



Critical Thinking

Building Healthy Decision-Making Skills

*Lessons for high school students
aged 15-19*



Critical Thinking

Building Healthy Decision-Making Skills

*Lessons for high school students
aged 15-19*

Editors:

Janna Nobleza

Suresh Korapati

Andrew Culley

Emelen De Jesus

Published 2025 by Seltrove, an imprint of IB Source Inc,
Copyright IB Source, Inc.

Copyright and Use Restrictions

This publication is protected by copyright laws. All rights are strictly reserved by the publishers. Unauthorized duplication, reproduction, storage, or distribution of any part of this work, by any means including but not limited to electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or micro copying, is prohibited without the express written consent of the publishing authorities.

Accuracy Disclaimer

The authors and publishers have exerted every effort to ensure that the information within this publication is both accurate and complete. Despite these efforts, no guarantee is made regarding the content's infallibility. The authors and publishers do not assume liability for any errors, omissions, or inaccuracies found in the publication, nor for any resultant loss or damage. Any questions or inquiries on rights please email info@seltrove.com



Critical Thinking – Teacher/Parent Guide



Learning Objectives

By the end of these lessons, students will be able to:

1. Recognize bias, distinguish between fact and opinion, and evaluate the reliability of evidence in personal, academic, and media contexts.
2. Use creative and flexible thinking strategies to generate multiple solutions and approach challenges from new perspectives.
3. Apply ethical reasoning by questioning assumptions, considering fairness, and weighing the values and perspectives of others.
4. Make thoughtful, responsible decisions by balancing logic, emotions, and social pressures while anticipating long- and short-term consequences.
5. Reflect on their own thinking processes (metacognition) to identify strengths, blind spots, and opportunities for growth through a growth mindset.

Learning Rationale

High school students are entering a stage of life where their choices, relationships, and worldviews carry greater impact, making critical thinking a vital skill for their success both inside and outside the classroom.



As students gain more independence the ability to weigh options, anticipate consequences, and make responsible decisions becomes essential.



Critical thinking empowers them to separate fact from misinformation, evaluate sources, and make informed judgments.



By learning to question assumptions and consider multiple perspectives, students practice fairness, empathy, and integrity.



Reflection help students learn from mistakes, recognize their own thought patterns, and build resilience.



Critical Thinking – Teacher/Parent Guide

Teacher/Parent Introduction

High school is a time of rapid growth, independence, and decision-making. Students are beginning to face challenges that require them to think for themselves—whether that’s choosing healthy friendships, evaluating media messages, navigating ethical dilemmas, or planning for their future. Critical thinking is more than an academic skill; it is a life skill that helps students slow down, ask stronger questions, weigh evidence, and reflect on their choices.

This pack is designed to guide students through five lessons that connect critical thinking directly to their social and emotional development. Each lesson builds on the last, starting with the foundations of logic and bias, moving into creative problem-solving and ethical reasoning, and culminating in decision-making and reflection. Activities encourage students to engage with real-life scenarios, practice flexible thinking, and develop greater self-awareness.

As students progress, they will not only learn how to analyze information more deeply but also how to apply these skills to relationships, responsibilities, and personal growth. The ultimate goal is to help them see critical thinking as a tool for becoming thoughtful, empathetic, and resilient young adults—ready for the challenges of high school, college, and beyond.

Table of Contents

- **Pre-Assessment** – A quick check of how students currently think through problems, evaluate information, and make choices in everyday life.
- **Lesson 1: Creative, Flexible Thinking** – Learn strategies for thinking flexibly and innovatively, using creativity to explore multiple solutions and tackle challenges.
- **Lesson 2: Logic, Evidence, and Bias** – Explore how to separate fact from opinion, identify different types of bias, and evaluate the strength of evidence before making judgments.
- **Lesson 3: Faulty Thinking vs. Critical Thinking** – Practice navigating gray areas by weighing values, perspectives, and fairness while questioning assumptions.
- **Lesson 4: Healthy Decisions using Critical Thinking** – Apply critical thinking to everyday choices by balancing logic, emotions, and social pressures, while considering long-term consequences and healthy relationships.
- **Lesson 5: Reflection – Growing as a Critical Thinker** – Strengthen self-awareness by reflecting on thought patterns, recognizing blind spots, and using a growth mindset to learn from mistakes and setbacks.
- **Post-Assessment** – Reflect on growth in critical thinking skills, identify personal strategies for continued improvement, and set goals.
- **Resources** – A range of resources for students, families, and teachers.



Critical Thinking Pre-Assessment

Teacher/Parent Lesson Plan



Learning Objectives

By the end of the pre-assessment activity, students will:

1. Demonstrate their current understanding of what critical thinking looks like in everyday life, academics, and relationships.
2. Show how they typically approach decision-making, problem-solving, and evaluating the reliability of information.
3. Reflect on their confidence in asking deeper questions, weighing evidence, and considering short- and long-term consequences.
4. Provide a baseline that teachers, counselors, or parents can use to track growth in critical thinking skills throughout the lessons.

