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Review of recent literature on developing critical thinking through reading

Mary Heid

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REVIEW OF RECENT LITERATURE ON DEVELOPING
CRITICAL THINKING THROUGH READING

by
Sister Mary Heid, S.N.D. deN.

A RESEARCH PAPER
SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
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This research paper has been
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of the Cardinal Stritch College by

Sister Marie Colette, SSF
(Adviser)

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In this present democracy it is becoming more evident that there is a need for citizens who can think critically for themselves. So many of the young people today follow the mob and do no thinking on their own.

Tinucci has stated:

Our democratic philosophy presupposes the need of critical thinking as a basis of the development of consensus. From Thomas Jefferson to the present it has been generally agreed that the continued existence of our democracy depends upon an informed and intelligent electorate.¹

It is the writer's belief that, because of the importance of critical thinking, teachers should be aware of the dimensions of the skills and when and how critical reading should be developed. Therefore, this paper was an attempt to review literature on developing critical thinking through reading. Stauffer has this to say on reading and thinking: "It seems that all people agree that reading without understanding is not reading and many more agree that the reading and thinking processes are almost identical."²

Statement of the Problem

The general objective of this study was to survey the recent literature on developing critical thinking in grade levels one through six.


The specific objectives were:

1. to review reported research and other literature on critical thinking and reading
2. to note the nature and importance of critical thinking and reading
3. to note different methods of teaching critical thinking skills.

Scope and Limitations

This survey of literature related to critical thinking was limited to research done in grades one through six, reported during the past ten years. A few studies prior to the time were used because of their valuable contributions. The information for this survey was gathered from the latest periodicals, journals, proceedings, monographs, and books.

Significance

Critical thinking must be coupled with learning to read. Durr aptly states, "Critical reading is a relatively recent term which has evolved from an increasing awareness of the importance of the reader reacting to or thinking about ideas expressed in print."¹ One aim of this study was to review the opinions of authorities on critical thinking in reading. Teachers should be aware of what has been written about this important skill. With this knowledge teachers should be encouraged to develop the skill at every opportunity.


2Russell Stauffer, Teaching Critical Reading at the Primary Level, (Newark, Delaware: International Reading Association, 1965), p. 50.
A second aim of this study was to stress the fact that critical thinking is a skill that must be developed from primary years and must be a continuous process.

In conclusion then it should be apparent that reading is a continuous process and as such constantly subjects the reader's mind to new information requiring him to adjust his thinking. Each word, each fact, each concept, each line or sentence requires a reader to react, accept, reject, associate and assimilate. The reader is asked constantly to suspend judgement. Many readers deal in the suspended judgement without ever being fully cognizant of what they are doing. If they were, there would be more people about who would refuse to jump to conclusions until all the evidence was in or, if they did reach a conclusion on limited evidence, they would realize that this is what has been done.¹

The significance of this study lies in the benefit to teachers and their pupils from the application of its ideas and insights.

Summary

In summary this chapter gives the statement of the problem: to review literature on developing critical thinking skills through reading and in doing this to note the nature and importance of thinking skills and methods in grades one through six. The scope, limitations and significance of the study have also been cited.

¹Ibid., p. 12.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Definition of Terms

Since the terms thinking, critical thinking, reading, and critical reading will be used frequently in this study, definitions by various authorities will be discussed. It has been found that many college textbooks on reading have no chapter on children's thinking. There are very few research studies done on this topic, especially for primary and intermediate grades. Downing says, "Perhaps thinking is neglected because it is an invisible process."¹

It is important, therefore, that the term thinking be defined and clarified.

**Thinking.**—Vinacke describes thinking as "something that goes on in the mind."

In general, thinking serves in the adjustment of the organism to its environment, both internal and external. Thinking can occur as a response to an inner need or as a response to a problem arising in the external world....As behavior, then thinking can fruitfully be treated in terms of adjustment. It is the internal processes which bring the organization laid down in past learning to bear upon response to current situation, and which shape those responses in keeping with inner needs.²

Russell has this to say about thinking:

Thinking is a process rather than a fixed state. It involves a sequence of ideas moving from some beginning, through some sort of pattern of relationships, to some goal or conclusions....It is possible to make a logical distinction between the materials of thinking (such as perceptions), the motives in thinking (such as attitudes influencing it), the processes of


Russell, in an article called "Children Work with Ideas" mentioned four main types of thinking:

1. Associative thinking - putting two or more things together as in a printed symbol and the word it stands for.

2. Convergent thinking - a series of associations on other experiences gradually building up concepts or depth of understanding of important ideas.

3. Problem solving - with its interchangeable steps of identification, data gathering, hypothesizing and testing. Such testing comes close to a related activity sometimes called critical thinking.

