


CRITICAL THINKING, THOUGHTFUL WRITING



A Rhetoric
with
Readings

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Critical Thinking, Thoughtful Writing: A Rhetoric with Readings

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**Critical Thinking,
Thoughtful Writing:
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Preface

Critical Thinking, Thoughtful Writing: A Rhetoric with Readings presents an integrated approach to teaching the thinking, writing, and reading skills that first-year composition students need in order to successfully complete academic work. This book's goal is to help students develop complex thinking and writing abilities by having them complete writing assignments and critically evaluate challenging readings drawn from various disciplines and social debate. Thinking↔Writing Activities are carefully integrated with material throughout each chapter and culminate in a Writing Project at the end of each chapter. The Writing Projects combine the thinking and writing skills students have practiced and strengthened throughout the chapter. The Writing Projects also draw upon the components of the Thinking↔Writing Model introduced in Chapter 1 (page 8) and are reinforced throughout the book.

Writers and teachers of writing have long recognized intricate relationships between the extraordinary human processes of thought and language. Leo Tolstoy eloquently observed that "*The relations of word to thought, and the creation of new concepts is a complex, delicate and enigmatic process unfolding in our soul.*" To date, this insight has not been clearly translated into a comprehensive approach for beginning college students to become thoughtful writers. Experts in the thinking process (philosophers and psychologists, for example) have not generally concentrated on the complex challenges of teaching writing. Experts in teaching writing have found integrating the critical thinking process into their pedagogy a sometimes problematic endeavor.

Critical Thinking, Thoughtful Writing introduces a comprehensive model of thinking and writing which integrates these processes. As students develop higher-order thinking abilities, they learn to articulate their ideas through writing. And as they develop their abilities in the writing process, they learn to think coherently, precisely, and creatively. This unique approach integrates development of thinking skills with writing skills so that they not only reinforce each other but also become inseparable.

Incorporating Critical Thinking in Composition Instruction

More than one writer has echoed Annie Dillard's observation, "I don't know what I think until I see myself write." *Critical Thinking, Thoughtful Writing* presents writing as a way of thinking and learning by developing critical thinking skills to help writers write clearly and forcefully. It also incorporates critical thinking as a way of teaching composition. An integrated and organic model of thinking, writing, and reading that prepares students for meaningful success in their academic courses, careers, and personal lives rests right at its core. Its approach reflects recent research into the thinking process, as well as contemporary practices in writing pedagogy, including the following areas:

- learning collaboratively
- writing and reading in the disciplines
- appreciating diversity, and
- conducting research

This book stimulates and guides students to think deeply and beyond superficialities, to refuse to be satisfied with the first idea they have, to look objectively at the pros and cons of issues, and to formulate their own informed conclusions. It helps students develop an interest in research and in delving into possibilities rather than into commonplace answers. It encourages students to be independent in their thinking and courageous in their convictions. And it shows them how to organize information, interpret different perspectives, solve challenging problems, analyze complex issues, and communicate their ideas clearly.

Using a Critical Thinking Framework to Teach Writing

Significant advantages to using a critical thinking framework to teach thoughtful writing and informed reading include the following:

- **Critical thinking provides an intellectual and thematic framework that helps writing teachers place structural and grammatical concerns in a meaningful context.** Because students are involved in and concerned about what they are writing, they are motivated to master the technical aspects of writing in order to articulate their thinking with clarity and precision. Critical thinking lends rigor and seriousness to students' writing. *Critical Thinking, Thoughtful Writing* challenges and guides students to think and write about important topics that build on their cognitive activities and critical explorations. This process enables

students to improve both the *technical* aspects of their writing (coherence, organization, detail, use of grammatical conventions) as well as the *quality* of their writing (depth, insight, sophistication).

- **A critical thinking framework permits students to understand the reciprocal relationship between the process of thinking and the process of writing.** Students are stimulated to explore their own composing processes, gradually mastering the forms of thought and critical thinking that are the hallmark of mature and thoughtful writing. Students are challenged to explore, analyze, and evaluate opinions.
- **The emphasis of critical thinking on actively exploring ideas, listening to others, and carefully evaluating opinions and arguments provides a context for collaborative learning and writing activities.** Students learn to examine their own opinions analytically and relate these opinions to the world at large. They learn to assess alternative points of view in dialogue with others. This approach enables them to use writing as a means of self-discovery, and to learn from the responses of others. The result is a sense of community and mutual support that gives students confidence to learning openly and collaboratively.
- **The critical thinking framework helps students appreciate that reading is a thinking activity rather than a series of decoding skills.** This understanding results in accelerated and enhanced reading development. Students are better able to understand and develop the interrelated thinking abilities which comprise the reading process. This includes problem-solving, forming and applying concepts, and relating ideas to larger conceptual frameworks.

