

Teaching Critical Reading

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Biographies

Narratives

Greek Myths

News Reports

Opinion Pieces

Teachers' Notes

To be able to think critically is essential for students in our contemporary society which exposes them to a multitude of sources, including technology, print and visual texts. This book is written with the intent to facilitate the growth of critical reading and thinking skills through a variety of texts, to allow learners to 'develop capability in critical and creative thinking as they learn to generate and evaluate knowledge, clarify concepts and ideas, seek possibilities, consider alternatives and solve problems'.

Critical reading and thinking requires engaged learners who think broadly and deeply. Critical reading and thinking uses skills, behaviours and dispositions such as reason, logic, resourcefulness, discussion, debate, analysis, summation, imagination and innovation. This book provides texts and activities that develop these skills, using content and experiences that are applicable for learning at school and in lives beyond school. Some activity sheets suggest an Extra Activity that includes research, use of ICT, small group and partner based learning tasks with differentiation for diverse learners.

Section 1: Reading Biographies

This section centres on a biography of Edith Cowan - a pioneer woman in the Western Australian Parliament. This section could be introduced with a discussion on famous Australian women and on women in Australian politics. It asks the inquiry question: How have key figures, events and values shaped Australian society, its system of government and citizenship?, and develops critical thinking and reading skills through summation, analysis of language and structure of texts, comparison and contrast and understanding of cause and effect.

Section 2: Reading Narratives

This section is built on a narrative of contemporary realistic fiction. This section is relevant to other in-depth reading and discussion of fiction in the classroom. It develops students' skills to manage conflicting emotions, to understand their physical and social changes and examine the changing nature of their relationships with learning experiences involving making connections through the use of inferences and predictions while encouraging students to discuss and examine personal, family and community values and beliefs.

Section 3: Reading Greek Myths

This section is built on a re-telling of an ancient Greek myth that fosters discussion on ethical decision-making. This section can be introduced via discussions on change and can form part of a unit on stories and storytelling in New Zealand society and in other cultures. It enables students to develop ethical understanding as they read and analyse a Greek myth to explore ethical issues through interactions with others and the discussion of ideas. Learning experiences include use of visualisation and graphic organisers to develop critical reading in understanding conflict and developing their personal opinion.

Section 4: Reading Non-Fiction

In this section students read, discuss and analyse a news report. This section is ideal for use in class discussions on current issues in the news, and for a discussion on change. On completion of this section, students could be involved in creating and publishing a class newspaper, news report or blog/vlog. Students develop skills in ICT while analysing the provided news reports for information and meaning.

● Summarising

- After reading the biography entitled *A Tireless Woman*, complete this activity sheet.

One way to understand a text is to summarise. How do we summarise? We write down the most important ideas from the text. We ignore what we think is less important information. We organise the information in a way that has meaning for us. Summarising helps us to take the text and to simplify it - to help clarify the big picture of the text.



- When you summarise, remember to quote (use exact words) from the text.

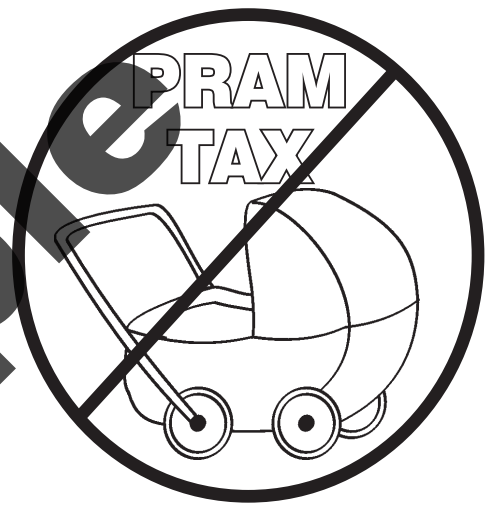
1. In a nutshell, *A Tireless Woman* is about:

2. One important idea presented in the text about Edith Cowan is:

3. A second important idea presented in the text about Edith Cowan is:

4. I believe that this text is important because:

5. If I had to write one sentence about the text to tell a friend, it would be:



EXTRA ACTIVITY

Write a list of the main "idea words" (important words) from the biography on the back of this sheet. Can you find ten to twenty words?

● *Monitoring Comprehension*

- After reading the narrative entitled *The Plan*, complete this activity sheet.

Checking For Understanding

Sometimes, if we ask questions when reading or viewing a text, we can check our understanding. We can ask questions like:

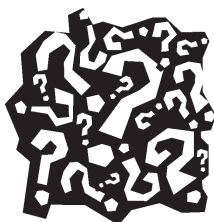
What seems clear?

What is not clear?