4. Creative thinking - new and fresh ideas.

Stauffer, after a lengthy discussion of the definitions given by Vinacke, Dewey, Johnston, Russell and others, stated a definition which he claimed would be helpful to teachers and parents and was adequate to direct reading for meaning. The definition was:

Thinking is a form of behavior or adjustment that is initiated by impulses that are to some degree both internal and external in nature, and are channeled by selective factors that dynamically determine response to the sub-whole and the total situation - on either an active or permissive basis, and are terminated when a particular response is discovered, realized, and followed up; or when something new becomes directive. This definition allows for either productive or reflective thinking and for unregulated thinking.

The concern of this paper was critical thinking; therefore, several definitions of critical thinking will be discussed.

1David Russell, Children's Thinking (Boston: Ginn and Company, 1956), p. 27.


Critical Thinking.—Huus said that:

Critical thinking involves reaction to other ideas or to one's previous ideas. It can be creative in that it can produce new insights for the individual, but these insights are concerned with previously established conditions.¹

Gordon expanded Huus's definition to include the requirements and foundations needed.

Critical thinking is the evaluation of some ideas or products in the light of some norm or standard. It requires an inquiring attitude, knowledge of the subject, application of methods of analysis, and action in the light of the analysis. The foundation upon which to build critical thinking is a language-oriented reading program. The promotion of critical thinking should however, be the function of the total school, and it can be since there are opportunities in every area of the curriculum for students to practice thinking critically.²

Usery defined critical thinking as follows:

Critical thinking may be defined as the act of searching for the clearest ideas about a subject derived from the fact, points of view, observations, and other elements. The reaching continues until one reaches a point at which he understands the intricacies of the problem so that he is able to use logical and creative thinking to make judgments and act in the light of those judgments.³

Discussion of developing critical thinking through reading was one of the purposes of this study; therefore, the definition of reading according to several authors will be clarified.

Reading.——Russell gives this definition of reading.

Reading is responding. The response may be at the surface level of


calling the word. It may be at the somewhat deeper level of understanding
the explicit meaning of sentences, paragraph or passage. Sometimes
reading may be at a third level. It may involve going beyond the facts
to the discovery of new and personal meanings. It may be a stimulus to
images, memories, identification or fresh and creative thoughts.¹

Merely pronouncing the words on the page is not reading. Gray has
said that:

We can distinguish four main components in the interpretation of printed
matter. Briefly stated, they are (1) word perception, (2) comprehension
of the ideas represented by the words, (3) reaction to these ideas,
(4) assimilation or integration of the ideas with previous knowledge or
experience.²

Stauffer on the other hand gives this definition.

Reading is a mental process requiring accurate word recognition, ability
to call to mind particular meanings, and ability to shift or reassociate
meanings until the constructs or concepts presented are clearly grasped,
critically evaluated, accepted and applied or rejected.³

Critical Reading.--Now that several definitions of reading have been
discussed, critical reading, which is the heart of the paper, will be defined
by some authorities.

In their treatment of critical reading Eller and Wolf contend that,
"Critical reading ability refers to the cluster of skills involved in evaluation
of the validity, accuracy or intellectual worth-whileness of a unit of printed
matter."⁴

Huus, on the other hand, states that, "Critical reading requires the
evaluation of the material and norms, and concluding or acting upon

¹David Russell, "Personal Values in Reading," The Reading Teacher, XV
²William S. Gray, On Their Own in Reading (Chicago: Scott Foresman,
³Stauffer, Directing Reading Maturity, p. 16.
⁴William W. Ellor and Judith I. Wolf, "Developing Critical Reading
Zachary has a good definition which brings in young children. "Critical reading often refers to critical thinking about what you read, but in considering the needs of young children the term should be expanded to mean the application of critical thinking and reading skills to what is read, reviewed, heard and observed."  

Many authorities and writers use the terms critical reading and critical thinking interchangeably. To lessen confusion, the ideas on critical reading and thinking of Karlin and Robinson will be used in this paper. Karlin states, "It is the writer's belief that critical thinking and critical reading have much in common."  

Nature and Importance of Critical Reading and Thinking

This is an age of mass communication. Newspapers, radio, television, magazines, and pocket-sized books and motion pictures have become the principal purveyors of entertainment and information. It is, therefore, important and necessary that the people receiving all this communication be able to evaluate and judge critically the influx of communication.

The term critical reading is used by authorities in many ways: as a major part of comprehension, as a higher-level comprehension ability and as a specific comprehension ability. Those who use the term critical reading do not always agree on what it includes; that is, creative reading, analytical reading

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or critical evaluation.

This variability in what constitutes critical reading is due to lack of research evidence on the reading abilities and the related factors. However, there is complete agreement on the importance of critical reading.

Before stressing the nature and importance of critical reading and thinking in the primary grades, the writer would like to give Russell's four reasons why critical thinking should be developed from kindergarten through college.

1. The whole force of mass culture is toward conformity rather than individuality.

2. Good mental ability does not guarantee some of the specific skills needed in critical thinking.

3. Attitudes of critical thinking can be learned, at least in part, by imitation of the procedures of the teacher and other adults.