Distinctive Features of *Thinking Critically, Writing Thoughtfully*

The four-part organization of every chapter integrates thinking, writing and reading. Each chapter focuses on a central critical thinking skill, which is explored through Thinking↔Writing Activities, and readings that embody the thought processes of the kind of writing students should develop. These demonstrate the key point introduced at the beginning of the book: “You can’t write better than you think!”

- **A Comprehensive Thinking↔Writing Model.** The Thinking↔Writing Model introduced in Chapter One (page 8) and reinforced throughout the book provides a clear graphic representation of the writing process and of the connections between critical thinking and thoughtful writing, as well as creative thinking and inventive writing.

- **Thematic Reading Clusters.** Readings in every chapter provide the basis for assignments that initiate students' writing. Engaging themes include creativity, decision making, language discovery, gender issues, ecological relationships, media influences, problem-solving, and arguments on controversial issues.
- **Writing Projects.** Each chapter culminates in a carefully structured Writing Project that builds on the skills developed in the Thinking+ Writing Activities in the chapter. The Writing Projects guide students to use the Thinking+ Writing Model to compose papers with special emphasis on chapter themes. The text moves methodically through each Project, guiding the students through stages toward a finished product.
- **Progression from the Personal to the Social.** The book moves logically from introducing creative and critical thinking to explaining how these tools can be used for the different modes of writing. It helps students understand thinking and writing as ways to show relationships, then moves into more complex modes of expository and argumentative writing. The logical progression evolves from the more personal and spontaneous thrust of creative writing, through attention to language issues, to traditional organizational patterns, and finally to problem-solving and argumentation. Students are encouraged to use external sources in their writing: researching, evaluating, integrating, and referencing. With its emphasis on the interplay of critical thinking and writing, the book provides a productive format for quickly pulling students out of their personal experiences and pushing them to think and write about more challenging issues and concepts. The practical strategies they learn will help students address writing assignments they will face in other academic classes as well as in the workplace.
- **Clear Definition of Critical Thinking.** Critical and creative thinking are often nebulous to many students, but this book introduces them in concrete ways. Each chapter contains the following organization: a concept is introduced; a "real world" context for that concept is provided; and then the concept is related to its use in writing and critical thinking (for example, discussing a practical process for making decisions, then applying that process to making decisions about editing and revising drafts).
- **Substantive Treatment of Creative Thinking.** The book discusses creative as well as critical thinking, showing that creative thought can and should be an integral part of academic writing.
- **Emphasis on Collaboration.** The value of collaboration in thinking and writing is emphasized throughout.
- **Cross-disciplinary Approach.** Recognizing that first-year composition courses prepare students to write in all of their courses and after col-

lege, this book presents examples, selections, and assignments that apply to a variety of disciplines.

- **Broad Coverage.** In addition to coverage of expository composition themes, the book emphasizes the reasoning process throughout, and includes a chapter on argument. This inclusive coverage and flexible design makes the book suitable for a first or second semester course, as well as a two-semester sequence.
- **Emphasis on the “Whole” Student.** The book views learning to think, write, and read as integral dimensions of an individual’s personal growth and transformation. It aims to help students grow. While learning how to think and write, students are encouraged to apply these critical and creative thinking and problem-solving skills to all facets of their lives.

The Authors

Critical Thinking, Thoughtful Writing is the result of collaboration of three authors. John Chaffee, a professor of Philosophy, has been a pioneer in the field of Critical Thinking and Critical Literacy for the last twenty years. His best-selling textbook, *Thinking Critically*, fifth edition, presents a comprehensive, language-based approach to learning to think critically that has helped define the field of Critical Thinking. He has linked Critical Thinking and Composition courses at his college, creating powerful learning communities that accelerate the development of students’ thinking, writing, and reading abilities. Barbara Stout and Christine McMahon, both professors of English, have used *Thinking Critically* in their Composition courses for over seven years and have adapted John Chaffee’s critical thinking approach to the teaching of writing. Their approaches to teaching writing and their active involvement in the composition field have contributed significantly to a text that is practical, effective, and adaptable to a variety of instructional contexts. This multidisciplinary synthesis has produced a text that provides students with a clear path to becoming literate thinkers, thoughtful writers, and informed readers.

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