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Critical thinking in high school literature classes

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Several questioning strategies that have the potential to promote critical thinking in high school literature classes are identified. These strategies are Questioning Circles, Questioning the Author, Design Conversations, Hierarchical Models of Questioning, Socratic Seminars, and Literature Circles. The role of the instructor in implementing these strategies is discussed. Recent research findings related to the implementation of these strategies in elementary and secondary education are presented. Considerations regarding the implementation of these questioning strategies in high school literature classes are provided.

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CRITICAL THINKING IN HIGH SCHOOL LITERATURE CLASSES

BY

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Chapter 1

Defining Critical Thinking

The topic of critical thinking has a long history in psychology and education. The 1980s marked a period of intense interest in the definition and study of critical thinking, but psychologists, philosophers, and educators tried to conceptualize critical thinking prior to this. For example, John Dewey (1933) urged schools to help students think, complaining that the academic content was disconnected from students' real world experience. In *How We Think* (1933), Dewey defines reflective thinking as "active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends" (p.9). Dewey argues in favor of promoting reflective thinking as a means of attaining a goal: "thinking enables us to direct our activities with foresight and to plan according to ends-in-view, or purposes of which we are aware" (p.19). In this chapter, definitions of critical thinking since Dewey are examined. Chapter 2 presents various questioning methods for promoting critical thinking in high school literature classes. Chapter 3 offers considerations about the implementation of the questioning models presented in chapter 2.

Across time educators have proposed various definitions of the concept of critical thinking. For example, Ennis (1962) identified three major components of this concept:

1. critical thinking as the correct assessing of statements;
2. a set of twelve abilities necessary for the correct assessing; and
3. three dimensions of critical thinking (i.e., logical, criterial, and pragmatic).

Norris and Ennis (1989) defined critical thinking (or "good thinking") in terms of its use in education: "critical thinking is reasonable and reflective thinking that is focused upon deciding what to believe or do"(p.1).

McPeck (1981) noted that Ennis' originality in his 1962 classification consisted only of the dimensional simplification of the notion. McPeck (1981) asserted that critical thinking should include not only the evaluation of statements, as Ennis had stated earlier, but also the evaluation of a decision. McPeck (1981) expanded the concept even further and included aspects of problem solving in critical thinking.

D'Angelo suggested a definition of critical thinking that is similar to Ennis's (1962). In D'Angelo's (1971) view "critical thinking is the process of evaluating statements, arguments, and experiences." (p.7) In order to make this definition operational, he drew up a list of ten attitudes and fifty critical thinking skills (e.g., linguistic, logical, empirical, methodological, and valuation skills). He added another thirty-eight skills to Ennis' initial twelve, as well as ten attitudes.

McPeck (1981) criticized both Ennis (1962) and D'Angelo (1971) for failing to recognize that critical thinking cannot be isolated from specific content. McPeck (1981) argues that "critical thinking always manifests itself in connection with some identifiable activity or subject area and never in isolation" (p.5). Thus, critical thinking behaviors differ according to the subject area in which this type of thinking manifests. McPeck (1981) identified reflective skepticism as the most salient feature of critical thinking. He uses skepticism with the meaning of not taking everything for granted. Applied indiscriminately, skepticism is unproductive; McPeck (1981) emphasized that skepticism requires knowledge of the field in discussion.

If we take a closer look at McPeck's (1981), D'Angelo's (1971), and Ennis' (1962) definitions of the concept of critical thinking we notice that these theorists envision critical thinking more as a process, rather than a product. Although valuable, their earlier contributions to defining the concept do not provide classroom practitioners with specific student behaviors that can be assessed as showing critical thinking. In other words, these theorists identify what it takes to be a critical thinker, but they do not specify the result of critical thinking.

More recently, Halpern (1997) proposed an encompassing definition of critical thinking: "critical thinking is the use of those cognitive skills or strategies that increase the probability of a desirable outcome"(p.4). For Halpern, critical thinking is goal-directed, it has a purpose, and it involves reasoning. People use critical thinking in order to solve problems, to formulate inferences, and to make predictions about how likely an event is to happen. She identifies critical thinking as having an evaluation component.

Erwin (1998) divided critical thinking in seven major categories; the subskills associated with each of them appear in parentheses: interpretation (categorization, clarifying meaning), analysis (examining ideas and purpose, detecting and analyzing arguments), evaluation, inference (collecting and questioning evidence, developing alternative hypotheses, drawing conclusions), presenting arguments, reflection, and dispositions. Erwin's (1998) comprehensive definition relies on a review of twelve tests that assess critical thinking. His definition gives education practitioners a clear idea of critical thinking in terms of cognitive processes to be assessed. This definition has the advantage of clarifying a fuzzy concept and conferring on it practical applicability.

The existence of so many definitions of one concept may confuse the classroom teacher who tries to integrate critical thinking into his or her instruction. One way out of this confusion would be for the instructor to examine the critical thinking tests that his or students are likely to take at some point during their academic career and identify the cognitive processes that these tests require students to perform. The instructor would then practice these processes in his or her classroom. The definitions presented here may present historical interest for the educational researcher, but they can easily mislead the classroom instructor because of their diversity.

There are many definitions of critical thinking and each includes different kinds of thinking. However, these definitions share a common focus: placing critical thinking in the context of higher order thinking. In the next section, critical thinking as a subset of higher order thinking is discussed.

Critical Thinking as a Subset of Higher Order Thinking

Most attempts to distinguish between higher-order thinking and lower-order thinking consisted of building hierarchies of information processing skills, such as the well-known one developed by Benjamin Bloom (1956). In his taxonomy of educational objectives, Bloom (1956) classified learning objectives into three categories: cognitive, affective and psychomotor. In the cognitive domain he identified six major categories of objectives: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. Bloom's followers agreed that the last three categories (analysis, synthesis, and evaluation) constitute higher-order thinking. As Bloom himself pointed out, critical thinking involves analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. If we accept Bloom's taxonomy, we can draw the conclusion that critical thinking falls into the broader category of higher-

order thinking. However, some have criticized Bloom's taxonomy for its "indeterminacy at the higher levels" (e.g., Marzano, 2003). This indeterminacy makes tasks at higher level hard to differentiate from those at lower levels. Thus, critical thinking, as a form of higher-order thinking, is not well defined by Bloom's taxonomy.

Similar to Bloom's classification of thinking, Paul (1993) distinguishes between lower and higher order learning. Rote memorization, association, and drill are lower order learning activities, whereas higher order learning implies the exploring "the foundations, justification, implications, and value of a fact, principle, skill, or concept". Paul (1993) claimed that critical thinking, in its "deepest and fullest meaning " is equivalent to higher order thinking, arguing that "it engages us in an evolving process in which we progressively take control of our own thinking, disciplining it by degrees, making it more and more responsive to evidence and reason, and extending it to ever more domains" (p.283). Although Paul's claims make sense, he fails to provide evidence that critical thinking is a kind of higher-order thinking.