4. The school must help supply the background of experience, the familiarity and know-how, which is the necessary basis for critical thinking.\(^1\)

In discussing the nature of critical reading Sochor states, "If reading comprehension involves thinking, then critical reading must involve thinking."\(^2\)

In Primary Grades.—This statement and other statements on thinking and reading critically are so profound that the question arises about the possibility of primary children being able to master and use these skills.

The eight-year-old has neither the motivation nor the intellectual capacity to criticize the validity of original documents or to suggest additional hypotheses growing out of a complex scientific experiment, but he can think critically about matters related to experience.

\(^1\)David Russell, "Prerequisite: Knowing How to Read Critically," Elementary English, XL (October, 1963), p. 581.

Matters affecting his home, his health, his immediate surroundings and his school work can provide context for his critical thinking. As he grows older, his reading and his interpersonal contacts will extend the range of material to which critical thinking may be applied.

Despite this assumption that young children can think and read critically Wolf and Ellinger reported that:

Although interest in critical reading has been shown by the publication of nearly 200 articles on the topic in the last decade, few educators have attempted to test the possibility of teaching it below the junior and senior high school levels. In fact, the theories of Piaget suggest that certain types of critical thinking or applying critical thinking to the printed page is impossible before the age of twelve. However, Wolf and Ellinger also stated that "There was evidence from several studies that children can perform these higher thinking processes to some degree before age twelve."

Primary children can think critically. This is the opinion of many authorities. They can evaluate in the terms of their maturity and background of experience. The kind of critical thinking and the amount depend on the teacher.

Artley has this to say on critical reading at the primary level:

It appears to me that in the teaching of critical reading one of the most important understandings to be developed early in children is that for a judgment to be valid it must be based upon defensible criteria. The teacher's questions, "Why do you think the way you do?" or "What are your reasons for?" may point up the fact that the reader has no basis for his evaluation or that the basis is very tenuous. The primary grades are not too early to begin the development of these kinds of understandings. Further extension of this basic understanding

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3Ibid.
will lead the reader on more advanced levels to recognize the fact that at times his judgment must be withheld until he has evidence to substantiate it. Growth in this direction will prevent the many quick trigger opinions that adults give and the judgments they make on the spongy ground of bias and prejudice.

Artley, Stauffer, and many others agree that young people in the primary grades are capable of critical thinking and reading. Of course, their needs and abilities are not the same as older children; however, these needs and abilities should not be neglected. Wolf and Ellinger stated:

Critical reading is one manifestation of the critical thinking process; it is using critical thinking in the act of reading. Therefore, it follows that if elementary school children can think critically at an early age they can also be taught to read critically. Yet, elementary school teachers frequently neglect the higher thinking skills when teaching reading and instead spend most of their time teaching the mechanics of reading.

Petty, in an article on critical reading in primary grades, considered that critical thinking involves:

1. an attitude of being disposed to consider in a thoughtful way the range of one's experience

2. knowledge of the method of logical inquiry and reasoning

3. some skills in applying these methods.

Ability to do critical reading as described here should and can begin to be developed even before actual reading is done because of its relationship to critical thinking. Problems which have meaning for children afford excellent opportunities for critical thinking. Young children should learn to recognize problems that need solving and to state these in their own words. They can think about what the different aspects of a problem may be — that is, what things are involved, what actions must be taken, what must be found before the problem can be solved. They can make some judgments as to whether it will be possible to find the answers to some or all of their questions. They may even

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begin to decide whether a particular source of information is reliable.¹

In the primary grades, problem-solving depends on the people to whom the children talk, reactions to various places, pictures they study and the printed material which they read or have read to them. Children need to make judgments as to whether the material answers their questions.

From what has been presented so far on the nature and importance of critical reading in the primary grades, it appears that the teacher is the crucial factor. The teacher must recognize the importance of critical reading and also realize that from primary grades onward they have the responsibility to develop abilities in critical thinking.

McCullough investigated whether questions purporting to measure different types of comprehension are testing essentially different things. She reported that:

It should be admitted that children can be trained to think only in terms of the facts of a story if the teachers ask them only facts, just as a dog chained to post becomes used to sitting by the post even when he is not chained. They check their higher thought processes at the door, as it were. Children need a good variety of questions in their experiences with stories, then they will be ready to think in various ways about story material.²

If the children in the schools are to develop skill in critical thinking through reading, they must be taught from the readiness program on up to college. Teachers must think of readiness for evaluative reading besides thinking of word recognition and understanding meanings. "One of the


major misconceptions current amongst reading teachers is that training in critical reading should be delayed until later grades."

In concluding this discussion on the nature and importance of critical thinking and reading in the primary grades, the writer wishes to stress again that younger children have the ability to think and read critically. However, the ability needs help in growing and developing. It is imperative that teachers realize this and do all they can to foster this ability. Critical thinking even in primary grades is a requirement for a citizen living in a democracy.

