

## ENHANCING CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS OF STUDENTS IN ENGLISH CLASSES

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***Abstract.** In the rapidly evolving world of higher education, developing critical thinking skills among students is worthy of attention. This article explores effective strategies for enhancing critical thinking in English classes, particularly in a higher education context. By integrating specific pedagogical methods, English instructors can significantly contribute to the intellectual growth of their students. The discussion encompasses various research-backed methods, practical classroom activities, and the overarching benefits of nurturing critical thinking skills.*

***Keywords:** Critical Thinking, English Classes, Higher Education, Pedagogy, Analytical Skills, Reflective Thinking*

### **Introduction**

Critical thinking is an essential component of higher education, equipping students with the ability to analyze, evaluate, and apply information effectively. Critical thinking involves the ability to think clearly and rationally about what to do or what to believe. It includes the ability to engage in reflective and independent thinking. In the context of English classes, critical thinking is crucial for interpreting texts, constructing coherent arguments, and engaging in meaningful discussions. Students become more adept at analyzing and interpreting complex texts, constructing coherent and persuasive arguments, and engaging in thoughtful discussions. These skills are transferable across disciplines and essential for academic success and lifelong learning.

### **Main Part:**

Students with strong critical thinking abilities are usually better prepared to navigate the challenges of the professional world, where analytical and problem-

solving skills are highly valued. However, while the importance of critical thinking is widely recognized, there are several challenges in integrating these skills into the English curriculum. To overcome those challenges requires instructors to apply different instructions, methods and strategies in teaching context.

***Strategies for Enhancing Critical Thinking Skills:***

*Discussion-based learning* fosters a collaborative environment where students can exchange ideas and challenge each other's viewpoints. In English classes, discussions about literary themes, character motivations, and authorial intent can promote critical thinking. Structured discussions, such as seminars or fishbowl discussions, require students to support their opinions with evidence from the text, thereby enhancing their analytical skills.

*Problem-based learning* involves presenting students with complex, real-world problems that require critical thinking to solve. In English classes, PBL can be applied through case studies, scenario analysis, and project-based assignments. For example, students might be tasked with developing a campaign to address a social issue explored in a piece of literature, requiring them to critically assess the text, identify key themes, and propose practical solutions.

*Peer review* activities allow students to critique each other's work, fostering a critical eye and constructive feedback skills. By evaluating their peers' essays or presentations, students learn to identify strengths and weaknesses in arguments, assess the effectiveness of rhetorical strategies, and suggest improvements. This process not only enhances critical thinking but also builds a collaborative learning community.

***Classroom Activities to Promote Critical Thinking:***

*Close reading* involves carefully and methodically analyzing a text, paying attention to details such as word choice, sentence structure, and literary devices. Instructors can guide students through close reading exercises, prompting them to ask questions about the text's meaning, context, and purpose. This practice develops students' ability to engage deeply with texts and think critically about their content.

*Organizing debates* on controversial topics or themes from literary works

encourages students to develop and defend their viewpoints. Debates require students to research their positions, anticipate counterarguments, and articulate their thoughts persuasively. This activity hones their critical thinking by demanding thorough analysis and strategic argumentation.

*Reflective journals* provide a space for students to record their thoughts, reactions, and analyses of the texts they read. This ongoing writing practice encourages introspection and critical engagement with course material. By regularly reflecting on their learning experiences, students can identify their thought processes and develop their analytical skills over time.

### **Conclusion**

Developing critical thinking skills in English classes is vital for preparing students to succeed academically and professionally. By incorporating methods such as discussion-based learning, writing assignments, problem-based learning, and peer review, educators can create a dynamic and engaging learning environment. Classroom activities like debates, reflective journals further enhance students' critical thinking abilities. Prioritizing critical thinking enable students to develop intellectual abilities and prepare them for the complexities of the modern world.

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