Ormrod (2003) classifies critical thinking as a subset of higher-level thinking, together with problem solving, transfer, and metacognition. Norris and Ennis (1989), however, see problem solving as part of critical thinking itself. Good thinking (their equivalent of higher order thinking) encompasses critical thinking (a reflective and evaluative kind of thinking) and creative thinking (non-evaluative, reasonable and productive thinking).

Haladyna (1997) defines critical thinking as a subset of higher order thinking. He classifies critical thinking along with understanding, problem solving, creativity,

metacognition, strategic knowledge, abstract thinking, reasoning, and self-regulation as types of higher-order thinking.

Thus, theorists differ as to whether they view critical thinking as a subset of higher order thinking (Bloom 1956, McPeck 1981, Paul 1993, Halpern 1997, Erwin 1998, Ormrod 2003) or just another form of thinking, as would be problem solving or creative thinking (Norris & Ennis, 1989). The majority of writers on critical thinking, however, seem to propose that critical thinking falls near the top of a hierarchy of thinking skills, consistent with Bloom's (1956) classification.

Critical Thinking and Other Forms of Higher Order Thinking

Critical thinking and creative thinking. Educational psychologists have identified affinities between critical thinking and creative thinking. Creative thinking borrows from critical thinking; "in formulating the goal and refining it, selecting among alternative approaches, refining candidate solutions" (Swartz & Perkins, 1997, p.44). Marzano (2003) sees critical thinking and creative thinking as being closely related, yet different. They are similar because they demand rigor of thought, but they differ in terms of results. Creative thinking is used to produce information, whereas critical thinking focuses on analyzing information.

Critical thinking and problem solving. Although some early definitions of critical thinking identify problem solving as a subcategory of critical thinking (D'Angelo 1971; McPeck 1981; Paul 1993) the more recent literature identifies them as two distinct types of higher-order thinking that share only a small number of skills (Haladyna 1997; Erwin 1998; Nosich 2001).

Erwin (1998) defines problem solving as a sequential process that involves defining the problem, searching for information, and testing hypotheses. He also considers that while engaging in problem solving it is important to bear in mind that there are a limited number of solutions; critical thinking, on the other hand, can lead to an unlimited number of solutions. Problem solving and critical thinking also differ in terms of the starting point of the cognitive process. In problem solving we already have the problem and we need to find and implement a solution; critical thinking entails identifying the problem in the first place, finding a solution to it, and finally being able to provide a rationale for the solution found. Erwin (1998) appreciates that what the two types of thinking have in common is "the ability to state a problem" (p.25); both types of thinking require the individual to evaluate the context of the problem, to produce a valid solution, and to be able to analyze the process that led to that solution. Both problem solving and critical thinking require an inclination towards thinking, problem solving, and creativity.

Nosich (2001) makes a similar distinction between critical thinking and problem solving; in problem solving an individual has already identified a problem that he or she is to solve, whereas with critical thinking requires an individual to identify the problem in the first place.

Haladyna (1997) also distinguishes between problem solving and critical thinking; for him, problem solving is a sequential process that has as its goal finding an answer to a problem; this process may involve other types of thinking, such as memorizing, understanding, critical, and creative thinking. The goal of critical thinking is to produce a judgment, using evaluation and prediction.

Thus it is evident that although theorists see a close relationship between critical thinking and other forms of higher order thinking such as creative thinking and problem solving, they also note that there a number of features that set critical thinking apart from other types of higher order thinking.

Defining Critical Thinking: The Delphi Project

The critical thinking movement gained momentum in the 1980s and culminated in 1990 with the publication of the Delphi project. In 1988 The American Philosophical Association, through its Committee, asked the leaders of Critical Movement to make a thorough investigation of the state of critical thinking and its assessment. The experts working on the Delphi project came from various fields of study: Philosophy, Physics, Psychology, Education, Economics, Critical Thinking Assessment, Freshman Studies, Zoology, Assessment and Evaluation, Social Sciences, Computer Science, and Behavioral Science. Their work on the project marked a landmark in the history of critical thinking. It was for the first time that specialists agreed on a common definition of critical thinking for the sake of educational purposes. This is the consensus statement the panel reached:

> We understand critical thinking to be purposeful, self-regulatory judgment which results in interpretation, analysis, evaluation, and inference, as well as explanation of the evidential, conceptual, methodological, criteriological, or contextual considerations upon which that judgment is based. Critical thinking is essential as a tool of inquiry. (Facione, 1990, p.3)

The panelists also drew a detailed portrait of the ideal critical thinker:

> The ideal critical thinker is habitually inquisitive, well-informed, trustful of reason, open-minded, flexible, fair-minded in evaluation, honest in facing personal biases, prudent in making judgments, willing to reconsider, clear about issues, orderly in complex matters, diligent in seeking relevant information, reasonable in the selection of criteria, focused in inquiry, and persistent in seeking results which are as precise as the subject and the circumstances of inquiry. (Facione, p.3)

Further, the panel of forty-six experts, coordinated by Facione, identified two essential dimensions of critical thinking: cognitive skills and affective dispositions, which are described below.

The cognitive skill dimension. The experts identified six categories of cognitive skills, with each category divided into sub-skills. These categories are: 1. *interpretation* (categorization, decoding significance, clarifying meaning), 2. *analysis* (examining ideas, identifying arguments, analyzing arguments), 3. *evaluation* (assessing claims, assessing arguments), 4. *inference* (querying evidence, conjecturing alternatives, drawing conclusions), 5. *explanation* (stating results, justifying procedures, presenting arguments), and 6. *self-regulation* (self-examination, self-correction) (Facione, 1990, p.20).

The dispositional dimension. The experts identified two categories of affective dispositions of critical thinking: dispositions for life and living in general, and dispositions for specific issues, questions or problems. Inquisitiveness with regard to a wide range of issues, concern to become and remain generally well informed, and

alertness to opportunities to use critical thinking are some of the dispositions that fall under the first category. Clarity in stating a question or concern, orderliness in working with complexity, and diligence in seeking relevant information are some of the dispositions listed under the second category (Facione, 1990).

Why Study Critical Thinking?

Many different definitions of critical thinking have been presented above. This section turns to the question of why it is important to study critical thinking, from an educational standpoint. Siegel (1988) believes that critical thinking, as an educational ideal, is not universally accepted, and it demands a sound justification: " To justify critical thinking as an educational ideal is to offer a positive account of the desirability and worthiness of educational efforts which have as their aims the fostering of critical thinking in students"(p.51).

