



## DEVELOPING CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS THROUGH LITERATURE IN THE ENGLISH CLASSROOM

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**Abstract:** For students studying English literature, critical thinking abilities are crucial. Based on a survey of scholarly research, this article examines successful strategies for fostering critical thinking in the teaching of English literature. Critical analysis-promoting writing assignments, classroom practices, and discussion techniques are evaluated.

**Keywords:** English literature , instructional techniques, inquiry-based learning, the Socratic method, critical thinking, and analytical writing.

### Introduction

Critical thinking is considered an essential ability for students because it helps them succeed in their studies and prepares them for the complicated thinking required Critical in many modern professions. In English literature studies, this skill is especially important since students need to carefully read and analyze texts.

However, many high school and university students find it difficult to think critically about literary works. They often expect that there is only one correct interpretation of a text, or they depend too much on their teachers' opinions or other sources instead of forming their own analysis. Therefore, developing students' critical thinking skills should be an important goal in teaching English literature.



## Literature review and methods

Many scholars highlight that critical thinking is an essential component of education, particularly in the field of literature studies. Earlier research indicates that the analysis of literary works helps learners strengthen their analytical, interpretive, and evaluative abilities. Experts state that activities such as careful reading, classroom discussions, and interpretation of texts motivate students to question ideas and develop their own viewpoints. Nevertheless, studies also reveal that a large number of students face difficulties when trying to think critically about literature. This often happens because they depend too much on teachers' explanations or other external sources instead of creating their own interpretations. For this reason, educators recommend applying interactive teaching methods, including group discussions, open-ended questions, and text analysis tasks, in order to enhance students' critical thinking skills.

For instance, when learners read O. Henry's short story "The Gift of the Magi," they can explore questions such as why Jim and Della chose to give up their most precious belongings, or what the story suggests about the true meaning of love and sacrifice. Questions like these motivate students to look deeper into the text and think more critically rather than focusing only on the obvious meaning.

Nevertheless, research indicates that many students have difficulty performing critical analysis. They often believe that there is only one correct interpretation of a text or rely too much on their teacher's explanation. To address this issue, educators suggest using interactive teaching techniques, including open-ended questions, classroom debates, and activities that involve detailed text analysis.

## Methods

This study examines how literature can be used to strengthen students' critical thinking abilities in the English classroom. A qualitative method may be used by observing how students participate in discussions, reviewing their written work, and assessing how they interpret and analyze literary texts.



In small groups, students analyze a character from a story and explain their motivations and actions.

### **Results and Discussion**

The use of literature in English lessons can greatly enhance students' critical thinking skills. When learners examine literary texts, they begin to analyze symbols, themes, and the motivations of characters. For example, while reading George Orwell's "Animal Farm," students can discuss how the story represents issues such as political authority and social inequality. This type of discussion helps students relate literary ideas to real-life situations.

In addition, classroom discussions allow students to realize that literary works can be interpreted in different ways. For instance, students may have different opinions about the ending of a story, and they need to support their ideas with evidence from the text. Such activities strengthen students' reasoning abilities and improve their communication skills.

### **Conclusion**

The development of critical thinking is an important objective of modern education, and literature can play a key role in achieving this in English classes. By carefully reading, discussing, and analyzing literary texts, students learn how to assess ideas, share their perspectives, and justify their arguments with textual support. Therefore, teachers should apply interactive and learner-centered techniques such as debates, collaborative group work, and open-ended questions. These methods can help students become more independent, analytical, and reflective thinkers.

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