Intermediate Grades.—The middle grade child has a questioning mind. This should be used as a starting point to good thinking, especially critical thinking. Children will begin to develop better ways of thinking about what they read if they have been trained to do so. In the intermediate grades they should be able to think on a higher level. They should be readers and thinkers who are not fooled by emotional language and who can recognize propaganda. It is important to recognize propaganda because unless it is understood, there is a danger of having the mind and body enslaved.

In the intermediate grades the children should be able to criticize and question what the author is saying; therefore, it is important to have a good foundation in comprehension. The child cannot think critically about ideas he does not understand.

Children at this grade level must be allowed to develop the ability to think critically. If they are treated as if they cannot think, they will learn not to think.

Pupils learn to avoid thinking because thinking may get them in trouble. It is safer just to give a quick and simple answer. They learn that there really isn't time to think nor is there any reward for it. There are just more answers to get, more pages to complete, more tasks to face. And for many children none of it makes very much sense. There simply isn't time or opportunity to organize, much less to contemplate or reflect on it all.¹

The need and importance of teaching critical reading is greater in the intermediate level than in the primary level; therefore, it is necessary to build upon the foundation hopefully begun in the lower grades. The problem is that most pupils in the later grades are poorly equipped to read critically.

They have acquired certain beliefs that make them unwilling to question statements in informative material. Two of these beliefs are as follows: (1) simply because an idea appears in print it must be true and therefore is not to be challenged, and (2) any printed statement on a given point is necessarily more valid than a spoken statement on the same point.²

Pupils in the intermediate grades are unacquainted with ways of trying to determine whether a statement is valid. They also know little about distinguishing between fact and opinion. They are not aware of emotional and factual language, and bias or propaganda. Most of these children accept passively whatever they read and receive many false notions.

Trying to perform these various acts can be quite complicated. Children in intermediate grades are not expected to reach full potential during the elementary school years; however, they acquire rudimentary skills essential to critical reading.

Whether the teaching should be done rests on these premises. First, is the importance which critical reading has in developing people who are concerned about furthering their education independently and about the welfare of society. Second, since many pupils do not complete both elementary and secondary education, the instruction should not be


withheld from intermediate grade pupils. Third, the ability to read critically can be developed most adequately by introducing some of its basic aspects as soon as the pupil can understand and use them.¹

In the middle grades it is important to strengthen and extend the skills that should have been taught in the primary grades. Pupils will be introduced to a higher level of skills and the materials will be more difficult. These grades will have wide reading of factual material in textbooks, magazines and newspapers. The children should use care in evaluating these materials. Most ten- or eleven-year olds cannot be expected to recognize subtle biases, but they can be taught to identify personal opinion.

Karlin, in discussing critical thinking and reading for the intermediate grades, said:

Another aspect of critical reading for pupils of this age involves questions of judgment based upon values to which they subscribe. For a child to be able to answer the question, "Was it the right thing to do?" as he studies the westward movement and the ultimate placement of the Indian on reservations requires the accumulation of more facts and fewer opinions and the weighing of issues. Of course, he is able to relate such conduct only to his concept of fairness and no effort should be made to have him struggle with moral issues that are beyond his present reach. But there is no question that this attitude of judging issues should be fed by careful guidance.²

The writer believes that teachers in the intermediate grades in contrast to many primary teachers do not need to be convinced of the need to teach the critical thinking and reading skills. They have more opportunities and the material of these grades lend themselves to critical thinking and reading. However, Gray after studying several years of research on critical reading instruction stated that, "Elementary school children are capable of critical thinking development. Yet there has been very little progress in

¹Ibid., p. 3.

developing critical reading in the elementary school."¹

Research has also shown that a major impediment to the development of critical readers has been the assumption by teachers that critical thinking or reading will develop naturally and that instruction is not necessary. Durrell and Chambers claim, "The ability to think appears to rest upon training rather than upon intelligence."²

Much of the literature brought out the fact that children bring with them to school many concepts and opinions. The teacher is required to direct reading as a thinking process so that the children may use their experiences, making comparisons and judgments. The teacher must teach the children to reflect on events from their own experiences and to reason while reading.

Research has implied that critical reading and thinking ability cannot be assumed because a child is good at comprehension. The critical skills must be taught. The students must have the opportunities to utilize the skills not only in the reading class but in content fields.

Factors that Influence Growth of Skills

Methods used to teach critical thinking and reading skills will be ineffective in an atmosphere that is not conducive for the skills. Therefore, attitudes and other factors that influence the growth of critical skills will be discussed. Ellinger and Wolf reported that:

There are numerous factors which influence critical reading performances;


these factors are found both within readers and within reading materials and many of them have a negative effect upon critical reading abilities. Within certain limits teachers can apparently foster improvement.\(^1\)

The teacher must assure that the classroom atmosphere will foster critical reading. She must not only have the right materials but also encourage children to express their opinions and develop self-confidence.