Without totally discarding the importance of a pragmatic justification, Siegel develops a philosophical justification of critical thinking as an educational ideal. His justification relies on four considerations: respect for students as persons, self-sufficiency and preparation for adulthood, initiation into the traditions, and critical thinking and democratic living (Siegel, 1988).

Others have identified critical thinking as an essential trait of a democratic citizen. Norris and Ennis (1989) emphasized that an educated person means " being able to exercise autonomy in making important decisions; respecting the rights and autonomy of others; and seeking not only factual information but also an understanding of why things are as they are" (p.23). Their definition of an educated person describes a person who has been trained to think critically, and who is also able to make informed decisions.

Similarly, Beyer (1995) argued that critical thinking is a necessary educational ideal because it prepares students to function as responsible citizens in a democracy. Decision-making in the personal, social, economic, and political spheres relies on the ability to think critically. Similarly, Halpern (1996) believes that critical thinking is necessary not only for the citizens of a democratic nation, but also for all the citizens living in the 21st century. Similarly, Facione (1990) and the Delphi panel see critical thinking as helping to promote democracy: " Properly used, critical thinking treats all affected persons with sensitivity and with equal respect and dignity – it is never exclusively self-interested, abusive, coercive, or without integrity and good faith." (Facione, 1990, p. 97)

Facione (1990) claims that critical thinking is also an important component of the individuals' social life: "Properly used, critical thinking promotes rational autonomy, intellectual freedom, and the objective investigation of any issue or concern whatsoever." (p.97)

Conclusion

The study of critical thinking, particularly with a focus on its definition, flourished during the 1980s. During the 1990s the efforts to define critical thinking continued, although not as intensely as in the previous decade. More recently, there appears to be a drop off in interest in this topic, and after 1998 there is a scarcity of major studies in this area. There are many different definitions of critical thinking. A number of them agree that critical thinking is a form of higher thinking. Critical thinking appears to be closely related to the concept of democracy; students as critical thinkers can adjust to living in a democratic society.

Chapter 2

Questioning as Means of Promoting Critical Thinking in Literature Classes

This chapter will examine various methods for promoting critical thinking in the classroom, specifically with respect to literature instruction at the high school level.

If we examine the various definitions of critical thinking presented in the previous part of this paper we can infer that critical thinking requires the critical thinker to question what he or she reads, as well as the information that the teacher and other sources offer in order to help him or her interpret the readings. Questioning is a complex process that involves both teacher and students. By using carefully designed questions, the teacher can engage students in critical thinking. Students are expected not only to respond to the teacher's questions, but also to come up with their own questions as a strategy for making meaning when interacting with literary texts and concepts. Students are also expected to answer their peers' questions in the process of making meaning. Below, several models are examined that attempt to implement critical thinking in literature classes through questioning.

Contemporary questioning models are deeply rooted in the reader response theories (Christenbury & Kelly 1983; Probst 1994). I will examine the main ideas that reader-response theory promotes before reviewing questioning models used in literature classes.

The reader-response theory. Louise Rosenblatt is widely recognized as the founder of the reader-response theory. Her seminal book *Literature as Exploration* (1938) presented innovative ideas that revolutionized the teaching of English and that continue to inspire modern theorists. The reader-response theory encourages personal

responses to literary texts by creating a reader-oriented classroom. This theory appeared as a reaction against the New Criticism, which claimed that the literary text had a single correct meaning and that it was the instructor's duty to pass this correct meaning to his/her students. New Criticism left little room for student's active involvement with the text. Critical thinking requires students to interact with the text; if the instructor poses as the unique holder of the right interpretation, students will be passive receivers of the instructor's knowledge. Passivity is inconsistent with critical thinking (Beach 1993). New Criticism, a text-oriented approach, emphasized students' ability to recall factual information about the text. Reader response theory empowers the student to have his/her own interpretation of the literary work. Rosenblatt claims that 'the reading of any work of literature is, of necessity, an individual and unique occurrence involving the mind and emotions of some particular reader (Rosenblatt, 1938, p.32). The reader, regardless of his or her status in the classroom, becomes thus free to use his or her critical judgment to create the meaning of a text. This meaning, although personal, is not aleatoric (characterized by chance or indeterminate elements), but it finds support in the text itself. Thus, the reader must choose the meaning for sound reasons, not just because it was handier at the time.

According to reader response theory, the meaning of the literary text is the result of the interaction between the writer's message and the reader's own experience: 'the reader brings to the work personality traits, memories of past events, present needs and preoccupations, a particular mood of the moment, and a particular physical condition' (Rosenblatt, 1938, p.37).

Rosenblatt (1938) emphasizes that the literature teacher should take into account the student's previous experiences, interests, and needs. She insists that the students should be given the opportunity to be active participants in constructing meaning. There can be great differences between what students notice and what the teacher, backed up by critical analysis and age, thinks they should notice.

Research suggests that students might improve their critical reading skills if the literary text they approach has a personal relevance for them. The instructor can choose texts that students may relate to; he or she can encourage students to search for a personal meaning and allow them to express it within the classroom.

Student response in Rosenblatt's view. Security is the first stage in empowering students to express their own critique of the text. They need to know that their opinions will be valued and are therefore worth expressing. It is up to the instructor to create a classroom environment that will encourage students to engage in thinking and to express the results of their thinking.

As the students gain the confidence to give a personal answer they are more likely to display spontaneity. It is important that the students give their true opinion about a text, rather than simply what they think the instructor may want to hear.

Clarification and enlargement of the student's response also fall into the instructor's responsibilities. Students' answers need not only a punctual acknowledgement, but they need to be clarified and elaborated. Rosenblatt (1938) believes that the instructor's clarification and enlargement of students' response leads students toward 'a critical awareness of their own reactions.'

The role of the instructor in Rosenblatt's reader-response theory. In Rosenblatt's (1938) view, the instructor should make literature accessible. Students tend to develop an inferiority feeling in the literature class. It is the teacher's duty to make them feel that they are entitled to express and argue their opinions about literary works. Most students fear that their criticism will not measure up to that created by professional literary critics. The instructor should make it clear that students are not expected to produce something that looks exactly like professional criticism, but to present personal ideas that originate from the 'modesty' and 'honesty' with which they approach the text. Therefore, the instructor expects students to evaluate critically his or her own assumptions about the text.

Student response in Probst's view. Probst (1988) builds on and expands Rosenblatt's ideas about reader-response techniques. Probst identifies several conditions that response-based teaching requires: teacher's receptivity, tentativeness, rigor, cooperation, suitable literature, responses and questions. Out of these conditions, he relates rigor to critical thinking. Rigor requires students to examine their own assumptions, to make inferences about the author's and the characters' attitudes, as well as about the participants' attitudes. Students will consider their peers' point of view, their teacher's, as well as views expressed by literary criticism.

