

Remodeled Lessons: K-3

The following links provide examples of remodeled lessons found in *The Critical Thinking Handbook: Kindergarten through 3rd Grades*.

The basic idea behind lesson plan remodeling as a strategy for staff development in critical thinking is simple. Every practicing teacher works daily with lesson plans of one kind or another. To remodel lesson plans is to critique one or more lesson plans and formulate one or more new lesson plans based on that critical process.

To help teachers generalize from specific remodeling moves, and so facilitate their grasp of strong sense critical thinking and how it can be taught, we have devised a list of teaching strategies, which are outlined in *Strategy List: 35 Dimensions of Critical Thought*. Each strategy highlights an aspect of critical thought. Each use of it illustrates how that aspect can be encouraged in students.

Complete remodeled lessons have three major components:

1. an "Original Lesson," or statement of the "Standard Approach" (which describes the topic and how it is covered, including questions and activities)
2. the "Critique" (which describes the significance of the topic and its value for the educated thinker, evaluates the original, and provides a general idea of how the lesson can be remodeled)
3. "Remodeled Lesson" (which describes the new lesson, gives questions to be posed to students and student activities, and cites the critical thinking strategies by number).

The strategy number generally follows the questions or activities it represents. Complete remodel sets also include a list of "Objectives" which integrate the objectives of the original with the critical thinking goals; and the list of critical thinking "Strategies" applied in the remodel (listed in order of first appearance).

- [Corduroy](#)
- [The Pledge of Allegiance](#)
- [What Will Decompose](#)
- [Sentences That Ask](#)
- [Listening Game](#)

Corduroy

Objectives of the Remodeled Lesson

(K-1)

The Students Will:

- compare perspectives of a mother and daughter in a story
- explore the thoughts underlying the feelings regarding what makes things valuable
- generate and assess solutions
- clarify values and develop criteria to evaluate toys

A Teddy bear named Corduroy sits on a shelf at a large department store. A little girl sees him and wants to buy him, but her mother says no because they are out of time and the teddy bear is missing a button. After the store closes, the bear searches for his button because he wants to be bought by the child. He looks all over the store and finally ends up in the bed department where he sees a button on a mattress and tries to pull it off. He falls off the mattress, knocks over a lamp and the night guard finds him and returns him to the toy department. The child returns, buys him, sews on the button and Corduroy happily joins her family.

Students are asked questions like the following: Who is Corduroy? Where is he? How did he get his name? Does anyone know what the material called corduroy looks and feels like? (Pass around a piece of corduroy.) Why did Corduroy go out into the store? Why was it important to find his button? Where was he when he tried to pull one up? Why couldn't he get it? How did the story end?

Critique

The original lesson focused on a lot of factual recall and a narrow line of questioning. No other point of view was suggested, nor was there any personal tie-in.

Strategies Used to Remodel

These refer to subsections of *Strategy List: 35 Dimensions of Critical Thought*.

- S-25 reasoning dialogically: comparing perspectives, interpretations, or theories
- S-19 generating or assessing solutions
- S-15 developing criteria for evaluation: clarifying values and standards
- S-4 exploring thoughts underlying feelings and feelings underlying thoughts
- S-26 reasoning dialectically: evaluating perspectives, interpretations, or theories

To lay the foundation for exploring thoughts underlying feelings and comparing perspectives in the story, the teacher could first set up a role play in which several children are wearing pictures of toys while a mother and child walk past shopping for the best toy. After a few minutes, stop and ask the toys how they felt, then ask the child how he or she was choosing, then ask the mother how she was choosing. Read the story

aloud and ask the following questions to encourage students to explore the story's meaning and assess Corduroy's solution:

What was Corduroy doing in the store after it closed? Why did he think it was important to find the button? Do you think it was important for him to find the button? How else could he have solved the problem of the missing button? Was it really necessary for him to have a button in order for him to be bought? S-19 Do you think an adult would buy a teddy bear with a button missing? If not, why not? Why do you think the girl bought him anyway? S-15 What would you have done? How did the girl feel after she bought Corduroy? Why? How do you know how she felt? What do you think Corduroy felt? Why? How do you know? S-4 "Can you think of a different way to end the story? If your favorite animal could think, what would he or she have thought while being bought?"

