# Critical thinking – option 1: Strategies used in business and war



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## Focus

In this unit, students will compare the common principles used across military and business thinking, and examine how critical thinking is important for decision-making across both areas. While military and business thinking seem very different areas, they share common thought patterns and applications of ideas. Students explore ideas such as why, when, and how when researching a military exercise or business decision. They will make an in-depth comparison between the 2 areas by applying original ideas across historical case studies and hypothetical events.

### Outcomes

A student:

* **CT5-3** constructs and builds stronger arguments with evidence-based decision making by discerning fact from fiction
* **CT5-4** undertakes research and engages in evident self-reflection throughout the critical thinking process
* **CT5-5** communicates arguments logically in a range of modes
* **CT5-7** evaluates the impact of critical thinking on society and explains the importance of transferable skills across disciplines.

Outcomes referred to in this document are from the [Critical thinking course document](https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/curriculum/department-approved-courses/critical-thinking#/asset2) © NSW Department of Education for and on behalf of the Crown in the State of New South Wales (2021).

### Rationale

Critical thinking is a form of purposeful thinking that emphasises evidence and reasoning. In today’s world, where information is readily available, critical thinking is becoming more important than remembering and recalling facts. Society values critical thinking because it is an interdisciplinary and transferable skill. It means that no matter what path or profession is pursued, critical thinking skills will always be relevant and useful.

Critical thinking skills include the ability to deconstruct, analyse, synthesise and reconstruct ideas while emphasising evidence and reasoning. Those skills are part of every toolkit for success in educational and professional arenas.

The Critical thinking course emphasises the fundamental attributes of critical thinkers and gives students a wide range of opportunities to transfer these skills across multiple disciplines. The course structure encourages students to think about thinking and transcend factual learning.

The core units introduce students to the key features of critical thinking, including how critical thinking is distinguished from other models of thinking. Students will learn about the process of argumentation and apply it to evaluate claims. Students will also gain practical research skills to collect information from various sources and evaluate their credibility.

A choice from the available options engages students in various areas of interest to reinforce the skills learnt from the core units. In addition, the options allow students and teachers to delve deeper into specific scenarios of interest. They will be guided to ask probing questions to strengthen their critical thinking skills and challenge their perceptions of the world around them.

After completing the Critical thinking elective, students will be able to apply critical thinking processes to analyse the strength and validity of information and claims. Those skills are valuable for learning in Stage 6. Critical and creative thinking is a general capability in most Stage 6 courses. By applying their critical thinking skills, students will deepen their understanding of content and skills across many disciplines.

### Aim

The course aims to engage and encourage students to develop their critical thinking skills and recognise the key aspects of a critical thinking mind. They will develop the essential skills to evaluate the vast and diverse amount of information they encounter in their daily lives. This will help them face future challenges in a continually evolving world.

### Purpose and audience

This teaching resource is for teachers delivering or planning to deliver the course. The learning sequence demonstrates how a combination of outcomes can be used to develop teaching and learning activities. It also suggests a range of resources to support teachers when planning and/or teaching the course.

### When and how to use this document

Use this resource when designing learning activities that align with the course outcomes and content. The activities and resources can be used directly or may be adapted based on teacher judgment and knowledge of their students. Core modules must precede options in the delivery of the course. Consult the course document for further details on timing of core and options.

## Teacher note

This resource provides some suggested teaching strategies that could be used in your classroom. The blue feature boxes contain teacher notes. They provide context and suggestions for the activities in each learning sequence.

It is important not to focus student learning on facts, content, and figures associated with business and/or war. The activities are intended for students to use their understanding of critical thinking and/or research skills to apply critical thinking across disciplines.

The examples of business leaders, battles, and case studies can be substituted with examples that are of more interest to your class or in your area of expertise. You should consider what is appropriate for your context and refer to the [Controversial Issues in Schools policy](https://education.nsw.gov.au/policy-library/policies/pd-2002-0045) when making these decisions.

As there is a wide range of student abilities and skills in every classroom, you may need to make some adjustments when using this resource with your students. This could include providing scaffolds or working through activities as a class to model best practices.

The amount of time allocated to each activity will vary and will also be based on the learning needs of your students. As the teacher, you are in the best position to judge what is required. Catering to the learning needs of all students is of vital importance to help them enjoy a shared learning experience. For example, unpacking the language used in the tasks could help EAL/D students better understand the purpose of the learning. To help direct your support, you could highlight or annotate the written text to indicate what students understand and what needs further clarification.

Choosing relevant and relatable examples to the students and their context means they can bring prior understanding and helps them connect with the activity.

Using written, visual, and audio forms of communication to present your teaching information is also recommended. For example, having information in written form and a supporting video (suitable to the target audience) can help reinforce learning.

You can work with and adjust content and learning activities with the assistance of the learning support team and align these with a student’s personalised learning needs. This will be beneficial for the student and can help maintain a sense of belonging within the course or classroom.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples should be aware that this document may contain images, voices or names of deceased persons in photographs, film, audio recordings or printed material.

## Learning sequence 1

Students compare and contrast a range of strategies and thinking used in business to the ideas in Sun Tzu’s The Art of War to identify parallels between them

### The Art of War and its relevance to business

**Note:** While Sun Tzu’s *The Art of War* provides the inspiration and stimulus for this learning sequence, it is not necessary to unpack and analyse the entire work. Selected quotes from *The Art of War* are recommended for you to use with students to help them think critically about how the quotes link to business thinking. It is not necessary to purchase student copies of the book for your class, as [a free version is available online](https://suntzusaid.com/). It is worth noting that various author translations differ slightly, but the core messages are consistent.