A classroom which stimulates critical reading and all interpretive reading goes far beyond selected materials and specific lessons. A classroom which stimulates critical thinking is alive with questions, with energy and vitality, and with feeling as well as with information.\(^2\)

Groff studied fifth and sixth grade children's expressed attitudes toward four different context type of reading material. The hypothesis of this study was that a positive relationship existed between pupil attitudes and pupil scores on an experimental test of critical reading. Relationships between the pupils' critical reading scores and attitudes expressed toward reading as a school activity and attitudes expressed toward school, classmates and teachers were also explored.

This study suggested that the reading comprehension of each child is influenced somewhat by his attitude toward the content type of material he is given to read. This is more likely to be true if the child is asked to reason, or read beyond the material, than if he is asked to repeat verbatim.\(^3\)

Piekarz had this to say about attitudes and emotions in relation to

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critical reading:

Attitudes and emotions have effects on critical reading. We read with our feelings and attitudes as well as with our intellectual abilities. These emotional factors can facilitate or impede our intellectual functions. Attitudes provide us with a personal outlook on the world through our feelings, biases, inclinations, preconceived notions, ideas, fears, threats and convictions, making each person's view of the world different from everyone else's. Negative attitudes are probably more influential than positive attitudes, but strong attitudes in either direction do affect our awareness and recognition of truth and reality— it isn't only people in love who see no faults in each other. Attitudes affect reading at the perception level by helping to determine the printed words we actually see, at the understanding level by coloring, twisting, and distorting ideas, and at the retention level by selecting those things that will be remembered and those that will be forgotten. Critical readers go beyond the identification of stated facts and ideas and engage in interpretive and evaluative thinking as they read. This makes them particularly susceptible to their own emotions, prey to their own attitudes. Successful critical readers recognize material which is emotionally loaded for them because of differences in viewpoint and resist, in so far as possible, giving into their personal feelings and emotions and remain detached, neutral, and objective about what they read as they read. People differ in critical reading performance as much because of variations in attitudes as because of variations in intelligence.¹

Maw and Maw studied the relationship of curiosity to reading behavior. Persons of high curiosity scan the environment more thoroughly than do persons of low curiosity and therefore they notice more. The high curiosity persons want to know more about what they see. It would seem then in reading that high curiosity persons will be more alert and active in seeking understanding. In this seeking for understanding the readers high in curiosity will more likely grasp important relationships and give attention to the meaningful aspects of sentences than the readers of the same intelligence but less curiosity. They are less actively concerned with gaining understanding.

This hypothesis was tested in two independent studies, one conducted

in December, 1960, with 191 pupils and another in March, 1961, with 749 pupils. Curiosity groups were matched for verbal and non-verbal intelligence.

In both phases of the study, the findings supported the hypothesis that children with high curiosity sense the meaning of sentences more accurately than do low curiosity children of the same tested intelligence. The study indicated that the advantages held by pupils of high curiosity are less at the lower IQ levels.¹

Classroom environment can stimulate this curiosity if it has the right kind of environment. Strickland had this to say about classrooms:

An attractive classroom as background for the child's school experience affords him pleasure and certain aesthetic value. A comfortable classroom environment gives him a sense of security and well-being with possible release of energy for purposes beyond just keeping the organism in equilibrium. But a classroom environment can be both attractive and comfortable and still be a passive, static environment which does little or nothing in and of itself to stimulate a child to reach out for experiences which help him to expand and grow. In fact, attractiveness and comfortableness which do nothing to stimulate curiosity, encourage exploration, thinking, and problem-solving, which keep the child in a passive, receptive, and vegetative sort of equilibrium, can stand in the way of growth. Intellectual growth is largely a result of finding oneself discontented with the stage in which one is and a consequent reaching out to build a new equilibrium on a higher intellectual level.²

The above discussions pointed out that there are many factors affecting critical thinking and reading. Before the skills can be taught these factors must be taken into consideration by teachers. Creating a challenging, curiosity-filled classroom atmosphere is a step in the right direction.

Children's attitudes are also important and must be guided.


Methods at the Primary Level

In the past a great deal of attention has been given to word perception and comprehension skills. Many authorities claim that critical reading skills have been neglected.

Primary children can be taught to show good judgment and to develop reasoning ability. They can be taught to express ideas in general terms, to give reasons for ideas expressed. They should also be encouraged to express their own ideas of evaluation and appreciation.

Shotka gives an outline that can be used in the primary grades in developing critical thinking. The outline is:

1. See and state a problem.
2. Recognize what can be taken for granted.
3. Assume what is true for the sake of testing.
4. Give reasons for testing.
5. Get evidence: reading, by looking about us for answers, talking to parents and people in position to help us, using pictures, seeing films.
6. Evaluate the evidence by: finding bias, validity, reliability.
7. Put findings together and organize them.
8. Draw conclusions.

Shotka then described in great detail how this outline can be used as an opportunity to teach and improve critical thinking. The topic used was "The Home and the Community." This seemed to be very well worked out and practical.

It has been established that critical reading is possible with young children, but the amount and type rest with the teacher. Painter gives some examples and applications of critical reading at the primary level.