Probst (1988b) also argues for enabling readers to find connections between their literary experience and their real life. Students need guidance on how to engage in a meaningful dialogue. The teacher can provide each student with a list of five to ten questions, each written on one sheet and stapled in a booklet. By placing each question on a separate sheet the teacher will provide students with room for writing personal

notes/comments. Probst (1988b) appreciates that the goal of the reader response theory is to make students benefit more from making meaning of texts themselves, thus replacing the old routines that asked students to memorize definitions of literary terms and interpretations made by someone other than the student (textbook, literary criticism, or teacher).

The role of the instructor in Probst's reader-response theory. The instructor's role is to build the discussion on students' responses and to avoid leading students into following his/her own line of thought. The teacher needs to be able not only to anticipate the students' responses, but also to deal with unexpected responses. Probst (1988, 1994) suggests that the teacher experiment by approaching a text for the first time in class. This is how he describes how teachers usually approach a text that they need to teach: "Typically, teachers come to class with meaning already made. That is to say, they understand the poem or play. They've read it, figured out what's worth discussing, what problems there are to solve, what questions there are to answer, what in sum, the text means" Probst (1994, p.41).

Thus, the teacher should assume the role of the student who sees the text for the first time and he or she should model reading and interpretation techniques. Students will have the chance to see the teacher struggling with a text and this will make the text more approachable. This will allow both the teacher and the students to engage in a natural process of thinking. The instructor can also model the type of thinking he or she expects students to engage in when approaching a literary text.

Probst's (1998a) response-based teaching functions according to five principles: selection, responses and questions, atmosphere, relativity, and forms of response. Like

Roseblatt (1938), he emphasized that the instructor should select literary texts based on their potential interest to the student (Probst, 1988a). The students' responses need to be at the center of the conversation. Probst (1988a, 1988b, 1994) recommended conversation in the classroom, rather than debate. This requires the instructor to create a cooperative environment, rather than a competitive one. Cooperation will allow students to change their minds and refine their ideas as the discussion progresses. On the other hand, debate implies the existence of two opposing views, one right and one wrong, which is not what reader-response theories claims. Like Rosenblatt, Probst claims that there are no absolute interpretations of a literary text, but rather personal constructs.

Reader response theory offers students the opportunity to engage in critical thinking by empowering them to interact directly with the texts and to construct, reconstruct, and question their meaning.

Questioning circles. Questioning Circles (Christenbury & Kelly, 1983) is a model for developing instructional questions. The authors represent the areas of questioning by means of overlapping circles. This nonhierarchical questioning model allows the instructor to address questions in a non-fixed order, in contrast to hierarchical taxonomies.

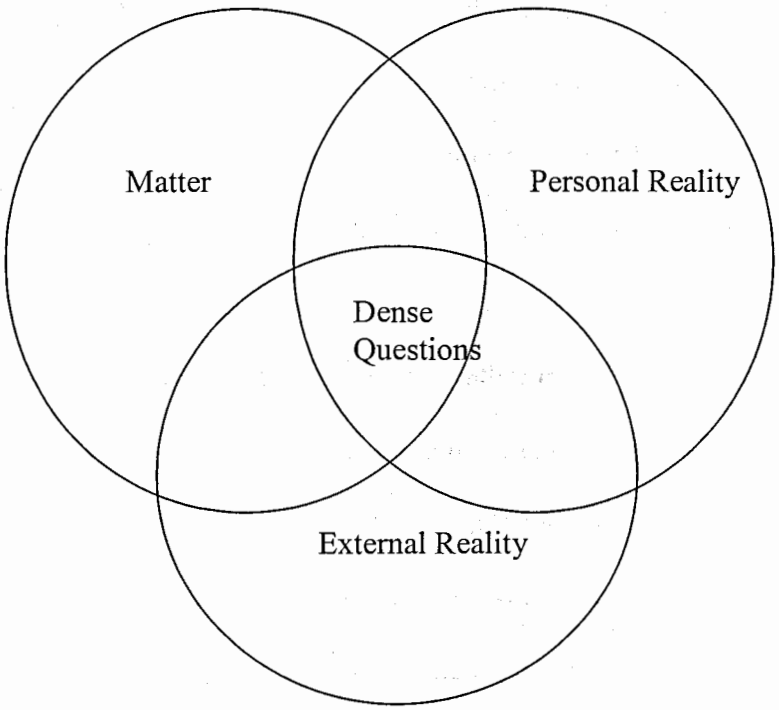

Figure 1

Christenbury and Kelly's (1983) Questioning Circles

The questions the instructor addresses can touch matter, personal reality, and external reality, as well as the areas where these circles intersect (e.g., the teacher may address personal reality/matter, personal reality/external reality, and matter/external reality). The matter represents the subject of discussion/questioning. Personal reality stands for the reader's individual experiences, values, and ideas. External reality represents the world and other literary works. The intersection of the three circles represents a dense area and contains the most significant questions. The authors suggest that their model can be interpreted as "a practical illustration of Louise Rosenblatt's personal response to literature"(Christenbury & Kelly, 1983, p.14).

The role of the instructor in the Questioning Circles model. When using Questioning Circles, the instructor decides what type of questions he or she should use to

start the conversation. There are no set patterns for alternating questions. The instructor will adapt his or her strategy according to each classroom. The instructor is not the sole question generator; students are encouraged to ask questions that fall into the categories described above: personality reality, external reality, matter, as well as combinations of the three.

Questioning the Author (QtA). Questioning the Author (QtA) is an intervention that has been used to promote critical thinking in elementary reading, social studies, and history classes (Beck, McKeown, Hamilton, & Kucan, 1997). This approach promises help for improving reading comprehension in text-based instruction and is designed to facilitate building understanding of text ideas. Students are urged to interact with the text in an active way by addressing questions while they engage in reading. Students construct meaning through discussion while reading the text for the first time. QtA is designed from a constructivist perspective on reading. Every text has a message that the author has encoded. The readers' job is to decode the message, thus making sense of the text. The key elements of this approach are the queries, the text, the discussion, the students, the teacher, and the building of understanding. Although the existence of a message to be deciphered reminds of New Criticism, where there is only one correct interpretation of the text, in QtA it is the student as reader who builds the meaning; the student as reader is not imposed a meaning of a text, he or she is involved in negotiating it.

The role of the instructor in the Questioning the Author Model. In QtA the role of the teacher is to initiate the discussion of the text by posing queries. Students engage in the discussion by responding to the queries, thus getting actively involved in the building of understanding. Unlike traditional models of reading-comprehension, the

teacher is no longer the only one who knows what the meaning of the text is. He or she no longer imposes his or her meaning on the students; instead the teacher becomes a guide who helps students discover the meaning.

