обучении: метафоры и модели*, 1994, Гузеев В.В., *Образовательная технология: от приема до философии*, 1998), that the results of this learning and personal development could be assessed.

It should be noted that not all specialists and practical teachers agree with this definition and interpretation of an "educational technology". The characterization of achievement through precise quantitative measures largely typified educational research of the Fifties and Sixties. At present, the notion of a technology is perceived rather as an instrument capable of creating and maintaining conditions for achieving a number of plausible (and not definitely prescribed) goals in the learning process.

In this case, a viable technological strategy that promotes critical thinking is seen as a means of achieving a number of rather concrete goals. Teachers can use such strategies to develop students' skills in:

- addressing learning and living problems;
- defining the main meaningful units in a text;
- or for developing the abilities to

1. work effectively together in a group,
2. deal accurately with sources of information,
3. change one's opinion if it does not explain certain facts or contradicts common sense, logic and scientific evidence.

Zur4ANGLU.qxd 2001.04.13 16:59 Page 42

Teaching Tips

I would argue that teachers are perfectly capable of evaluating these skills.

So how, in fact, do we assess students engaged in such processes? Undoubtedly, we must focus on qualitative rather than quantitative measures, and in this case we cannot rely on the traditional one-to-five marking system. Rather, I propose that teachers find a way to trace the steady positive development of these characteristics in each student.

The American educator, Donna Ogle, once demonstrated to us how some teachers in the US do it.

A teacher can make a chart like this for each student in his/her class. Is this difficult and tedious work? Unfortunately, it is. And when you realize that these same American teachers, after studying such a topic, might send these charts to their students' parents, you might become very sceptical about the future of such assessment practices closer to home.

Student N	**Topic: "Weather"**		
Main notions	Knew before studying the topic	Learned while studying the topic	Able to use what was learned
Pressure	Could say that air weighs down on the ground	Could explain that weather changes because of differences in atmospheric pressure	Learned quickly; can analyze what causes changes of pressure
Temperature			
Rainfall			
Weather in St Petersburg			

Let us return to the core question: how might we assess the development of critical thinking skills? Actually, there is a variety of methodological instruments for doing so. Educational goals are found mainly in the cognitive area in which Benjamin Bloom singled out the following levels (Bloom, B.S. (ed) *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: The Classification of Educational Goals*. NY, Longman, 1956):

1. reproduction (recognition and recalling information);
2. comprehension (interpretation of material and charts, transforming verbal material into mathematical expressions, etc.);
3. application (ability to use notions, laws, procedures in new situations);
4. analysis (determining hidden assumptions, finding logical faults, making a division between facts and consequences, etc.);
5. synthesis (writing an essay, working out a research plan, etc.);
6. evaluation (logic in presenting material, activity outcomes, etc.).

Here is an example of:

Possible Forms and Methods of Assessing the Level of Critical Thinking of Students in Geography Class (Geography of continents and oceans)

Chapter: Eurasia

Topics: General characteristics of climate in Eurasia

Climate zones and types of climate in Eurasia

I. *Type of assessment:* attendant (performed along with the study of new material)

Task 1: Read the section in the textbook. Fill in INSERT* chart (see glossary).

Task 2: Complete the chart of "easy" and "difficult" questions, referring to the text. Write answers to some of the "difficult" questions. (Here the teacher may give his/her students a "prompt" in the form of question words and phrases: What? How? Why? What is it connected with? In what way does it differ? What is the cause? Is it possible? What will it look like?)

Here we should check the following:

- whether the questions the student asks are complex/high level;
- if the student has thought of at least several questions;
- whether the evidence in the

answers is relevant and convincing;

• if the answers reflect knowledge of background information.

For example, a student might ask the question: "Why is there a variety of moderate climate areas in Eurasia?" To answer this question the student would need knowledge of the factors that form climate, e.g. ocean influence as the main one. He/she would also need to know something about the length of the continent as it stretches from east to west; and – as evidence – be able to support the answer with atlas data about areas of moderate climate scattered throughout the continent.