Editors' note: The teacher could extend the discussion on the differences between the perspectives and standards of the girl and her mother (a common sort of difference between children and grown-ups). "Why do some people care about things like missing buttons and other people don't? How important was the missing button to the mother? Why? What reasons could she have? The girl? Why? Corduroy? Why? What was the most important thing about Corduroy for the mother? The girl? Why did the girl want Corduroy? Why didn't the missing button alter her feelings? Would the missing button have stopped any of the girl's plans for Corduroy? Why or why not? What does this difference between mother and daughter tell us about their values-what they think is important? Do you think the missing button is important? Why or why not? What's your best reason? What's the best reason on the other side? S-15 Have you ever seen or experienced a similar disagreement? How was it similar? What do you think of it? What does that tell us about your values?" S-26 With whom do you identify? Who do you understand? Who are you rooting for? Why?

The Pledge of Allegiance

Objectives of the Remodeled Lesson

1st-3rd Grades

The Students Will:

- discuss the meaning of the Pledge of Allegiance
- begin to develop a concept of 'good citizenship'
- develop an appreciation for 'our republic', 'liberty', and 'justice'

- begin to develop insight into sociocentricity and the need for integrity by comparing ideals to actual practice and comparing U.S. and French ideals
- explore the relationships between symbols and what they represent

The teacher explains the difficult words in the pledge, and the class discusses the flag and the importance of patriotism.

Critique

The lessons we reviewed on the subject over-emphasized the flag, while de-emphasizing allegiance to the country. They tended to confuse our ideals with our practice, thereby failing to suggest that it takes work to better live up to ideals. The common belief that loving your country means finding no fault with it is a major obstacle to critical thought. Fairminded thinking requires us to consider criticisms. The lessons we reviewed do not fully explain the ideas in the pledge; therefore, students are making a promise they don't understand. Ideas as important and complex as 'good citizenship' aren't covered in sufficient depth.

Furthermore, many lessons lead students to believe that our ideals are uniquely American, ignoring how many other countries have similar ideals. This practice encourages sociocentric stereotyping of non-Americans. Therefore, we suggest that students discuss ideals that others share with us.

The remodel can be substituted for any lesson on the pledge. Some teachers may also want to have students critique the pledge lesson in their text.

Strategies Used to Remodel

These refer to subsections of *Strategy List: 35 Dimensions of Critical Thought*.

- S-14 clarifying and analyzing the meanings of words or phrases
- S-32 making plausible inferences, predictions, or interpretations
- S-27 comparing and contrasting ideals with actual practice
- S-7 developing intellectual good faith or integrity
- S-29 noting significant similarities and differences
- S-2 developing insight into egocentricity or sociocentricity

We have designed this lesson as a complete third grade level discussion. We believe, however, that the pledge should be discussed as early as the children recite it. For first and second grades, use as much of this lesson as your students can understand. Teachers of second and third grades may have a pre-activity. Groups of students could use the dictionary to look up the words in the pledge and rewrite the pledge in their own words. We then recommend a thorough discussion of the pledge, such as that described below.

A pledge is a promise. What is a promise? Why keep promises? How do you feel when someone breaks a promise to you? Is something a promise if you have no choice about whether or not to make it? S-14

Allegiance is loyalty. (Use 'allegiance to a friend' as an analogy to enhance discussion.) So, we are making a promise to be loyal. Loyal to what? (Flag and country.) The flag is a symbol of our country. (If necessary, discuss the meaning of 'symbol'.) To be loyal to the flag is to show respect for it. We do this as a way of showing respect for our nation. (Discuss our country's name.)

"And to the republic for which it (the flag) stands." Our country is a republic. That means that we have the right to pick our leaders. (Compare this to other forms of government.) Do people in every country get to pick their leaders? If we select our leaders, then who is responsible for our government? S-32 Why? (Discuss how the country is made up of land, people, and government, and so we have to care for all three.)

