

# CRITICAL THINKING OPENERS TOOLKIT

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10 MINUTE  
WRITING  
OPENERS



PROBLEM  
SOLVING,  
CREATIVE  
THINKING, AND  
METACOGNITION



## Teaching Procedures

To provoke process-thinking, students need a context from which to explore the schema described above. The *Critical Thinking Openers Toolkit* uses famous literary quotations from the greatest thinkers and writers of all time, including contemporary minds from all knowledge disciplines to stimulate critical thinking.

1. Display and read the Student Response from the previous lesson, describing an insightful observation, interpretation, application, or revision.
2. Display the Critical Thinking Opener with your projector.
3. Read the Literary Quotation twice outloud, defining vocabulary as is necessary.
4. Tell students to read the *Observation*, *Interpretation*, *Application*, and *Revision* question prompts and respond to one or more on binder paper or in Writers Notebooks.
5. Lead an interactive discussion on more or more components of the critical thinking schema.

## Variations

- Introduce the critical thinking schema one at a time, layering in the components as students become more familiar with the components.
- In addition to individual responses (as described above), explore paired responses, cooperative group responses, whole class responses, and your own responses as teacher-coach. Try combining instructional methods. For example, starting off with paired written responses on the *Observation* will stimulate cooperative group brainstormed responses on the *Interpretation*, which will provoke terrific whole class discussions on the *Application*, which will engender creative and original individual ideas on the *Revisions*.
- Jigsaw the *Observation*, *Interpretation*, *Application*, and *Revision* components. Divide your students into heterogeneous groups of four or eight. Assign one component to each cooperative group (or one component to two groups, if using groups of eight). Assign group roles (pre-printed cards work well) such as spokespersons, recorders, time monitors, alternative questioners, summarizers, and evaluators to keep students on task and working well together. A lot five or six minutes to the task, and then facilitate an interactive discussion among the groups.
- Do a teacher “Think Aloud” on one or more components of the critical thinking schema. See the following for how to incorporate this instructional technique:

# **CTO Critical Thinking Openers #1**

## **Literary Quotation**

“All would live long, but none would be old.”

Benjamin Franklin (1706 – 1790)

**Definition/Explanation/Reflection:** Growing old presents both opportunities and challenges.

**Observation:** What do you see? What do you feel? What seem to be the key words?

**Interpretation:** How would you put this into your own words? What does this mean? What doesn't this mean? What does this suggest? Why does the author say this?

**Application:** How can this be used? How could this thought affect something else? What conclusions can be drawn from this? Do you agree with this? How does this apply to you?

**Revision:** How else could this have been written? Revise this to reflect your point of view or ideas. Create something new to say about this subject.

**Student Response:**

## Critical Thinking Openers #2

### Literary Quotation

“Indifference and neglect often do much more damage than outright dislike.”

J.K. Rowling (1965 – )

**Definition/Explanation/Reflection:** *Indifference* means to not be interested. *Neglect* means to not pay attention.

**Observation:** What do you see? What do you feel? What seem to be the key words?

**Interpretation:** How would you put this into your own words? What does this mean? What doesn't this mean? What does this suggest? Why does the author say this?

**Application:** How can this be used? How could this thought affect something else? What conclusions can be drawn from this? Do you agree with this? How does this apply to you? What conclusions can be drawn from this? Do you agree with this? How does this apply to you?

**Revision:** How else could this have been written? Revise this to reflect your point of view or ideas. Create something new to say about this subject.

**Student Response:**

## **CTO Critical Thinking Openers #3**

### **Literary Quotation**

“Four be the things I'd have been better without: love, curiosity, freckles and doubt.”

Dorothy Parker (1893 – 1967)

**Definition/Explanation/Reflection:** Many things in life are both good and bad.

**Observation:** What do you see? What do you feel? What seem to be the key words?

**Interpretation:** How would you put this into your own words? What does this mean? What doesn't this mean? What does this suggest? Why does the author say this?

**Application:** How can this be used? How could this thought affect something else? What conclusions can be drawn from this? Do you agree with this? How does this apply to you?

**Revision:** How else could this have been written? Revise this to reflect your point of view or ideas. Create something new to say about this subject.

**Student Response:**

## **Critical Thinking Openers #4**

### **Literary Quotation**

“We shall not fail or falter; we shall not weaken or tire...  
Give us the tools and we will finish the job.”

Sir Winston Churchill (1874 – 1965)

**Definition/Explanation/Reflection:** To falter means to hesitate. The author was Great Britain’s leader during World War II.

**Observation:** What do you see? What do you feel? What seem to be the key words?

**Interpretation:** How would you put this into your own words? What does this mean? What doesn’t this mean? What does this suggest? Why does the author say this?

**Application:** How can this be used? How could this thought affect something else? What conclusions can be drawn from this? Do you agree with this? How does this apply to you?

**Revision:** How else could this have been written? Revise this to reflect your point of view or ideas. Create something new to say about this subject.

**Student Response:**