Primary children can question whether a situation is truth or fantasy. A child may decide if action is plausible in stories not labeled fairy stories.
Young children can be led to judge the competence of an author.
Children can judge how fair and just another is.
Characters can be judged as life-like or real.
Sometimes a title can be appraised.

Children can judge practices.
Children can judge likenesses and differences in books dealing with children of other lands.
Various types of comparisons can lead to critical thinking.
A child should be ready to evaluate his own oral or written reports.
A teacher may teach children to detect propaganda.
The child must be alert to figurative language.
A child can become alert to words that arouse emotions.
Finally, a child will select books according to his preferences.

Under each one of these points, Painter gives specific examples of materials that can be used to develop critical thinking. This article contains a wealth of ideas for teachers.

Stauffer maintains that training in reading that accomplishes good thinking is best done in a group situation where there is discussion. These group directed-thinking activities help pupils become aware of discrepancies between their own interpretations and those of other pupils. He gives three basic steps that should be followed for developing a directed reading-thinking activity.

The first step is developing purposes for reading. Purposes direct and motivate the influences that get a reader started and carry him through the end. If the reader from the very beginning has a definite purpose for reading, he acquires a proper attitude toward reading and an appreciation of the use and value of having a purpose.

The role of the teacher is that of an agitator. The teacher should not dominate or intimidate. All the members of the group should be involved in the act of setting up conjectures and purposes. Well-written stories and good pictures should maintain and carry the reader to the end.

The second step is developing habits of reasoning. The reader should

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balance his experience and his knowledge and the yardsticks provided by society that he has learned to use because they are socially and culturally acceptable against those of the authors. To the degree that the reader has examined carefully the experiences and knowledge that he uses, to that degree he can be a critical reader.

The third step is developing habits of prediction. By silent reading, the children can find out whether or not predictions made have been right or wrong. After silent reading there is oral reading to prove to the group that predictions were right or wrong. In these circumstances there is immediate feedback.

In the directed-thinking reading activity there is instant and ongoing testing so that the reader can substantiate or deny his hypothesis and prove what he has found.1

Further, Stauffer presents lessons on the first-grade level and the third-grade level using this directed-thinking activity. Actual stories are used and all the steps are followed and explained in detail.

In conclusion he states, "It may not be true that you can induce a child to read anything if your approach is that fundamental to a directed-thinking activity, but it appears that you can teach him to read a great deal more and in a more scholarly way than anyone might have guessed."2

Howards offered some practical suggestions in teaching critical skills in primary grades. He suggested that:

Many of the rudiments of structural skills and critical reading skills can be taught in the primary grades using some of the TV ads about plastic electronic monsters which the children soon dis-

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1 Russell Stauffer, Teaching Critical Reading at the Primary Level, (Newark, Delaware: International Reading Association, 1968), pp. 5-12.
2 Ibid., p. 50.
cover really do not look as big in the store as they did on TV and
which fall apart quickly. This kind of awareness can be highlighted and
used to build in the foundational background for more sophisticated
critical reading skills later. In teaching youngsters the differences
between the real and unreal, the imaginary and the actual, fact and
fiction, one can really see the application of several basic critical
reading skills. The child can be questioned as to whether certain super-
stitions or misconceptions could be proved. How? Do arguments make
sense? Children love humor which can readily be slanted toward this end
of critical analysis.1

Lee, Bingham, and Woelfel in their book Critical Reading Develops
Early offer many practical methods in developing critical reading and thinking
skills in primary grades. A few will be mentioned here.

Showing personal interest in things that are important to the
children encourages many aspects of development. It encourages pupil initiative
in bringing ideas to school. It encourages pupils to share.

Teaching can extend awareness of verbal meanings through their own
varied use of words. Small children need frequent contact with unfamiliar
words used in a familiar context and familiar words used in unfamiliar context.
Daily classroom situations provide a rich source for extended vocabulary.

An opportunity for developing critical thinking arises whenever a child
begins expressing his ideas through drawing and painting and uses his illus-
trations as basis for verbal communication. He may tell at some length about
the experience which was the basis of his picture. This should be accepted and
appreciated. Then he should be asked to focus on the main idea. "What is the
one most important thing you want to tell us about all this?" As the child
becomes able to select the main idea, the one most important to him, he becomes
increasingly aware of the relative importance of ideas through actually making
such selections.

1Melvin Howards, "Ways and Means of Improving Critical Reading Skills,"
Developing Comprehension Including Critical Reading, ed. Mildred Dawson,
(Newark, Delaware: International Reading Association, 1968), p. 194.
In the middle of listening to a story on record the teacher can take the needle off and raise the question: "How do you suppose the story might end?" After much speculation, some children from the group write out their own ideas while others can talk their thoughts to a tape recorder. As children's skills increase with this activity, the beginning can be omitted and children can guess about how the story might have started.