Task 3: Present arguments for discussion web (see glossary) on the topic: "Is the climate of Eurasia identical to that of North America?" The answer will be given in the form of a "pros and cons" chart. For instance, you may ask your students to provide five "pro" and five "con" arguments. Here the criteria of the level of critical thinking would be:

• the analytical level of judgment (the ability to formulate a logical chain of arguments);

• the ability to synthesize (to formulate conclusions on the basis of the proposed arguments);

• the ability to evaluate (to formulate a general conclusion bearing in mind all the "pro" and "con" arguments).

Task 4. Make a cluster (see glossary) identifying the main ideas of the topic while reading the chapter section by section. The main topic is "The climate of Eurasia". This cluster may be developed either in class or at home. Qualitative assessment may be performed on the basis of criteria such as:

• the ability to restate the main ideas in one's own words;

• the ability to combine theoretical components of the central notion (climate-forming factors, types of climate, air temperature, prevailing winds, etc.) with its factual components (the Himalayas, the Caucasus, the Alps, the monsoon winds in the Far East, the Mediterranean subtropics);

• the ability to draw in additional material not mentioned in the textbook or offered by the teacher, to enlarge the cluster.

For more generalized evaluation, I suggest using criteria associated with creativity (in our case it is the ability to synthesize new information in graphics, and use it for solving new types of problems).

II. *Type of assessment:* generalizing (after studying new material)

Task 1: Doing tests. You may ask the students to choose the tasks he/she considers the most interesting. In this case the whole test should consist of 30 questions, and students are asked to answer any six of the total number. The teacher has to prepare five questions corresponding to each of the six reflective operations (reproduction, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation), and puts a special mark next to each to show its difficulty to the students. Students are then free to choose. General qualitative and quantitative assessments will be applied by: (a) comparing the level of difficulty chosen by the student with the level of knowledge and skills he/she demonstrated while studying the topic; and (b) checking correctness and completeness of the answers. Test questions may be open ended (without multiple-choice answers), as well as closed (with multiple-choice answers).

Here are some examples of such questions:

1. Reproduction

In Eurasia we mostly find territories located in (underline the right answer):

arctic zone	tropical zone
subarctic zone	subequatorial zone
moderate zone	equatorial zone
subtropical zone	

2. Comprehension

Underline the factors that are relevant to the general formation of the Eurasian climate:

• proximity to the equator

• length of the continent from west to east

• proximity to North America

• location of the mountains along the eastern coast

• deserts in Central Asia

• proximity to the North Pole

• arctic deserts along the coast of the Arctic Ocean

Zur4ANGLU.qxd 2001.04.13 16:59 Page 44

3. Application

Insert the necessary words to complete the logical chain:
tropics ⇨ Eurasia ⇨ ...⇨ monsoons

4. Analysis

The Eurasian climate is mostly influenced by (choose one).

- the Atlantic Ocean
- the Arctic Ocean
- the Indian Ocean
- the Pacific Ocean

Give two or three sentences explaining why this is the case.

5. Synthesis

Connect the following expressions with arrows:

Moderate sea climate	great fluctuations in winter and summer t°
Moderately continental climate	permanently unstable weather
Moderate continental climate	most of East European plain
Moderate sharp continental climate	typhoons
Moderate monsoon climate	the Arctic Ocean-seasonal wind-sinfluence of the western shift

6. Evaluation

Name three basic similarities between the Eurasian and North American climates.

Task 2: Fill in the dual-entry diary (see glossary). On the left side of the diary, students place the main features of the Eurasian climate (data from the textbook and atlas). On the right side they give their own ideas regarding the following question: How do these features of the Eurasian climate influence the relief, inner waters, and flora and fauna of the continent? Please note that the students have not yet studied these themes. Thus, we check their ability to independently extrapolate information of an analytical, synthetic and evaluative character.

In assessing the level of critical thinking in students, it is important to remember that this ability is not limited to cognitive skills. In addition to the rational components of thinking that can be checked with, for example, tests, critical thinking also includes such important abilities as:

- accepting different points of view;
- considering various perspectives when analyzing problems;
- setting distinct, relevant personal learning goals and, accordingly, constructing one's own learning routes (i.e. attending to the points which seem to have the greatest importance for understanding the topic).

