

## Strategy: Engaging Students in Critical Reading, Writing, and Speaking

Six types of prompts guide pre-class reading that asks students to (1) identify the problem or issue, (2) make connections, (3) interpret the evidence, (4) challenge assumptions, (5) make applications, and (6) take a different point-of-view.

### Origin

Tomasek, T. (2009). Critical reading: Using reading prompts to promote active engagement with text. *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, 21(1), 127-132.

### Application

Critical reading/writing/speaking prompts can be designed to target specific critical thinking skills and can be used in and out of class, alone or in combination, to help students expand, clarify, or modify ideas.

**Identify the problem/issue** helps students create a “need to know” viewpoint:

- What problem is the author identifying? Who does the problem relate to?
- What are the complexities of this issue?
- For whom is this topic important and why?

**Making connections** helps students think about course topics within the realm of their own experience:

- What do I already know about this topic? Where and how have I acquired this knowledge? What might be the limitations of my thinking about this topic?
- How is this different from what I already know? Why might this difference exist?
- What new ideas are here for me to consider? Why am I willing to consider them? Why am I not willing to consider them?
- What experiences have I had that support, confound, or refute this information?
- What information contributes to my interests?
- How do these principles relate to what I’m learning in my other courses?
- What connections can I make between this and something else we’ve covered in this course?
- Make a list of ideas presented that are similar to your own and a separate list of ideas presented that you have never thought about before.

**Interpretation of evidence** can help students in reading case studies, viewing video clips, or reviewing information:

- What inferences can I make from the evidence provided?
- What patterns do I notice?
- What relevant evidence or examples does the author give to support his or her justification? Am I convinced? Why or why not?
- How does the author challenge complexities of this idea/information?

**Challenging assumptions** helps students identify and critique seldom-tested assumptions, determine their source, and evaluate their validity based on information:

- What assumptions do I have about this topic? How have my assumptions shaped my initial point of view? What information opposes my assumptions?
- What do I still not know or understand about the topic?