Our country has ideals, some of which are in the pledge. (Discuss 'ideals'.) 'Indivisible' means something that stays whole, and is not split into parts. (Use households as an analogy to generate a discussion of why unity is important.) (Define 'liberty' and 'justice'.) We say "with liberty and justice for all." Why are these things important? How do you feel when you are treated unfairly? How would you feel if you couldn't decide anything for yourself? (Then discuss that last phrase, and ask who is meant by 'all'?) Is the idea that everyone is free and is always treated fairly a fact or an ideal? S-27 What is the difference between a fact and an ideal? (Discuss) Are freedom and fairness easy or hard for a country to achieve? (Discuss) S-7

Therefore, when we say the pledge, we promise to respect the flag and be good citizens. Since we live in a republic, the citizens are responsible for the government. So, we promise to take care of the land, keep our country whole, and strive to make our government treat everyone fairly and let people be free.

The teacher should point out that the students are not required to say the pledge, that they have a choice to decide whether they want to make this promise this way. You might want to tell the students that the French people hold the ideals of liberty, brotherhood, and equality. Have the students compare these to our ideals, then ask, "What do French and American points of view have in common?" (This could be a good place to have students critique the implications of their texts and why it was written that way: the tendency to want to think of ourselves as the only good people.) S-2

The next section is an introduction to the idea of a symbol. It helps the students distinguish between symbols and that which they represent.

Symbols S-29

You might begin with our flag, the skull-and-crossbones sign, and traffic lights as examples of symbols. Ask the students for more examples. Then ask, "Is there a

symbol for you?" Use the analogy of the students' names as symbols of them in the following discussion: Is a symbol the same as the thing it symbolizes or stands for? Is the symbol as important as what it symbolizes? Why might people get upset when a symbol is mistreated? Is it right to treat or react to the symbol the way you treat or react to the thing it symbolizes? Why or why not?

What Will Decompose?

Objectives of the Remodeled Lesson

2nd-3rd Grades

The Students Will:

- distinguish between man-made and natural objects by categorizing examples collected on a nature walk
- use the scientific process to organize information, categorize, hypothesize, test, and draw conclusions
- develop a perspective on the uses and problems of using man-made materials, by recognizing assumptions
- discuss the implications of using man-made objects, such as those made from plastic

Abstract

The original lesson plan is a scientific experiment to investigate what objects will decompose. The children are told that water is needed to make bacteria grow. They bury various objects, add water, and dig up each one after a specified length of time. They record the results.

Critique

We feel that a separate experiment on bacteria's need for water should precede this lesson.

This plan misses the opportunity to help children categorize and find common characteristics among natural and man-made substances through small group discussions. It does have hands-on investigation and experimentation. Its strength lies

in its use of the mechanical techniques of the scientific method. We would use the original lesson plan as a part of the lesson and encourage small group discussions on such questions as these: Why do we use plastic or other man-made materials? When are these materials good to use? When are they not good to use?

Strategies Used to Remodel

These refer to subsections of *Strategy List: 35 Dimensions of Critical Thought*.

- S-12 developing one's perspective: creating or exploring beliefs, arguments, or theories
- S-35 exploring implications and consequences

Rather than beginning the lesson with the experiment, start by clarifying concepts about trash by taking a nature walk to find trash, and then brainstorming ideas about the kinds of trash found. Ask what trash is decomposing and which isn't. Encourage the students to suggest categories of things that do or don't decompose, and encourage hypotheses to test. Then execute the experiment by having students choose objects from each category, make predictions regarding which objects will decompose and how quickly, and follow through on the experiment.

Following the experiment, allow for a discussion focusing on critical thinking skills. Allow for discussion on what problems have been revealed in this experiment and discussion. "What kinds of things did you predict would decompose quickly? Slowly? Not at all? What happened? Which of your predictions was verified? Which weren't? Why not? What can we say about what kinds of things decompose? Why? How are the things that decompose similar? How do they differ from those that don't decompose? Do you think that's the reason these did and those didn't? Why or why not? Can we generalize?" The class can discuss this at length, trying out generalizations, and possibly testing them with follow-up experiments.

In evaluating man-made objects, and assumptions about their use, ask if it is important to use them, and under what circumstances can natural objects be substituted. "Do we really need to make it out of plastic, or are you just assuming we do because you've always seen them that way?"