It makes sense that such components of critical thinking cannot be wholly diagnosed by content area methods and assessed quantitatively. That is why a teacher should pay special attention to a number of other important aspects while planning a lesson and evaluating its effectiveness:

1. "Will there be enough time for me to complete this work in my forty-five-minute lesson?"

Not all stages of the RWCT lesson-planning framework (see glossary) need to be packed within the space of a single lesson, and may well carry over several lessons. It is important, however, that the evocation-realization of meaning-reflection cycle is complete, and that the last reflection evolves into the next evocation.

2. "Is the selection and order of strategies important?"

No, you may use the strategies that make sense to you. The only thing that matters is that they should promote the main goals set by you and your students.

3. "What should a teacher do if students have not understood the material, or do not give the 'right' answer at the reflection stage?"

If your ultimate goal is to pass knowledge to your students, you will construct your lesson with this goal in mind. Whether you employ critical thinking methods alone or in combination with more traditional technologies, preserving a democratic atmosphere in the classroom will encourage students to participate actively and express their thoughts and ideas.

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Zur4ANGLU.qxd 2001.04.13 16:59 Page 45

Web Site Reviews

Online Opportunities for Young Writers

Donna Neutze

Do you have students who want to publish their work? Are they interested in reading what other young people have to say? You need look no further than the Internet, where opportunities abound for the young writer. If you are considering any online student publishing, we recommend that you first check with your school, as Internet safety concerns have led many schools to institute policies related to Internet usage in the classroom. For additional information, guidelines and suggestions, visit the following sites.

- ACCEPTABLE INTERNET USE POLICIES

http://www.pen.k12.va.us/go/VDOE/Technology/AUP/home.shtml

From the Virginia Department of Education, this site features a handbook of acceptable use policies. The handbook is divided into four sections: Introduction, Components, Samples and Templates.

- INTERNET SAFETY FOR STUDENTS & TEACHERS

http://k12science.ati.stevens-tech.edu/internetsafety.html

The Center for Improved Engineering and Science Education (CIESE) has provided suggestions related to Internet safety issues as well as links to other sites which address this same concern.

Once you have learned your school's policies and have investigated any of your other questions and concerns, you are ready to look into those websites that have been developed specifically for young writers. The following sites represent only a small sampling of the online publishing opportunities that are available.

- KIDAUTHORS SITE

http://www.kidauthors.com/

Young writers can submit their poems, stories or puzzles. If their work is chosen for publication, they may receive a certification of achievement.

- KIDNEWS.COM!

http://kidnews.com/

This news and writing site has published the work of thousands of young authors from countries located on almost every continent. They accept a wide range of work, including reviews, short stories, poetry, and real life accounts. There's also a special section for teachers.

- KIDSBOOKSHELF

http://www.kidsbookshelf.com/

The KidsBookshelf accepts short stories, poems, book reviews and artwork for publication on their site. There's also a special section where teachers and parents are invited to share their work.

- KIDS SPACE

http://www.kids-space.org/

Designed for children 16 years old and younger, this site has readers from over 150 countries. Children can submit stories, artwork and music.

- THE SCRIPTORIUM: YOUNG WRITERS DEPARTMENT

http://www.thescriptorium.net/youth.html

The Scriptorium is accepting articles for "The Scriptorium Youth News." The site also features writer's guidelines, advice on how to find markets for your work, freewriting exercises and a list of additional resources for young writers.

