

Active Learning Activities for Critical Thinking

Reciprocal Teaching

*apprenticeship where students assume the role of teacher in supporting their peers construct meaning from text.

Steps:

1. Choose an article or Website text for the students to read. Break up the text into smaller parts if necessary.
2. The instructor will take an active role in leading the discussion of the text.
3. Have the terms –predicting, clarifying, question gathering and summarizing written on a board or overhead screen.
4. Organize the students into pairs or groups of 4-5
5. Have the students read the text independently and each student takes a role of predictor, clarifier, question gather or summarizer.
6. Conclude the exercise by having the students report their understanding of the text.
7. Ask the students “who would like to share their prediction? What were some of the difficult words or confusing ideas? Who can share a question they wrote? Who will share their summary?”

Predicting: Predicting occurs when student hypothesize what the author will discuss next. In order to do this successfully, students must activate the knowledge they already possess regarding the topic. For example, “I predict social media has a positive impact on scholarly communication.” Or, “I predict this author will provide reasons for eating organic because of the environmental effects of genetically modified foods.”

Clarifying: When students are asked to clarify, their attention is called to the fact that there may be many reasons why text is difficult to understand such as new vocabulary, unclear reference words, and unfamiliar or complex concepts.

For example: Identify words that are unfamiliar or difficult to pronounce (circle the words), and discuss ideas that are confusing.

Question gathering: Students must first identify the kind of information that is significant enough to provide the substance for questioning.

For example, what questions do you have from your reading?

Summarizing: Summarizing provides the opportunity to identify and integrate the most important information in the text.

For example: What are the main ideas, important details, and author’s purpose.

Amanda Bird

birdam@appstate.edu

Georgia International Conference on Information Literacy, 2013

Active Learning Activities for Critical Thinking

Read-Pair-Share

*A collaborative activity that can be very effective in getting students to engage in critical thinking.

1. Choose a scholarly article for the students to read.
2. The instructor preps the students by showing them how to read a scholarly article.
3. In groups, students jointly read the text
4. Ask the students to:
 - Identify the main questions the author is addressing
 - Examine the important information the author uses
 - Assess the primary conclusions

Include some information literacy competencies such as how can we tell if this author is credible? How do we fact-check? What other types of sources do we need? This will facilitate a discussion on finding and evaluating resources and continuing on the path of knowledge.

Peer Teaching

*Students work in self-guided groups to foster peer learning.

1. Ask students in groups to use a specific database or 2-3 different databases to answer a research question.
For example, “How do you see digital innovation and social media changing the nature of scholarly communication?”
2. Have the students come up with key words, use advanced searching features.
3. Evaluate its usefulness, present the source to the class

Bibliography

Webb, Julie. Reciprocal Teaching: Raising Student Achievement Through Collaborative Literacy Experiences.” Academic Literacy Summit, University of California, Davis. Web. 3 Feb. 2011.