

In this context, a critic is someone who reviews, analyzes, and makes judgments or evaluations on issues, ideas, processes, and experiences. Critical thinking is the kind of thinking through which such **evaluation** is achieved. Critical thinking, an important component of the thinking process, includes **creative thinking** through which ideas are generated. Thus creative and critical thinking are interrelated: creative thinking generates ideas, **critical thinking** evaluates those ideas.

An appropriate classroom environment is vital to encourage students to become critical thinkers. Aside from modelling critical thinking skills, teachers need to develop an **open, non-threatening climate** for the discussion of ideas and issues in class. In a manner similar to controversial issues, the focus should be on the ideas, viewpoints, and supporting arguments, rather than on the person who is presenting them. A creative and critical thinker cannot be closed minded and dismissive of others and their ideas.

Adequate **knowledge** about an issue is imperative for the critical thinker. The geography curriculum identifies many knowledge-based outcomes that specify what students need to know on a variety of topics. In addition to knowledge, the critical thinker requires a variety of skills, many of which are identified in the curriculum, to review, analyze, and evaluate ideas.

Characteristics of Critical Thinkers

Critical thinkers...

- gain as much knowledge as possible on an issue before beginning evaluation
- do not make or accept conclusions without careful thought and evaluation
- carefully analyze and evaluate reasons and evidence
- distinguish between what is known and what is suspected
- are able to detect bias and unsubstantiated evidence
- are willing to re-examine assumptions
- do not seek to be negative or to find fault
- are objective in their evaluation in spite of personal views, interests, or wishes

Skills for Critical Thinking

Critical thinkers...

- ask questions that are clear and easily understood
- listen to others' views and opinions
- distinguish between fact and opinion
- determine credibility of sources of information
- detect bias
- weigh all evidence
- distinguish relevant from irrelevant information
- draw inferences
- draw logical conclusions based on evidence
- organize and classify ideas and evidence
- identify underlying assumptions
- distinguish hypotheses from evidence
- make appropriate use of persuasive techniques
- recognize a variety of political, social, cultural, and personal perspectives