The teacher uses queries to initiate discussion. Queries are open-ended questions that refer to the message the author encoded in the text; queries can be applied both to expository and narrative texts. Beck, McKeown, Hamilton, and Kucan (1997) identify three types of queries: initiating, follow-up, and narrative. The first two are specific both to expository and narrative texts, while the last one applies only to narrative texts. The initiating queries start the discussion and have as a main goal drawing students' attention to the most important ideas in the text while reminding them of the existence of the author. The teacher's role during the discussion prompted by initiating queries is to summarize students' ideas. The follow-up queries help the teacher focus the content and direction of the discussion by integrating and constructing meaning. The last type, narrative queries, challenges students to think about characters and their motivation, as well as the author's crafting of the plot.

Queries are meaning building tools. Their role is, on the one hand, to assist students in grappling with text ideas in order to construct meaning, and, on the other hand, to facilitate group discussion and prompt student-to-student interactions. The authors make a clear distinction between questions and queries. The questions, as applied in traditional reading-comprehension instruction, have a right or wrong answer and involve students in retrieving textual information. Queries do not have a clear-cut answer and challenges students to construct meaning by performing a close analysis of the text.

This approach involves students in actively handling the text's ideas. It is important for the students to see that it is the author that challenges them, and not the teacher. Thus, the teacher becomes an ally and not an enemy in deciphering the author's meaning. The teacher's duty is to make students grasp the concept of author fallibility. If students do not understand what the author wanted to say, this could mean that maybe the author did not make himself or herself clear and students have to rephrase, fragment, or even reassemble the text in order to make meaning of it.

The students get to see the author as a real person who has written a text in order to transmit a message. The students' duty as readers is to look for the message. If the message is not clear, students tend to blame themselves for their incapacity to see the meaning. If the students get to see the author as someone who failed to make his or her message clear, then they are more likely to put the blame on the author, and not on themselves.

Beck, McKeown, Hamilton, and Kucan (1997) identified several discussion moves for the QtA approach: marking, turning back, revoicing, modeling, annotating, and recapping. Marking is the teacher's response to an important idea that students bring up in the discussion: the teacher draws the students' attention to it by paraphrasing and by explicitly acknowledging it. Turning back has two meanings: empowering students to figure out ideas and looking back in the text for clarification. Revoicing is interpreting what the student said by getting the gist of the comment; it is necessary for clarification. Modeling helps students understand the thought processes a reader may engage in while encountering a text for the first time. The teacher models thinking processes for the fragments he or she anticipates as challenging. The teacher identifies confusing parts of

the text and shows how a reader might work through them. By annotating, the teacher provides extra-textual information that will help students fill in the gaps. Recapping helps students get the big picture as the teacher summarizes the main ideas. Like the previous model, Questioning the Author is non-hierarchical (the instructor does not follow a strict pattern in addressing questions).

Beck, McKeown, Hamilton, and Kucan (1997) report that by 1997 QtA had been implemented for over three years by five teachers working with 120 fourth and fifth grade students. Data was collected in reading and social studies lessons. The results show that teachers who apply the QtA approach tend to focus less on the retrieval of information and more on construction of meaning. Teachers strive to promote a type of conversation in which students do more talking and initiate their own comments and questions. Frequent student-to-student interactions and student-teacher interactions were noted when QtA was implemented.

One of the advantages of the QtA approach is that classroom management becomes less of an issue because students are involved in conversing. Although the QtA approach has been developed based on research in elementary classes, I think that it also has applicability at the high school level because its elements are generalizable across age gap.

Design Conversations. Perkins (1994) is another theorist who also argues that questioning promotes critical thinking. He proposes four basic design questions that can start and develop meaningful discussions in any discipline, including literature. These questions are

1. What are the *purposes*? What is it for?

2. What is the *structure*? What does it look like; how is it made?

3. What are *model cases*? What are some specific examples?

4. What are the *arguments*?

Perkins' (1994) model does not require the instructor to address the questions in a predefined order. These four basic questions are part of a strategy called design conversation, which involves three phases: choice of a topic, conversation, and closure.

The role of the instructor role in the design conversation strategy. The instructor chooses the topic of discussion and addresses the four basic questions above, recording the answers elicited from students. Because the questions may seem confusing due to their abstract character, the instructor can give sample of answers he or she expects from students. The instructor can help students summarize the conclusions they reach during the discussion, as well as the connections they make. If time does not permit, the instructor can summarize the highlights. Perkins (1994) believes that this strategy works better if the instructor chooses a discussion topic for which students already have background knowledge. Students can address the four basic design questions themselves, once the instructor has explained the procedure to them.

Hierarchical models of questioning. The questioning models described above did not require the instructor to follow a strict order in addressing questions. Their authors believed that this liberty would enhance the natural flow of the conversation and encourage students' responsiveness. Hierarchical models are also used in contemporary teaching of literature. Schmit (2002) argues for a strategy that is based on a rigorous sequence of questions. The goal of this strategy is to lead students to 'increasingly sophisticated observations' (Schmit, 2002, p.104). He defines the role of questions that

address factual information, arguing that it is necessary that students have a clear literal representation of the text before they start analyzing it. In other words, students need to agree upon what the text says before discussing what the text means.

Schmit (2002) identifies six basic questions that instructors should address in a literature class:

- What is_____? (knowledge)
- What is _____ about? (comprehension)
- What is _____connected/related to? (application)
- What are the significant components of _____? (analysis)
- What does_____mean? (synthesis)
- What is the value of _____? (evaluation) (Schmit, 2002, p.106)

It is clear from the labeling of the questions that Schmit considers Bloom's taxonomy of cognitive tasks a sound framework with which to construct questions. These questions follow a cognitive process, from simpler cognitive tasks to more complex ones. The intended benefits of this questioning scheme are a scaffolding of new and complex ideas and the modeling of critical thinking.

Schmit (2002) identifies three phases of whole-class discussion in literature classes:

1) exploration of the text
2) examination of ideas
3) extension of discussion to the outside world

During the first phase participants discover facts, recount experiences, review observations and examples (questions 1 and 2). The questions the teacher addresses

during this phase focus on the recall of factual information found in the text. The answers students provide during this phase will be used in the other two phases. The questions require exact answers and focus on factual information: "What is the subject of the text? When was it written? Who is the narrator? Are there any unfamiliar words?" During this phase the students are supposed build a common understanding of the text.