If we ask ourselves these questions, we can build our understanding. Questions and sharing our questions and answers with others help us to understand.

- Create questions about the story *The Plan* with your partner. Talk and write down your questions below together with your answers to the questions.

Question 1 Why did:	Answer:
Question 2 Should there:	Answer:
Question 3 How did:	Answer:
Question 4 I'm not sure:	Answer:
Question 5 Any other question:	Answer:



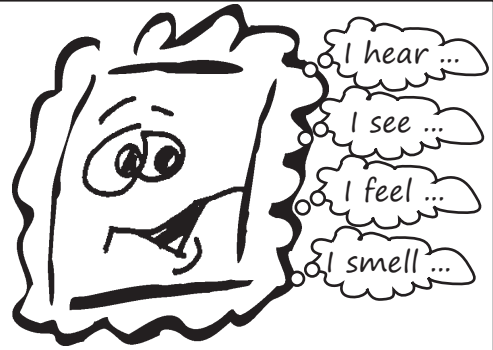
EXTRA ACTIVITY

Share your questions and answers with another pair or with the class. Are any questions the same? Are there any that are different?

● Visualisation 1

- After reading the Greek myth entitled *Daedalus and Icarus* complete this activity sheet.

We can build a picture of the text that we are reading in our minds. This means that we are creating mental pictures. When we form mental pictures while we read, we are visualising. Visualisation helps make a story more personal for us. It also helps us to remember more and remember well. Our mental images change as we read. Visualisation is like building a personal road map – we create pictures of what we hear, smell, touch, and see in the story.



- Complete the Visualisation Chart below. Use words, dot points, sentences or pictures to describe the images that you see as you are reading the myth.

Visualisation Chart

<p><i>What do you see?</i> e.g. I see the King's red face and steam coming from his ears.</p>	<p><i>What do you smell?</i> e.g. I smell Icarus' burning wings.</p>
<p><i>What do you hear?</i></p>	<p><i>What do you feel?</i></p>



EXTRA ACTIVITY

Share your chart with the class. Discuss similarities and differences.

● What's The Text's Problem?

- After reading the Greek myth entitled *Daedalus and Icarus* complete this activity sheet.

Texts Have Problems

- In texts, characters often experience a problem.
- In texts, events often cause a problem.
- We can think about what events caused the problem and the effect that the problem had on the characters in the text.
- What problems did you notice in the myth *Daedalus and Icarus*?
- Were they caused by people or by events?
- We can also think about how the problem is solved, then we can deepen our understanding and response to the text.



- In pairs, complete the chart. It will help you to identify the problems in the myth, the effects on the characters because of these problems and the solutions of these problems.

Problem Chart

1

What is a problem in the text?

2

What caused the problem?

3

What was the effect of the problem?

4

How was this problem resolved?



EXTRA IDEA

In small groups, role play the problem and solution. Could the problem be solved in another way?

● *Objective And Subjective Language*

- In the news report *Volcano Set To Erupt*, the writer (Jade Jenkins) wants to sound as objective (unbiased) as possible. To do this she uses objective language (“facts”) rather than subjective language (“opinions”).
- The writer of the opinion piece *The Truth Behind Kyushu Volcanic Activity* uses lots of subjective language (“opinions”) but also includes some objective language, to make her text look believable.
- Give examples of objective and subjective language used in both texts. Write in the table below.

NEWS REPORT	OPINION PIECE
<i>Volcano Set To Erupt</i>	<i>The Truth Behind Kyushu Volcanic Activity</i>
e.g. “With an ash plume rising to an altitude of 3km!” (objective)	e.g. “Well-prepared? For medical emergencies? I doubt it.” (subjective)

Sample

- Which text do you trust more? Why?

● *Analysing Images*

- The news report *Volcano Set To Erupt* includes a map of the island of Kyushu. We can analyse the map to help us critically view the author's argument.

It is helpful to learn how to analyse and interpret information that is represented in graphs, charts, tables, diagrams, and maps. The information often adds to our understanding of the text. We can learn to breakdown graphics in information texts and maps in a step-by-step process.

1. View the graphic. What type of graphic are you analysing?

2. What information is the visual providing?
List three pieces of information.

- _____
- _____
- _____



Map of Japan

3. The writer argues that the government is well-prepared to evacuate people from Kyushu to other islands of Japan, such as Shikoku and Honshu, in emergency situations. Look at the map. Look at where the islands are situated. How close are they? Do you think that they are easily accessible?

4. Can you think of a different way to visually represent the information on the map? Explain why this visual representation might be effective in representing the information.

EXTRA ACTIVITY

Do some research to find other maps of Kyushu that show the information differently, for example, railway lines or road maps. With your partner, compare the information on these maps.