SKILL TREE™

13: *The Magic of Critical Thinking*

PK–6

A PK–6 Lesson on Asking Questions, Using Evidence, and Making Thoughtful Decisions

Introduction for the Facilitator

This lesson introduces the professional skill of **critical thinking**, defined as the ability to pause, ask smart questions, and think deeply before making a decision. For PK–6 students, it's about learning how to **wonder, explore, and reason their way through problems**, instead of rushing to guess or follow others.

Critical thinking helps students become more curious, more thoughtful, and more confident in their decision-making. It teaches them to **gather information, spot patterns, evaluate ideas, and use logic**. These are habits that grow over time and strengthen everything from reading comprehension to social problem-solving to goal setting.

When students practice critical thinking, they also build their **personal competitive advantage**, which is their unique ability to approach life's challenges with clarity and confidence. Being able to learn deeply, ask better questions, and make smart life choices will support the **lifestyle** they want to build.

This lesson includes:

- **A Social Story about learning to pause and think**
- **8 Group Discussion Questions with follow-ups**
- **8 Journal Prompts (draw or write)**
- **10 thought-provoking classroom Activities**
- **A printable Worksheet to build their critical thinking mindset**

Let's help students discover that thinking deeply is a superpower they can use every single day.

CAREER TREE®

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Social Story: *Arjun's "Wait-a-Minute" Moment*

Arjun was always the first to raise his hand. In games, he shouted answers before the question was done. At lunch, he made fast choices—sometimes too fast.

One afternoon, the class played a game called "Guess What's Missing." Ms. Alvarez put several items on a tray and covered them with a towel. "You'll have 10 seconds to look, then tell me what's missing."

Arjun stared, then shouted, "It was the eraser!" But it wasn't. It was the glue stick.

He frowned. "I was sure."



Ms. Alvarez said gently, "Sometimes the fastest answer isn't the best one. Want to try a 'wait-a-minute moment' next time?"

Arjun tried again. This time, he paused. He looked twice. He remembered what was round, what was small, and what was colorful. "The paperclip!" he said. And he was right.

That small pause made a big difference. Arjun realized that **thinking clearly meant slowing down, asking better questions, and checking your ideas**.

From that day on, he didn't just shout the first thing that came to mind. He gave himself a "thinking breath." It made him feel stronger, smarter, and more in control.

Arjun's new ability to pause and think before acting became part of his **personal competitive advantage**. And it helped him build the kind of lifestyle he wanted: confident, thoughtful, and full of discovery.

Group Discussion Questions

1. **What does critical thinking mean to you?**
   Follow-up: How is it different from just answering quickly?
2. **Why is it helpful to pause and think before making a decision?**
   Follow-up: What can go wrong when we rush?
3. **What kinds of problems need critical thinking to solve?**
   Follow-up: How do you decide what to do when you're unsure?
4. **How do asking questions help us think better?**
   Follow-up: What's a smart question you've asked recently?
5. **What helps you stay curious instead of just guessing?**
   Follow-up: What do you do when something seems confusing at first?
6. **What are some places you use critical thinking at school? At home?**
   Follow-up: Where would it help more?
7. **How does critical thinking help you grow your personal competitive advantage?**
   Follow-up: What are you better at now because of your thinking skills?
8. **What kind of lifestyle do you want to live?**
   Follow-up: How can thinking clearly help you live that kind of life?

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Journal Prompts

(Students can write or draw their answers based on age and ability.)

1. **Draw or write about a time you stopped and thought before deciding. What happened?**
2. **What helps you stay calm when you're not sure what to do?**
3. **Describe a time you figured something out using clues.**
4. **What's one question you asked that helped you understand something better?**
5. **If critical thinking were your superpower, what would your superhero name be? What could you do?**
6. **How can thinking before reacting help you with friendships?**
7. **How does asking questions make your brain stronger?**
8. **How does critical thinking help grow your personal competitive advantage?**

Activities

1. **What Would You Do?**
   Students listen to a real-world situation (e.g., finding a wallet) and think through smart, kind options.
2. **Mystery Object Guess**
   Present a bag of hidden objects and give clues. Students ask "yes/no" questions to guess what's inside using logic.
3. **Think-Aloud Puzzle Time**
   During a puzzle or brain teaser, model aloud how to think through each step and reflect on the process.
4. **"Would You Rather?" Debates**
   Ask silly or serious questions and have students explain their thinking before choosing sides.
5. **Connect the Clues**
   Give students a few facts and ask them to draw a conclusion or story that connects them logically.
6. **Pause & Predict**
   During a read-aloud, stop and ask: "What do you think will happen next?" and "Why?"
7. **Evidence Sort**
   Give students multiple answers and facts. Have them match which facts support which idea.
8. **Find the Better Choice**
   Present two possible solutions to a problem. Students pick one and explain why it's the better option.
9. **Silly Syllogisms**
   Use simple logic puzzles or "if this, then that" games to teach deductive thinking in a fun way.
10. **Thinker of the Day**
    Each day, highlight one student who asked a thoughtful question, changed their thinking, or explained an idea clearly.

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My Critical Thinking Power Plan

Name:

Helpful Words:

- **Critical Thinking** = pausing to ask questions and think clearly before deciding
- **Lifestyle Goal** = the kind of life I want to live
- **Personal Competitive Advantage** = my special strengths and habits that help me grow

Directions:
Write or draw your answers. Every good thinker grows one step at a time!

Use the back of this sheet if you need more space.

1. **A time I used critical thinking was:**

2. **The question I asked myself was:**

3. **Here's how I figured it out:**

4. **Something I will think more deeply about next time is:**

5. **My Critical Thinking Superpower helps me do these things:**

6. **Critical thinking helps me grow my personal competitive advantage by:**

7. **This is how thinking clearly helps me live the lifestyle I want:**

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