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