Learning Rationale

The pre-assessment offers a snapshot of where students are beginning their journey with critical thinking in high school. Some may already evaluate sources, question assumptions, and think through consequences, while others may rely more on instinct, peer influence, or quick judgments. Understanding this starting point helps teachers and parents see students' strengths, blind spots, and attitudes toward thinking critically.

This step is not about grading or judgment. Instead, it helps adults tailor discussions, examples, and support to meet students where they are. It also encourages students to pause and reflect on their own thinking habits. When they revisit these same questions in the post-assessment, they will be able to clearly recognize how their critical thinking skills—and their confidence in using them—have grown.



Critical Thinking Pre-Assessment

Teacher/Parent Lesson Plan

Lesson Plan

- 1** Ask students to read each statement and reflect on how much they agree with or understand the idea. Remind them that this is not a test—there are no “right” or “wrong” answers. The goal is for them to be honest about where they are starting so they can see their growth later.
- 2** After each statement, you may invite students to share quick examples, personal experiences, or thoughts. Keep the discussion open and respectful—this step is about listening, not correcting. Allow students to explain their thinking in their own words so you can better understand how they view critical thinking right now.
- 3** Record insights: Consider jotting down brief notes or patterns in their responses. This will give you a clear point of comparison when you return to the post-assessment at the end of the unit.
- 4** Set the tone: Let students know that by the end of these lessons, they will have practiced new ways to ask stronger questions, spot bias, recognize faulty reasoning, and make more thoughtful decisions. Reassure them that their answers and perspectives may shift along the way—that shift is evidence of growth and reflection.



Critical Thinking Pre-Assessment

For each statement below, rate how well you understand the idea by choosing one of the following:

- I strongly agree with this statement.
- I agree with this statement.
- I disagree with this statement.
- I strongly disagree with this statement.

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I can usually tell the difference between facts, opinions, and assumptions.				
I am confident in recognizing when information is biased or unreliable.				
I can use logic and evidence to back up my ideas or decisions.				
When solving a problem, I am able to think of multiple possible solutions.				
I am comfortable using creativity to find new approaches to challenges.				
I think about the ethical or fairness side of a situation before making a decision.				
I can recognize when my own assumptions may affect how I see an issue.				
I weigh both short-term and long-term consequences before making choices.				
I can resist peer pressure or emotional reactions when making important decisions.				



Critical Thinking Pre-Assessment

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I reflect on my past choices to learn from them and improve my future decisions.				
I am aware of my strengths and blind spots in how I think through situations.				
I believe I can improve my critical thinking skills with practice and effort.				

Which topic do you feel the most confident about? Why do you think that is?

Which statement(s) did you feel unsure or confused about? What do you think made them hard to understand?

What is one question you have about AI that you'd like to explore?



Creative, Flexible Thinking

Teacher/Parent Lesson Plan



Learning Objectives

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Use creative thinking strategies to generate multiple solutions to a problem.
2. Apply flexible thinking to approach challenges from new perspectives.
3. Evaluate potential solutions for fairness, practicality, and long-term impact.
4. Reflect on how creative problem-solving strengthens resilience and adaptability in everyday life.

Learning Rationale

High school students face challenges every day—from juggling homework and activities to navigating friendships, identity, and future goals. Many teens rely on familiar routines or quick fixes, which limits their ability to think critically about problems and generate thoughtful solutions.

This lesson strengthens critical thinking by showing students how to use both divergent thinking (brainstorming many ideas) and convergent thinking (choosing the most effective one). They learn that problems rarely have a single “right” answer, and that exploring options with creativity and flexibility leads to stronger outcomes.

Creative and flexible thinking builds problem-solving skills through critical thinking by:

- Strengthening confidence to tackle complex challenges.
- Reducing stress by replacing quick fixes with thoughtful strategies.
- Developing adaptability—essential when plans don't go as expected.

Why This Matters for High School Students

As students prepare for real-world responsibilities and independence, they are ready to:

- Think beyond limitations by questioning assumptions and considering multiple perspectives.
- Build resilience by viewing obstacles as opportunities for growth rather than roadblocks.
- Strengthen relationships by solving conflicts in fairly, empathetically, and respectfully.
- Prepare for the future by developing innovation and adaptability—critical skills for college, careers, and leadership.



Creative, Flexible Thinking

Teacher/Parent Lesson Plan

Lesson Plan

1

Read the Introduction

- Students can read the introduction silently, in pairs, or listen as you read it aloud
- Key points to emphasize:
 - Essential Question: How can creativity and flexible thinking help me solve challenges in new and more effective ways?
 - Core Idea: Critical thinkers don't just accept the first solution—they explore multiple perspectives, use creativity to generate options, and choose the path that is fair, practical, and thoughtful.

