



# Literacy Connects

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## Critical Thinking Across the Curriculum

Thomas Jefferson once wrote, “A democracy cannot survive unthinking citizens.” This basic premise has served as a cornerstone for public education. Yet, are we doing enough to ensure that our young citizens are thinking critically about our subject areas, their lives and communities, and the world at large? In order to think critically, students must be able to analyze and evaluate information. These skills do not come naturally; they must be taught. Research indicates that developing proficiency in thinking skills is a cumulative, developmental process that must start in the early years and continue through college. Critical thinking is not limited to certain subject areas but must be taught across the curriculum. There are numerous strategies for raising the level of questioning in the classroom, but the easiest way is to create purposeful questions that seek to engage thinking rather than repeat knowledge. Following is a list of question starters that may increase the level of thinking in almost any context:

### **Hypothetical thinking: Considering possible outcomes as variables change (*requires evaluation and synthesis*)**

- What if this had (had not) happened?
- What if this were (were not) true?
- What if we change \_\_\_\_\_?
- What if I could do something I can not do?

### **Application of different symbol systems: Changing modality of expression (*requires analysis and synthesis*)**

- Can I make this into a word problem?
- Can I make this into a number problem?
- Can I draw a picture of this?
- Can I represent this in musical terms?
- Can I act it out?
- Can I make a dance to represent this?

### **Analogy: Comparing dissimilar items on an abstract level (*requires analysis and synthesis*)**

- How is \_\_\_\_ like \_\_\_\_\_?
- How does this model represent \_\_\_\_\_?
- How is this process similar to a process you know?
- How can this concept be compared to \_\_\_\_\_?

### **Analysis of point of view: Considering author perspective, purpose and audience (*requires analysis and evaluation*)**

- What else could account for this?
- Who would benefit if I thought this?
- What view of the world does the author assume the reader holds? How do we know?
- How many other ways could someone look at this?
- What would \_\_\_\_ say about this?
- Where is the author unclear? Why is this unclear?
- What perspective is missing? Why?
- What does the author want us to believe? Why?
- How does the text depict age, gender, and or cultural relationships?

Visit the RPDP website ([www.rpdp.net](http://www.rpdp.net)) for a complete selection of *Literacy Connects* and for lists of adult, adolescent and picture books that promote critical perspectives.