In phase two participants make critical considerations about the text; they make meaning of the text collaboratively, through interpretation and inference. Participants closely examine various parts of the text with the goal of identifying meaningful components. This phase is the core of the discussion based on hierarchical questions. Phase three requires students to create meaning and make judgments. During this stage students have to make sense of the text as a whole and to relate it to the outside world. Students have to identify ideas represented in the text. The questions addressed in this phase invite students to make sense of the text based on its literal meaning, as well as on the meaning that larger contexts may offer to the text. The teacher can ask students to consider contrasting points of view, as well as the assumptions of the author or of those present in the class. During this stage students are also encouraged to see the text as it relates to their own lives. They have to go beyond the text and evaluate its personal importance. The instructor addresses open-ended questions during this stage.

The role of the instructor in a hierarchical questioning model. The role of the instructor in a hierarchical questioning model is to design and implement questions in a pre-established order. Although the teacher initiates questions, he or she is not supposed to anticipate the kind of questions students themselves might have. The scaffolding the model proposes, although logical, seems rigid with respect to the order of the steps. The

teacher needs to cover steps one and two before reaching step three. Students move from 'What does this text say?' to 'What does this text mean?' and 'What does the text mean to me?'.

Socratic seminars

Socratic seminars combine elements from nonhierarchical and hierarchical models. The instructor who assumes the role of seminar leader does not have to follow a strict order in addressing questions (an element of nonhierarchical models); however, seminars follow a certain protocol that both instructor and students have to respect (a rigidity that might be compared to the one present in hierarchical questioning models). One of the most popular Socratic seminar formats is Adler's (1984). In the *Paideia Program*, Adler (1984) proposed three distinct methods of instruction to be integrated in a 12–year course of study: didactic teaching, coaching, and Socratic seminars. The kind of discussion held in the Socratic seminar differs from regular classroom discussion by its informal character. Both the students and the instructor work in a cooperative environment geared towards the understanding of a text.

Elder and Paul (1998) identify a direct relationship between critical thinking and Socratic questioning. In their view, the two share a common goal, which is the pursuit of meaning and truth. They argue that Socratic questioning represents the practical illustration of critical thinking. They also acknowledge the importance of follow-up questions and constructing questions prior to the seminar.

Moeller and Moeller (2002) define the Socratic method as "an exercise in 'reflective thinking'" (p.16). The authors use reflective thinking with the meaning that Dewey assigned it: a cognitive process an individual uses to find a solution to a problem

that stemmed from doubt. During Socratic seminars participants address prepared questions that relate to the text to be discussed. Spontaneous follow-up questions are also necessary for a better understanding.

The dimensions of the Socratic seminars are a problem (the text to be discussed), a process (the discussion), and a product (understanding and enjoyment) (Moeller & Moeller, 2002). In a Socratic seminar participants engage in a conversation with the author by asking questions about the meaning of a text. In the context of Socratic seminars there is no single correct interpretation of a text. However, not all interpretations are considered to be valid. A valid interpretation is one for which there is evidence in the text.

Moeller and Moeller (2002) suggest that two readings of a text will lead to a better comprehension of a text by the students. Participants are advised to take notes during the readings; these notes will help them create questions. In Socratic seminars both the instructor and the students generate questions based on the following areas:

1. whatever readers consider important in a text
2. whatever readers consider unclear (this may include unfamiliar vocabulary)
3. whatever readers like/dislike, agree/disagree with in a text
4. connections and patterns – similar actions, repetitions of words or phrases

The goal of a Socratic seminar is to identify not only what an author says, but also why the author says it and how he/she says it. The goal is similar to the models of Schmit (2002) and Christenbury and Kelly (1983).

Moeller and Moeller (2002) identify three types of basic questions, according to their purpose: to check for recall (the answer is factual information); to check for understanding (interpretation), and to check for personal relevance and application (evaluation). Factual questions check the reader's understanding and recall of basic, factual information. Interpretation questions urge the reader to speculate about possible meanings that the author has embedded in the text. Evaluation questions invite the reader to think about his or her personal values and experiences, that is to go outside the text.

The role of the instructor in Socratic seminars. The seminar does not represent an arena in which the teacher can present his or her knowledge ostentatiously, but rather a place where each student's input is valued, and where each student is encouraged to participate. Both fiction and non-fiction texts can be discussed in a Socratic seminar (Adler, 1984).

An effective seminar is one that leads to the discovery of something new and unexpected. The teacher is expected to ask questions that would start the seminar; to examine the answers students provide; to make participants examine opposing views. Participants can change their minds during the seminar; they can embrace a view opposed to their original one if the evidence presented is convincing. This requires them to be open to new views. The teacher reads the text carefully and prepares a short list of questions that would be the anchors of the discussion. Adler (1983) appreciates that the teacher should prepare one to four questions for each seminar. This number should suffice, considering that students will generate their own questions starting form the ones the teacher has provided. Respect, patience, politeness, relaxation, and a sense of humor are the key characteristics of a good seminar leader. Teachers who have not coordinated

Socratic seminars before are advised to attend seminars coordinated by more experienced peers. They can also adopt the role of students' in their peers' seminars, so that they gain a different perspective on the process.

Adler (1984) provides a list of recommended readings for children ages five to nine, ten to fourteen, and fifteen to twenty. The texts proposed are classic books that have received universal critical acclaim. Adler (1984) urges seminar coordinators to "not accept half-minded listening on the part of students or put up with garbled, incoherent speech in their replies."(p.25) However, incoherent speech is often encountered in real conversations; not all utterances are fully developed thoughts so teachers should not silence a student just because he or she stated an idea before thinking it through.

The instructor can also act as a trainer in teaching participants how to create meaningful questions (Moeller & Moeller, 2002). He or she needs to make sure that the questions addressed focus more on interpretation, rather than on recall or evaluation.

Polite and Adams' (1996) study focused on the effects of the Socratic seminar methodology at middle school located in Chattanooga, Tennessee. The results indicated that some teachers were dissatisfied with the texts chosen to be discussed during the seminar because they were not relevant to the students. Teachers have also expressed the need for training in organizing and conducting Socratic seminars. More than half of the students interviewed reported that when they rated the seminars the most important factor was the relevance of the materials to their own life experience. Half of the students preferred the seminar setting to their regular classroom setting, because they felt that their input was more valued than in a regular class. Several students also remarked that teachers got more involved with content and showed more interest in student responses

during seminars. One limitation of the study is the lack of details about the format of the Socratic seminars. The results must be generalized with caution due to the small sample size (n=34).

Metzer (1998) presents an individual teacher's experiment with Socratic seminars. The teacher used Socratic seminars to teach reading comprehension techniques. Her method involved two student groups: the inner and the outer groups. The two groups took turns at having a ten-minute discussion about a short literary piece (under a page). The inner group read the piece several times and discussed it, while the outer group took notes on the dynamics of their discussion (e.g., the strategies the inner group used to make sense of the text). The outer circle gave the inner circle feedback for ten minutes, and then the groups changed roles. The inner group's discussion was initiated by the teacher's open-ended questions. The teacher incorporated response journals into her Socratic seminars. Students wrote three journal entries each week, as their individual responses to the seminars.