2

Activity 1: Level Up the Question

- Read the directions aloud and go through the sample together.
- Give students time individually, or in pairs, to complete the activity.
- The final question is great to use as a discussion question, if you have time.

3

Activity 2: Seeing Through Different Eyes

- Read the directions aloud.
- Give students time to write responses from each perspective.
- Remind students that seeing things through other perspectives helps them find creative solutions to problems.

4

Activity 3: The Decision Matrix

- ***This activity requires students to first complete Activity 2. It builds off Activity 2.***
- Ask students to pick one “problem” from activity 2 to work with for this matrix.
- Students can share their thoughts using the reflection question.

5

Activity 4: Reverse Thinking Challenge

- Read the directions out loud with your students. This is a fun and creative activity.
- First, students brainstorm the worst ideas—this helps them see unhealthy choices and think outside the box.
- Next, students flip those into the best solutions to the problem.
- Wrap up by asking students to share their most creative and practical ideas.

6

Activity 5: The Question Lab

- Read the directions out loud with your student and go through the example.
- Give students time in small groups to brainstorm. If you don't have enough students to make groups, you can work with your child/student individually.
- The ending question is great for a discussion question, if you have time.



Creative, Flexible Thinking



Learning Goals for this lesson:

At the end of this lesson, I will be able to:

- Use creative thinking strategies to generate multiple solutions to a problem.
- Apply flexible thinking to approach challenges from new perspectives.
- Evaluate potential solutions for fairness, practicality, and long-term impact.
- Reflect on how creative problem-solving strengthens resilience and adaptability in everyday life.



By using critical thinking along with creativity, we can find solutions that go beyond the obvious and discover new ways of handling challenges.

Every day, you face problems—some small, like what to do when you forget your homework, and some big, like how to handle a conflict with a friend. Often, we jump to the first solution that comes to mind. But strong critical thinkers don't stop there—they explore multiple options, test them out, and choose the one that is most fair, practical, and effective.

Creative problem-solving isn't only about being artistic—it's about being open-minded and flexible. It means asking questions like, "What else could work?" or "How would someone else see this problem?" Thinking in new ways strengthens your critical thinking skills, builds resilience, and helps you adapt when life doesn't go as planned.

Key Ideas to Remember

- **Think in Possibilities**
 - Don't stop at one answer—brainstorm several options.
 - Even "wild" ideas can spark useful solutions.
- **Switch Perspectives**
 - Try seeing the problem from someone else's point of view.
 - Different people (friend, parent, teacher, coach) may notice solutions you missed.
- **Test Your Solutions**
 - Ask: Is this fair? Is it realistic? What might happen in the long run?
 - Good solutions balance creativity with clear, critical thinking.



Creative, Flexible Thinking

- **Be Flexible**

- If your first idea doesn't work, try another.
- Adaptability is a key part of problem-solving and critical thinking.

Why This Matters to You

- Helps you manage stress when the first solution doesn't work.
- Strengthens friendships and teamwork by finding fair outcomes.
- Builds resilience—you can bounce back when plans fall apart.
- Prepares you for bigger challenges in high school, college, and beyond.

Quick Check: Am I Thinking Critically and Creatively?

When you face a challenge, ask yourself:

- Have I listed more than one possible solution?
- Have I looked at the problem from another person's perspective?
- Have I thought about both short-term and long-term consequences?
- Am I willing to adjust if my first idea doesn't work?



Think of a challenge you faced recently. Did you explore multiple solutions or stick with your first idea? How might critical and creative thinking have changed the outcome?



Creative, Flexible Thinking



Activity 1: Level Up the Question

When you face a challenge, the first questions that come to mind are often surface-level: “Why is this happening?” or “Whose fault is it?” These don’t always help you move toward a solution. Asking the right type of questions can help you find more creative solutions. Strong questions dig deeper, challenge assumptions, and open the door to new ideas.

Read the problems below and write down “shallow” questions that might come to mind first. Then take time to “level it up” by writing more deep, creative questions that could lead to solutions. A sample has been done for you.

Problem: Students are stressed before exams.

Shallow Question: Why are exams stressful?

Leveled-Up Question: How could exams be redesigned to measure learning without creating so much stress?

Problem: The school cafeteria is overcrowded.

Shallow: _____

Leveled-Up: _____

Problem: Too many students are late to first period.

Shallow: _____

Leveled-Up: _____

Problem: The soccer team keeps losing games.

Shallow: _____

Leveled-Up: _____



How did changing shallow questions into deeper ones help you think of more creative solutions, and how could this skill help you in real-life situations?