

Critical Reasoning Analysis Using the Elements of Thought

Summary

Students analyze information or an ethical issue using a table that emphasizes the elements of thought.

Student Handout: Critical Reasoning Analysis

Point of View: What is the point of view? How does the chosen perspective show through?

Purpose: What is the purpose of the material? Why was it written?

Questions: What questions does the author address? What questions does the material raise?

Concepts: What are the main concepts/ideas communicated by the material?

Information: What factual information is included?

Assumptions: What assumptions are behind the author's arguments? What is the author taking for granted that might be subject to question?

Inferences: What can you infer from the material? What can you conclude based upon the material?

Implications: What are the consequences if the author's reasoning is correct? What if it is incorrect? What is the larger meaning?

The elements are discussed as a class, and can serve as a starting point for more involved approaches such as the Congressional Hearing Model.

Teacher Instructions

Students are either provided with information (for example, a newspaper article) or gather it themselves. They use the elements of thought to analyze different aspects of the information. Note that the elements do not necessarily have to be presented in a certain order.

Variation

The elements of thought can also serve as a framework for analyzing an ethical issue. The sample Congressional Hearing Model focused on Stem Cells demonstrates how such an approach might be used.

This analysis sheet can also be used before conducting a Socratic Seminar, to ensure that students have read the required material.

(from the Foundation for Critical Thinking, www.criticalthinking.org, and Paula Fraser, Bellevue School District PRISM Program)

Critical Reasoning Analysis

Point of view - What is the point of view, and how does the particular perspective show through?

Purpose - Why was this material written?

Questions - What questions are addressed by the author? What questions do you have about the material?

Concepts - What are the main ideas and concepts addressed?

Information - What are some of the most important facts included?

Assumptions - What is the author assuming that might be subject to question?

Inferences - What can you infer and conclude based on the material?

Implications - What is the larger meaning? What are the consequences if the author's reasoning is correct?