The findings of the Metzer (1998) study showed that the students' comprehension skills improved, as well as their listening and speaking skills. Rereading a passage at a slower speed helped students become more focused and notice more significant details. During the seminars students also made meaningful connections between different texts they read. Students enjoyed the format provided by the seminars in their Language Arts class and have requested it in their Social Studies class. Although an example of successful implementation of Socratic seminars, the results of this study should be generalized with caution because of the small number of students involved in the study

(n=48). The author of the study does not provide consistent information about student characteristics. The biggest weakness of this study is the lack of a control group.

Nystrand and Gamoran (1997) did an empirical study to examine the general effects of dialogic practices on achievement and learning. The two-year study used a large sample of classes located in diverse schools and communities. The observers coded both teacher and student questions for authenticity, uptake, and evaluation. A question was rated "authentic" if the teacher who addressed it did not have a specific answer in mind. By addressing an authentic question the teacher expresses his or her genuine interest in what the student thinks. The teacher uses an authentic question to probe a student's original view and not his or her ability to report what someone else has said regarding the topic in discussion.

To provide an "uptake" means to follow up the questions addressed in the class. In a dialogic classroom both the teacher and the students are expected to provide follow up questions. It facilitates the negotiation of understanding, indicating, at the same time, that the conversants listen carefully and respond to each other.

The level of evaluation refers to the extent to which the teacher allows a student response to modify the topic of discourse. Researchers found that classroom discourse was mainly monologic (teacher dominated). In the classes observed the teachers asked the majority of the questions; few teacher questions were authentic and few teachers followed up on student responses. Discussions lasted less than 50 seconds per class in eighth grade and less than 15 seconds per class in ninth grade. Findings also indicate that the time spent discussing, addressing authentic questions, uptake, and high-level teacher evaluation had a strong positive effect on achievement.

Nystrand, Wu, Gamoran, Zeiser, and Long (2001) reanalyzed the data collected by Nystrand and Gamorand (1997) and focused on aspects of classrooms, teachers, students, and patterns of teacher-student interaction that foster dialogic discourse. The researchers' main concern was to identify how a monologic classroom transforms (one in which the teacher's discourse is dominant) into a dialogic classroom (a place where students' voices are encouraged and valued). Their study reveals that teachers can make the change from monologic to dialogic in several ways: with little or no transition, by asking authentic questions, and by encouraging students to respond to each other's questions. Student answers to the teacher's authentic questions can initiate dialogic discourse. The results also show that classes where the majority of lessons relied mostly on recitation, it was more difficult to initiate a discussion. The pattern of authentic questions and uptake is less likely to occur as a sequence in low-track classes. Student questions, as primers of dialogic spells, occur infrequently in low-track classes. Monologic discourse tends to predominate in low-track classes.

In an overview of the research studies done between 1989 and 1996 under the patronage of the National Center on Literature Teaching and Learning, Langer (1997) identifies two orientations that individuals adopt when reading and discussing literature: a literary orientation and a discursive orientation. The two orientations differ in terms of the individual's purpose for approaching literature. A literary orientation has as its purpose engaging in a literary experience. This involves uncertainty, openness, and exploration. A discursive orientation focuses on gaining information and understanding ideas and has as its result maintaining a point of reference. Traditional literary knowledge does not get lost in the reader response theory, but finds its place in this second

orientation. One may use both orientations in the process of making sense of a literary text, according to his or her needs.

Recent research abounds in case studies on teachers who have tried to implement various questioning models in their high school literature classes (e.g., Christoph & Nystrand 2001; Carico 2001; Kong & Fitch 2002; Tredway 1995). For example, a qualitative study done by Commeyras and Sumner (1996) indicates that literature discussions based on student-posed questions addressed a number of reading, writing, and oral language core curriculum objectives. Students encouraged to address their own questions showed more willingness to engage in literary discussions. They also tended to ask more "why" questions than "how" and "what" questions. Results also showed that students took more responsibility for their learning, generated more questions, and helped one another clarify questions. One of the main limitations of this study is that researchers observed elementary students in only one teacher's class.

Literature Circles

Daniels (1994) defined literature circles as a "sophisticated fusion of collaborative learning with independent reading, in the framework of reader response theory." Unlike questioning models, students form groups according to their literary preferences. The instructor provides students with a variety of fiction texts and students get in groups according to the text they choose to read. Students are assigned various roles within the group; students rotate roles and form new groups with every new book. Students use their role sheets, reading notes, and/or reading logs as discussion prompters. Unlike the models discussed above, the instructor does not provide the questions that suggest discussion topics; instead, students are and expected to find and develop their own literary topics.

Student-led discussions represent the key-characteristic of this type of instructional activity.

The role of the instructor in book clubs and literature circles. The role of the instructor in book club and literature circles is to collect books, help groups to form, observe group meetings, keep records of group meetings and make assessment notes. The instructor acts as a facilitator of open conversations, and not as the leader. Daniels (1994) argued that students could benefit from seeing their literature instructor playing the role of a 'fellow reader':

> A teacher's becoming a fellow reader, honestly reading, responding, predicting, and sharing meaning-making processes right along with the students, offers a radically different and powerful demonstration of how mature readers really think. (p.26)

The role described above, that of fellow reader, is consistent with one of the reader response principles that emphasizes the importance of the instructor modeling literary response. The instructor is also responsible for assigning students various roles within the group: discussion director, literary luminary/passage master, connector, illustrator, etc.

In a recent study, Kong and Fitch (2002) examined the effects of implementing Book Clubs in a combined fourth and fifth grade classroom. Students who participated in a year-long study learned how to construct meaning by connecting the text with their previous experience. The results indicated that students involved in the Book Club were more willing to share their thoughts and used more metacognitive strategies when reading. They also showed more engagement in literary conversations. Students received

direct instruction on conversation management (how to keep the conversation going, how to respond to their peers' questions, and how to clarify their own responses). Students had the chance to observe a group of older students who had previously been involved in a Book Club project. This gave the younger students a clearer idea of what is expected of them. As the school year progressed, students displayed more responsibility in literary conversations and also gained more control over the conversations. The Book Club format used in this study had four major elements: small group discussions (also called Book Clubs), whole class discussion (also called community share), reading and individual writing. The program focused on student responses. One of the limitations of the study is the small number of student participants (10 fifth graders and 15 fourth graders).

Conclusion

As described above, critical thinking has been defined in various ways and little consensus has been reached on what this concept means. The review of the literature, presented above, suggests that researchers who studied interventions in the classroom tend to create their own definitions of critical thinking based on earlier definitions of the concept (such as those of Dewey, Bloom, and Ennis).