Teachers need to give the children opportunities to make decisions. The children need to recognize that making decisions about things is a quite different matter from making decisions which involve people. It is important for the child to learn to respect the autonomy of others, to estimate how the others involved would view or feel about the issue, to solicit other points of view.¹

From the above discussion it can be seen that there are many ways of teaching critical thinking and reading to primary children. The teacher can plan specific lessons or use the opportunities that arise in the classroom situation. The important factor is that the teachers be aware of the opportunities that do present themselves.

**Methods at the Intermediate Level**

In the intermediate grades there should be well-planned lessons in developing critical reading skills. Most basal readers do have a sequence in developing critical thinking and reading.

Williams made a study of basal readers and stated:

Systematic and gradual development of critical reading skills is provided in several recent basic reading materials. However, the content in these readers might be expanded and improved to offer

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more practical application of the higher thinking skills.¹

In using basal readers to teach critical reading skills, the teacher should use the manual as a guide to make sure she is developing these skills properly. Williams also found in his study that:

Well prepared teacher's manuals have been provided to offer systematic guidance in the essential thinking skills. However, the non-use or misuse of these materials are responsible for the unfavorable practices that nurture inaccurate and purposeless reading skills.²

Besides using basal readers to develop critical reading skills, intermediate teachers can use a variety of activities to promote growth in these skills. Intermediate grade teachers can help pupils build the ability to read informative statements critically. Judging the validity of reading matter is best done by providing pupils with several books as sources of information. In this way the pupil can discover that all books do not agree on one subject, or that a certain statement is out of date, or that an author can make a misstatement. In this way the pupil will learn that it is all right for him to question the truth of statements which he reads.

Durr lists four skills essential to critical reading:

1. Distinguishing statements of fact from statements of opinions.
2. Recognizing assumptions and vague expressions.
3. Recognizing propaganda techniques.
4. Judging the competence of the writer.³

Durr went on to say that the degree to which a pupil can distinguish between fact or opinion depends upon the maturity of the pupil and the

²Ibid., p. 329.
procedures used in teaching this skill. He gave the following suggestions: read and think it over, talk together with the class to answer certain questions, let the child work by himself by giving a list of statements and having him decide whether the statement is fact or opinion. Then the pupil should be encouraged to differentiate between fact and opinion statements. The teacher should provide for practice in using the skill.¹

All pupils will not be able to perform the skill with the same degree of competency. Individual differences should be taken into consideration in the activities that are provided. For pupils who are capable of going beneath the issue of opinion or fact Durr listed these specific activities:

a. Write brief stories or descriptions and have pupils indicate which sentences contain statements given as opinion.
b. Give the pupils sentences and then indicate whether each sentence is opinion or fact.
c. Have pupils bring editorials from your local paper or the school paper and examine the style that differentiates them from news stories.
d. Bring selections written by different columnists and have your pupils note whether the writers express their opinions about issues. If possible, find columns which represent different opinions on the same issue or compare a columnist's comments on an event with a news report on the same event.
e. Have your pupils read and compare a biography of a famous person with a fictionalized story about that person.²

In teaching the three other skills, namely, recognizing assumptions and vague expressions, recognizing propaganda techniques and judging the competence of the writer, Durr suggested the same steps as were used in distinguishing fact from opinion. The steps were: introducing the item, that is read and think it over, talk together with the class, let pupils work by themselves and have the teacher provide practice in using the skill. The materials

¹Ibid., pp. 8-10.
²Ibid., pp. 11-12.
used for teaching these techniques should be many and varied.¹

The task of the teacher in helping pupils grow in critical reading is to determine the background of the pupils and to take steps to provide the experiences necessary for developing the skills. The teacher must be well-organized, be a critical reader herself, and not be biased in any way.

If intermediate children are going to grow in critical reading and thinking skills they must have a good foundation in all reading skills. Many authorities point out that the critical skills must be built upon and grow out of the other skills. It was also noted that the curriculum contains many opportunities for the development of critical thinking. Every course can contribute to the growth of the child; however, the lessons must be carefully planned and not left to chance.

Hill suggested that instead of using readers or content area textbooks to teach the skills necessary for critical reading, that books read for recreation or as part of an individualized reading program be used. One type of book suggested was biography. Have the children read biographies of one person by several authors and compare them as to what phases of the person's life were covered, whether there was any bias, whether the various versions were historically true, and what fictionized details were included.

Books about families also interest middle grade children. Pupils can discuss the different types of families, their homes, their standards of living and the ideas of discipline. In this way they can see how families differ and yet are all alike. This type of book also helps understanding of family life of other cultures, ethnic and social groups and reduces bias and prejudice.

¹Ibid., pp. 12-27.
Another way to use books to develop critical thinking is to have the children write their version of how a book came to be written or how they would have ended it.

Studying the pictures in books and comparing the different styles is another technique that can be used. Comparing the earlier books of an author with his most recent book is an interesting and thought-provoking project.

Some of the basal reader stories are based on versions of famous children's books. Children can read original books and compare the stories in the reader.

