

IDEA 44 Learning how to read as a political act: Critical literacy in the 21st century

Critical literacy <http://thinkcritically.weebly.com/critical-literacy.html> is the ability to actively read text in a manner that promotes a deeper understanding of socially constructed concepts such as power, inequality, and injustice in human relationships. Critical literacy encourages individuals to understand and question the attitudes, values, and beliefs of written texts, visual applications, and spoken words.

The development of critical literacy pushes students to question issues of power; in essence, to become thoughtful, active citizens. Becoming critically literate means that students have developed and mastered the ability to read, analyze, critique, and question the messages inherently present within any form of text—especially ads and political ads and speeches.

Themes of power, control, and domination, as well as topics of political and economic inequities, are present in the represented social world that is books, magazines, websites, etc. Students can use critical literacy to challenge these issues, and in doing so, they will develop a deeper understanding of their external worlds and what it means to be agents of change.

Facilitating the development of critical literacy promotes the examination and reform of social situations and exposes students to the hidden agendas within texts. Thus, in order to become critically literate, we must teach students to do more than read and write; students should become agents of social change.

Gail E. Tompkins, [Literacy for the 21st Century, A Balanced Approach: 5th Edition](#) (Boston: Pearson Education Inc, 2010)

<http://vorcreatex.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/What-is-critical-literacy.pdf>

Linda Christensen. [Unlearning the myths that bind us: Critiquing fairytales and films.](#) *Rethinking Our Classrooms*. Rethinking Schools Ltd, 1994.

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Lisa Stevens, and Thomas W. Bean, *Critical Literacy: context, research, and practice in the K-12 classroom*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications 2007. *Google Books*. Ed. Google, 2010. Accessed on Feb. 10th, 2010 from: <http://books.google.com/books?id=PxxFGlvlmXwC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Critical+Literacy&client=firefox-a&cd=3#v=onepage&q=&f=false>