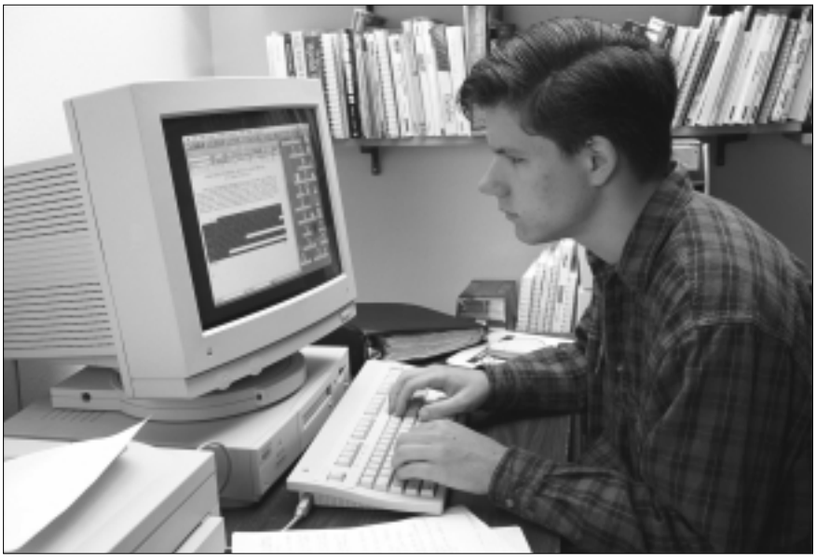
- THE YOUNG WRITERS CLUB

http://www.cs.bilkent.edu.tr/~david/derya/ywc.html

"This club aims to encourage children of all ages to enjoy writing as a creative pastime by getting them to share their work and help each other improve their writing abilities." Members can submit stories, poems, activities, research articles and articles for "Global Wave", the site's online magazine. (Students need only complete a simple form to become members.)

Zur4ANGLU.qxd 2001.04.13 17:00 Page 46

Web Site Reviews



● WRITING CORNER

http://writethecorner.tripod.com/

Writing Corner, with its 17-year-old Webmaster, accepts submissions of poetry, stories and descriptive writing. (Not for younger students.)

● WRITING WITH WRITERS

http://teacher.scholastic.com/writewit/index.htm

Get tips on journal writing from award-winning author Virginia Hamilton, participate in writing challenges from the poet Jack Prelutsky or select from among seven other writing workshops provided by Scholastic. Students first work with authors, editors and illustrators. Then, when their writing is complete, it can be submitted for possible publication.

You may find that while there are many websites that provide wonderful opportunities for young writers, these sites may not quite meet the needs of your students. Don't despair; there is another avenue that you might choose to pursue. Many schools and classes have developed their own websites to showcase students' work. The following sites are designed specifically for teachers who are interested in developing their own school web pages.

● THE TEACHERS.NET WEBSITE HANDBOOK

http://teachers.net/manual/

This handbook, which is divided into five short chapters, is written especially for teachers. Reader-friendly text, plenty of helpful hints and a large number of links will appeal to those new to web page authoring.

● TIPS FOR DEVELOPING SCHOOL WEB PAGES

http://www.siec.k12.in.us/~west/online/

This site, from Loogootee West Elementary School, provides tips relating to the development of school web pages. Copyright issues, online student publishing, and web page evaluation are just a few of the areas that are addressed at this site.

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Zur4ANGLU.qxd 2001.04.13 17:00 Page 47

Book Reviews

Learning to Think Critically

Thoughtful Teachers, Thoughtful Learners: A Guide to Helping Adolescents Think Critically

Norman J. Unrau (1997)

Pippin Publishing Corporation: Scarborough, Ontario, Canada.
Softcover, 144 pages.
ISBN 0-88751-082-5
Available in English from the Wright Group
Tel. 1-800-648-2970 from North America.
Tel. 1-425-486-8011 from outside North America.
$18.95US
Russian translation: Soros-Kyrgyzstan Foundation

Reviewed by Inna Valkova

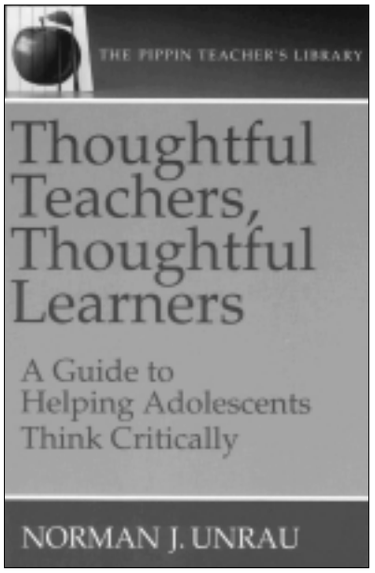
The author gives his book *Thoughtful Teachers, Thoughtful Learners* , a volume now available in both English and Russian, the subtitle "A Guide to Helping Adolescents Think Critically". Unrau, who has been a professor at California State University, Los Angeles, for more than 25 years, teaches methods courses for both preservice and in-service secondary school teachers. Many of the methods he describes originated and were tested there.