Editors' note: Why do people often prefer to use man-made materials such as plastic? What problems does this cause? Where do man-made materials end up? What effects does that have?" S-35

Sentences That Ask

Objectives of the Remodeled Lesson

2nd Grade

The Students Will:

- learn the mechanics of writing questions correctly, by formulating and writing appropriate questions
- practice inferring facts about other students from their choice of questions
- practice fairmindedness by writing questions their parents might ask
- discuss how changing an issue can change which questions are appropriate and which facts are relevant

Abstract

First, students read two sentences in their textbooks: "Think of your pet or a pet that you would like to have. Talk about your pets. "The teacher then encourages the students to discuss their pets by asking each other questions.

Next, the students read, "This sentence asks a question: What is your pet?" Students each think of three questions about pets. The teacher writes some of them on the board, calling attention to the question mark and to the fact that all sentences begin with a capital letter. Finally, the children copy three or four of the board questions. The teacher stresses the punctuation rule before work begins.

(from *Language for Daily Use*, Level 2 Red, Dorothy S. Strickland et al. 1973 Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc. p. 19.)

Critique

This lesson over-emphasizes drilling the mechanics of writing questions (begin with a capital letter; end with a question mark) at the expense of exploring the necessary function of questioning. Children need to learn to formulate appropriate questions, and to see the ways in which these questions can elicit useful responses. The lesson can be expanded so that asking good questions becomes the topic, and learning the correct form is a by-product.

In the lesson, students are asked to think of any three questions they could ask about a pet, but they are given no guiding purpose for formulating them. This approach misses the opportunity to show students the ways in which their needs and purposes determine their questions, and is therefore an incomplete introduction to questions. We have added extensions which give students practice distinguishing relevant from irrelevant information and practicing fairmindedness.

Strategies Used to Remodel

These refer to subsections of *Strategy List: 35 Dimensions of Critical Thought*.

- S-31 distinguishing relevant from irrelevant facts
- S-32 making plausible inferences, predictions, or interpretations
- S-3 exercising fairmindedness

First, instead of having students ask any three questions about pets, the teacher can ask them to think of at least three questions they might ask a pet seller to determine if a particular animal would be a good pet for them. This will give students a guiding purpose, though any reasonable purpose will do for formulating appropriate questions. "What would you want to know? What facts about the animal seem relevant or important to you? Why would you want to know that?" S-31

After the students have listed their questions, and have corrected any mechanical errors such as forgetting a question mark, the teacher can write one student's questions on the board so that the class can discuss what that student wants in a pet. "What can we infer about what Sue wants in a pet? Can we tell what animal she's referring to? Why or why not?" S-32

Then, when a number of students' responses have been covered, have the students imagine that they are going home to ask their parents if they can have the pet they want. "What questions do you think your parents would ask? What facts would they think are relevant or important to know?" S-31 (Students could trade papers to double-check the mechanics. "Does each question begin with a capital and end with a question mark?") The class could then discuss the things that most concern the parents and why. This activity gives the students practice in fairmindedness as well as more practice formulating and writing questions properly. S-3

Next, to give students practice seeing how changing a problem slightly can change the nature of the pertinent questions, students could imagine that they have moved (from a house with a yard to an apartment, for instance) and list questions that they would now ask when choosing a pet. "How did your questions change when the situation changed? Why are different facts relevant? Did you have to change your mind about the pet that was best for you? Why or why not?" S-31

Listening Game

Objectives of the Remodeled Lesson

3rd Grade

The Students Will:

- practice critical listening skills and develop insight into critical listening by discussing listening, comparing listening to reading, comparing active to passive listening, and discussing ways to listen actively and accurately
- explore the implications of changes to a story retold five times
- discuss how to judge the accuracy of conflicting versions of a story
- recognize when to suspend judgment
- explore how one's point of view can shape one's interpretation of events

Abstract

In this lesson, five students are asked to leave the room. Next, the teacher reads the story "The Dizzy King" asking that the remaining students listen very carefully. When the story is finished, one student from class brings in student #1 and retells the story. Then student #1 tells the story to student #2, etc. After all the students have been told the story, the class discusses how the details of the story changed. "Were details left out? Added?"