Most recent research done in the field, using questioning as a means of promoting critical thinking, focuses more on individual teacher's cases or at most on an individual school. There appears to be a lack of research studies with a large sample of subjects, which limits their generalizability.

Chapter 3

Considerations in Implementing Questioning Models

The questioning models presented in the previous section stress a change in the emphasis placed on student input in the literature class. Each model has its own advantages. Christenbury and Kelly's (1983) Questioning Circles offer the instructor and students guidance in discussing literary texts from a triple perspective: matter, personal reality, and external reality. These three categories, as well as the subcategories resulting from their combinations offer participants a conceptual framework for thinking of and addressing questions. Questioning the Author (Beck, McKeown, Hamilton, & Kucan 1997) can be used both with narrative and expository texts. This model addresses specifically the idea of the text as the creation of a person (the author) who has something to say, and the reader as an explorer in search of the message the author has embedded in his or her text. This model helps students see the author as a real person, and not as an abstract notion. Perkins' (1994) basic design questions are broad enough to allow the instructor to mold his or her own specific questions according to the goal of the discussion. Schmit's (2002) hierarchical model offers a more structured strategy for addressing questions. This whole-class model explicitly requires students to agree upon the literal meaning of a text before engaging in other higher-order thinking processes. Socratic seminars emphasize small group work and grant many responsibilities to participating students. Student questions and student-student interactions dominate discussions during Socratic seminars. One of the advantages of this model is that it integrates oral and written response into the literary text. Students can use their reading response logs during seminars. Similarly, students engaged as readers in literature circles

also use their reading-response logs to develop discussion topics. Literature circles promote student-led discussion and allow students to choose their own readings. This strategy focuses on the idea that students enjoy literature more if they are allowed to read what interests them.

The questioning models examined above also have a number of common requirements and advantages. Both students and instructors need instruction and preparation in using a questioning model. Instructors need to have a clear idea about the models they would use in the classroom before actually implementing them. This will help instructors define their expectations about the model(s) chosen. The models presented in the previous section require instructors to train students prior to implementation. Students need to know how the model functions, the roles and responsibilities assigned both to students and instructor, as well as the instructor's expectations.

Modeling is closely related to the instructor's expectations. The teacher can model the type of cognitive processes he or she expects students to engage in during literature discussions. Research has shown that students benefit from seeing more experienced peers engaging in types of literary discussions similar to those required by their instructor.

Instructors who do not have much experience in using a questioning model can also benefit from modeling. They can watch their peers implementing a certain model, or they can act as students in their more experienced peers' classes.

Implementing any of the questioning models presented requires instructors to create an environment where student input is expected and valued. Students need to feel

secure in order to contribute meaningfully to discussion. If a peer or the instructor repeatedly criticizes a student's comments, that student is likely to resist contributing with further ideas. It is the instructor's duty to establish and monitor an environment in which students feel free to present their ideas and are encouraged to take risks.

Before a questioning model is implemented it is beneficial if both student and instructor agree on rules for small-group and whole class discussion because literary discussions require students to use their social skills.

The questioning models I have examined above assign the instructor the role of literary discussion facilitator. This will not deter him or her from teaching literary concepts and/or from providing students with background information related to literature. The goal of these models is not to undermine the importance of traditional teaching, but to provide a framework that allows students to express and develop their own responses to literature.

These models strive to create independent readers, students who can approach any type of fiction and provide a valid understanding. They also allow students to see themselves as having a valuable input into the process of learning. Students are encouraged to engage in relevant conversations with their peers. When implemented correctly, the models encourage student-student interaction more than teacher-student(s), as traditional teaching strategies would do. Thus, the value of implementing questioning models goes well beyond a simple technique for encouraging critical thinking and extends to a means of developing social relations.

Students assume an active role in interpreting literary texts. They are no longer passive recipients of teacher-produced interpretations, but active creators of meaning

engaged in a dialogue with the instructor, their peers, themselves, and the text. The models provide students with strategies for approaching literary texts; students are expected to apply them when trying to discover the meaning of a text. During the process of studying a text, students learn from the instructor that there is no single correct interpretation and that interpretations can display various degrees of validity according to the evidence the texts provides to support them.

Conclusion

The questioning models presented in the second part of this paper can be implemented in high school literature classes; these models provide the instructor with a variety of strategies that can be used to engage students in thinking about a text. Critical thinking can be understood as a continual process of questioning. In literature classes I expect students to question a variety of elements that pertain to the literary text: genre, structure, characters, choice of language, plot, literary devices, etc. I consider the models applicable not only in reading novels, but a whole range of fiction texts. In addition, they can be used not only with print fiction texts, but also with movies. Their structure allows the instructor to make a movie the subject of literature discussions.

Regardless of the model used, the instructor must pay close attention to the way he or she delivers the questions. If the instructor's question is met with silence, this does not necessarily mean that students refuse to participate. Students' silence may be attributed to several causes (Christenbury & Kelly 1983; Perkins 1994): students did not hear the question clearly, the question was too abstract, or the question requires students to spend more time thinking. The instructor can repeat the question louder, to make sure that every student in the class has heard it. Paraphrasing the question or rephrasing it in

colloquial language may help students understand what answer is expected of them. The instructor may also provide students with a sample answer.

Authentic questions, addressed either by the instructor or the students themselves, invite students to place literary texts in larger contexts (personal experiences, books that connect with the one under discussion, social contexts, etc.).

Questioning models offer students a real purpose for reading. Instructors need to be able to help students connect reading in school with their life and interests instead of urging them to read something simply because it is required by the curriculum. One of the most immediate advantages of using questioning is that it gives the instructor immediate feedback about student comprehension, thus allowing him or her to adapt instruction accordingly (Christenbury & Kelly 1983).

I recommend flexibility in using both hierarchical and non-hierarchical models. The instructor should adapt the models to his or hew own student characteristics and needs, while bearing in mind that the goal is to involve students in thinking and discussing literature.

The questioning strategies examined above require high school students to reflect on the literary texts they study in literature classes. These questioning strategies are designed from a democratic perspective. The role of the literature teacher is to encourage students to express their honest opinions about literary texts and to support these opinions with information provided by the literary texts themselves. Every student is expected to participate equally in classroom discussion by providing his of her thoughtful input. Students need to make use of critical thinking in order to provide this input and to interact with their peers and the instructor in a democratic classroom setting.

Using questioning in literature classes not only keeps both the instructor and the class alert but also gives the instructor the chance to show his or her genuine interest in student thinking. Because of their informal character, these models can ease the tension in the class. Because of the type of questions proposed (open-ended questions), these models require students to engage in higher-order thinking, thus going beyond mere memorization of definitions of literary concepts and interpretations of literary texts.

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