The book is well grounded theoretically, and contributes substantially to our understanding of critical thinking. In chapter one, for example, Unrau deals carefully with an analysis of the term "critical thinking". Although widely used in international practice, teachers, teaching methods specialists and students often understand this notion of critical thinking in markedly different ways. Sometimes the word critical is associated with critique; and sometimes the term takes on the more negative connotation of superficial criticising.

The main part of the book is devoted to a description of practical methods and strategies of interest to those wishing to improve their students' thinking. The rest of the chapters describe activities for developing critical thinking through speaking, reading and writing.

For instance, in the chapter "Thinking through talking", the author claims that, in order to develop the ability to think, students must learn to talk and to argue. Unrau encourages teachers to help students analyse the nature of the controversy, its probable causes, the bases of disagreement, the thinking processes that take place during the argument, and what can be done to generate a more meaningful conversation in class.

The author talks about student reflection in some detail. With guidance, students learn to use their own classroom experience to understand the reasons why arguments succeed or fail. They also learn to take notes in their own diaries, to witness and analyse



arguments between their relatives and friends, and to listen to radio and watch TV discussions with fresh insight.

A wide sampling of learning strategies are also described, including dramatisation, classical debate, modelling arguments, holding discussions and then analysing them, as well as a variety of ways to encourage the exchange of opinions.

Further on, Unrau introduces practices that encourage reflective reading. He approaches reading as a process of creating meaning, and views meaning as influenced by readers' knowledge, their lives, and their emotional experiences. He analyses in great detail the logical patterns used to create meaning in text, as well as the problems related to authenticity in understanding and interpreting text. A number of strategies

Zur4ANGLU.qxd 2001.04.13 17:00 Page 48

are offered to help students craft their own interpretations, and share and evaluate their ideas.

When reading material to be used in discussions, students are encouraged to study creatively, and to evaluate the arguments an author uses. The process of analysing arguments described in this section serves to introduce an original strategy called TASK (thesis, analysis, synthesis, key).

TASK is based on a series of ten questions that direct students' attention while reading material for discussion and writing an argumentative essay. The answer to each of these questions serves as a consecutive step in directing reading and analysis.

The guidebook describes step-by-step exercises that enable students to master the TASK process. The author emphasises that using TASK for analysing arguments and evidence develops in students the ability to perform cognitive operations useful in defending their own point of view and formulating and grounding their own ideas.

The last two chapters are devoted to writing analytical essays. These essays are the most difficult of learning activities, requiring higher-order thinking. However, mastering the analytical essay is not in itself enough to develop critical thinking. Unrau suggests that students engage in other types of writing activities as well, to help them to become more

adept critical thinkers, and he offers a wide variety of suggested writing assignments.

The author has developed an elaborate programme for learning to write, starting with producing simple definitions and moving towards well-grounded arguments. Critical thinking, he believes, is developed most effectively when writing is combined with other approaches, particularly with reading and speaking.

Teachers will be especially interested in reading about lessons that help students work on various types of essays. Here you will find mini "quick-writes", general essays, topical essays, letters to real addressees, opinion pieces, sections from personal diaries, and other types of written work that can be used to promote critical thinking. Each activity is accompanied by a description of written assignments designed to help students reflect.

The last chapter is devoted to using TASK for developing sound written arguments. Introducing TASK as a guide for writing an argumentative essay is done gradually with step-by-step exercises, the same way TASK was introduced for reading activities.

Unrau has also worked out an assessment table, and offers it to students. In this way, students become better able to predict the grades they are likely to receive for their essays. They are encouraged to assess different elements of their essays according to the table, and then predict the combined grade/mark they will receive for the completed work. It is important that, as a result of this self-analysis, students are able to revise and edit the parts of the essays needing improvement.

At the end of the book, in the appendix, the author provides examples of his experience of using TASK in his own practice.