(from **Using Our Language**, Dr. Anne D. Ross. Bowmar Noble Publishing Inc. Economy Co., 1977. p. 55.)

Critique

Although this lesson is about listening clearly and carefully, it doesn't discuss or teach strategies for skilled listening, such as self-regulation and correction, or the need to test oneself by reiterating a sensible version of what one has heard. This lesson oversimplifies the difficulties of listening carefully and fairly. The only kinds of mistakes it refers to are altering details, leaving details out, or adding new ones. It fails to address the effect these changes have on the meaning of what was heard.

This lesson addresses only the problem of remembering a number of details from a story. Since the story doesn't involve, or appeal to, anyone's self-interest, the lesson overlooks the motives people have for changing stories. Although listening to remember details is an important skill, children face more profound problems when listening carefully to understand the story as a whole: distinguishing credible from un-credible sources of information, recognizing contradictions, determining the effect of point of view, and suspending judgment when they don't have enough information to know.

The lesson could also increase students' insight by relating listening to reading, writing, and speaking.

Strategies Used to Remodel

These refer to subsections of *Strategy List: 35 Dimensions of Critical Thought*.

- S-22 listening critically: the art of silent dialogue

- S-35 exploring implications and consequences
- S-9 developing confidence in reason
- S-11 comparing analogous situations: transferring insights to new contexts
- S-8 developing intellectual perseverance
- S-16 evaluating the credibility of sources of information
- S-2 developing insight into egocentricity or sociocentricity
- S-34 recognizing contradictions
- S-5 developing intellectual humility and suspending judgment

The class could first have a discussion about the differences between active listening and passive listening. Students could also compare listening to reading. "If someone is talking and you're interested in what he or she is saying, do you listen differently than usual? In what ways? Why? How does that compare to times you weren't really listening? Why do people sometimes not listen carefully? How is listening easier than reading? Harder? Why? What do these two have in common? Why? What can you do to listen better?"

Then, after playing the original game and discussing how the story changed, the teacher could add the following questions: Was anything in a rearranged order? Was something important left out of some versions? What? Why was it important? Did each version of the story make sense? Did any of the changes affect the meaning of the story? Which changes? How did they change the meaning? Why did some changes not affect the meaning of the story? S-35

How was student #2's version affected by the changes made by student #1? Did any of the distortions from the first re-teller show up in the last version? Then, to develop insight into careful listening, students could explicitly discuss listening: What were you doing as you listened? While you were listening, did something not make sense? Did you ask for clarification? Why or why not? What question or questions could you have asked? S-9

Do you listen differently when you know you will have to remember and repeat what you are hearing? How? Why? Do you read differently when you know you're expected to remember what you read? Do you speak or explain things differently when your audience has to understand and remember what you say, then you do when you're just talking for normal purposes? How? Are there ways speakers can make it easier for listeners to understand and remember what they say? What? Why would that help? How do writers help their readers follow, understand, and remember the key points? Could speakers use any of these techniques? Which? Why? How would that help? S-11 The experiment could be repeated after this discussion. Encourage students to stop the teller to ask questions or to get clearer explanations as they listen. "What was different this time? Did thinking about listening help you listen better?" S-8 Students could retell TV shows and correct each other.

Extension S-16

The teacher could extend this lesson to stress the importance of determining credibility. We suggest adding a detailed discussion of the motivations people have for changing or distorting stories. "Did you ever hear two or more different versions of the same story?" If you need examples to get the students on track, mention how siblings might explain a quarrel differently to their parents.

After getting a number of examples, have students discuss them. You could use questions such as these: Why do you think the people told different stories? (To avoid blame; to make one's self or friend look good; to make someone else look bad; because they saw different parts; because they made different inferences.) S-2 Could all of the versions of the story be true? Why or why not? Which part of that version contradicted the other version?

S-34 Could you tell if any particular version of the event was true? Were parts of the story true but not other parts? Can you always find out the truth? Tell us about a time you had to suspend judgment, and why. What could you do to find out what really happened? S-5