A final suggestion to help children read critically was the use of the newspaper. The accounts of important events can be compared in several newspapers. This can lead to the study of the way news is gathered and reported and the effect that the printed word has in their lives.¹

Flamond, in an informative article on critical reading, gives a practical suggestion for developing the skills in distinguishing between fact and opinion.

Skill in differentiating between fact and opinion can be developed by requiring students to verify or prove their statements. To say that an answer has been found in a story is not enough. Students should be required to support their statements of fact with verification. Verification can be derived by inference as well as by direct quotation. An illustration of verification by inference, in answer to the question, "How do you know John's mother was angry?" might be derived from "his mother's eyes flashed fire when John came home an hour late." This statement requires the ability to interpret a figure of speech in order to get the inferred meaning of anger.²

In summarizing the discussion of various methods in teaching critical thinking and reading skills in grades one to six, it can be said that there are many ways in which critical reaction to reading can be encouraged. In

¹Jeraldine Hill, "Teaching Critical Reading in the Middle Grades," Elementary English, XXXIX (March, 1962), pp. 239-42.

conclusion to the discussion, a list of suggestions that can be applied to any level of instruction will be presented. These suggestions were given by Gans:

1. Have a program in which children have experiences that challenge and motivate reading that is not a patchwork, but that becomes an integral part of the program for all ages.
2. Have a program that encourages personal choice and the development of taste that does not try to make children alike -- the standard brand.
3. Schools must encourage these ideas by a different concept of selecting reading material and a different concept of budgeting to buy these materials that are needed in this kind of program.¹

Summary

The terms thinking, critical thinking, reading, and critical reading were defined. The nature and importance of critical thinking in the primary and intermediate grades was stressed. Emphasis was given to the fact that critical thinking should be developed from primary grades. Factors influencing critical thinking were discussed. Finally, various teaching techniques in developing critical thinking were presented for primary and intermediate grades.

CHAPTER III

SUMMARY

As stated in the introduction, this survey of literature on developing critical thinking was made to note the nature and importance of critical thinking and reading and to note different methods of teaching critical thinking skills. The writer hoped to communicate whatever helpful information there might be to teachers who are interested in developing the skills of critical thinking in their pupils. It was also hoped that teachers would be made aware of the importance of developing critical thinking as early as the primary years.

Findings of the Survey

The limited amount of research done in critical reading has focused on three topics: critical reading as an ability distinct from general reading ability, factors affecting critical reading and the influence of instruction on the ability to read or think critically.

Studies on the nature of critical reading and thinking indicated that critical reading is an ability distinct from general reading ability. The findings reported that a common factor does pervade reading skills, but that the ability to read well literally does not insure the ability to read well critically.

Research has also shown that a major impediment to the development of critical readers has been the assumption by teachers that critical thinking will develop naturally and that instruction is not necessary. Durrell and
Chambers claim: "The ability to think appears to rest upon training rather than upon intelligence." ²¹

The writer also reviewed a few studies that reported on the factors that influence critical thinking skills. These studies reported that there are factors both within readers and within reading materials which influence critical reading performance. It was also found that within limits teachers can foster improvement.

Many authorities agreed on the following points. Some children have learned to think critically before coming to school. Critical reading should have its beginning in the primary grades. The level of achievement in critical reading is controlled somewhat by the experiences of the reader and his ability to deal with them.

Implications

Critical thinking has many meanings. Some variations of its meaning have been presented by quoting various authors. The viewpoint in this paper was that critical thinking and critical reading have much in common. Thinking must accompany reading. The reader should be able to examine material objectively, compare and make judgments, detect and analyze propaganda and recognize distortions.

The results of the paper imply that critical thinking and reading skills are not taught and acquired at any particular level or with any special material. Critical thinking and reading should be developmental, sequential and continuous. The emphasis in the reading program should not only be placed on word recognition and literal comprehension, but also on making judgments and

reading between and beyond the lines.

The instruction must be effective; therefore, it takes a teacher who requires pupils to solve problems and raise questions and who encourages them to do reading, exploring and analyzing. It also takes teachers who realize the importance of critical reading even in the primary grades. The teachers must allow time for discussion, must see that all sides of a question are presented. From primary level onward this can be done in different degrees of competency.

The following comment by Triggs seemed a fitting conclusion to this discussion on the implications of this paper.

Thinking is the basis of critical reading and every child challenged to use his ability can learn to read what for his level of understanding is critical. It is failure to emphasize at all levels the critical reading skills, along with the teaching to the level of mastery of the basic reading skills, that causes some of our students to accept as truth whatever they see in print, failing to react personally in such a way that fallacies become apparent. They never have learned to read critically.¹

Conclusion

To read critically is to read intelligently. Such reading does not occur by chance or automatically. Each teacher must make efforts to develop this ability at every level of instruction. Determined teachers can alter the reading behavior of the pupils by helping each one to be a thoughtful, careful and critical reader.

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