Table 1 contains some quotes from *The Art of War*. If you have other quotes you feel would work better with your class, they can be substituted. It is best to unpack the quotes before having students attempt the learning sequence. You should not expect students to complete the whole table, but encourage them to work on the quotes which interest them. An alternative is to assign a quote to each student (or student group) and then bring all their ideas together during a class discussion.

Watch [Sun Tzu – The Art of War Explained In 5 Minutes (5:09)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hz4FNBj1APA) to familiarise yourself with *The Art of War*. It provides a brief overview of the book and summarises the main ideas.

Choose a quote from the following table or use the quotes assigned to you by your teacher. Unpack the quote in the first column by creating a brief explanation of its meaning in your own words in the second column. Finally, explain if it is relevant to modern business or not. Support your explanation with examples to demonstrate your understanding.

Table 1 – The Art of War and business

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Quote from The Art of War | In your own words, what do you think this quote means? | Do you think this type of thinking is applicable in business? Explain your reasoning. |
| **Chapter 1**Line 1. Sun Tzu said: The art of war is of vital importance to the State.Line 2. It is a matter of life and death, a road either to safety or to ruin. Hence it is a subject of inquiry which can on no account be neglected. |  |  |
| **Chapter 1**Line 26. Now the general who wins a battle makes many calculations in his temple ere the battle is fought.The general who loses a battle makes but few calculations beforehand. Thus do many calculations lead to victory, and few calculations to defeat: how much more no calculation at all! It is by attention to this point that I can foresee who is likely to win or lose. |  |  |
| **Chapter 3**Line 18. Hence the saying: If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles. If you know yourself but not the enemy, for every victory gained you will also suffer a defeat.If you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you will succumb in every battle. |  |  |
| **Chapter 4**Line 2. To secure ourselves against defeat lies in our own hands, but the opportunity of defeating the enemy is provided by the enemy himself. |  |  |
| **Chapter 4**Line 15. Thus it is that in war the victorious strategist only seeks battle after the victory has been won, whereas he who is destined to defeat first fights and afterwards looks for victory. |  |  |
| **Chapter 6**Line 31. Water shapes its course according to the nature of the ground over which it flows; the soldier works out his victory in relation to the foe whom he is facing.Line 32. Therefore, just as water retains no constant shape, so in warfare there are no constant conditions. |  |  |
| **Chapter 8**Line 11. The art of war teaches us to rely not on the likelihood of the enemy's not coming, but on our own readiness to receive him; not on the chance of his not attacking, but rather on the fact that we have made our position unassailable. |  |  |
| **Chapter 10**Line 18. When the general is weak and without authority; when his orders are not clear and distinct; when there are no fixes duties assigned to officers and men, and the ranks are formed in a slovenly haphazard manner, the result is utter DISORGANISATION. |  |  |

After completing your assigned or chosen quotes from the table, watch [The Art of War by Sun Tzu – Animation (5:31)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=BOLXv3nqDkI).

As a class, discuss the examples and the interpretations of *The Art of War* quotes provided in the video. Then, based on the class discussion, evaluate the responses you made in your table and make any changes you feel are necessary.

Annotate your changes and explain why you felt the need to revise your responses. If you made no changes, explain why you thought that no revisions were necessary.

### *The Art of War* and me

**Note:** This activity extends students' ability to transfer their understanding and critical thinking skills to new and unfamiliar situations. After reading one or both articles below, students could create a short response stating their opinion on the relevance of *The* Art of War to modern business practices or their own lives. Students could also share their findings as a presentation or speech, or create a short video.

Both articles are opinion pieces which reference real companies and military engagements. It is recommended the suitability of the articles is assessed prior to use in the classroom. The [Controversial Issues in Schools policy](https://education.nsw.gov.au/policy-library/policies/pd-2002-0045) can help guide your decision. Other articles can be substituted for the ones provided if you feel they are better suited to your class’s needs.

The purpose of the activity is to draw parallels between *The Art of War* and business decision-making. It is highly recommended not to engage with political discussions. Instead, you should maintain the learning objective of the task for all students.

The following articles relate to Sun Tzu’s *The Art of War* and its relevance to business and modern warfare:

* [The Art of War as a Business Strategy](https://worldfinancialreview.com/the-art-of-war-as-a-business-strategy/)
* [‘The Art of War’: As relevant now as when it was written](https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/books/the-art-of-war-as-relevant-now-as-when-it-was-written-1.3440724).

Read one or both articles. Annotate the articles to highlight the links between decisions made in business or war and *The Art of War*. Your annotations can include why you agree or disagree with the parallels drawn.

**Note:** The next part of this activity gives students the opportunity to think about how the *Art of War* is relevant to their lives.

Think deeply about whether specific information or quotes from the book are valuable for you as you tackle some obstacles in your life. Record your thinking on a [Venn diagram](https://app.education.nsw.gov.au/digital-learning-selector/LearningActivity/Card/599).

Create a short text (400-500 words) on your thoughts and interpretations of the relevance of *The Art of War* to everyday life. Remember, your article should be a persuasive text to convince your audience of the credibility of your point of view.

The target audience may be one of the following:

* your peers, for example, an article for the school newsletter
* your local community, for example, a local newspaper
* a national news outlet, such as The Australian Financial Review, which is targeted at working professionals.

Your writing style should reflect the audience you are writing for.

### Additional resource link

**Note:** Quotes from the 13 chapters in *The Art of War* appear in the animated video [The Art of War: Every Episode (2:39:58)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lQe-bL0S2_k). You could navigate to each chapter in the video, then discuss Sun Tzu’s quotes and the accompanying analysis with the class. The breakdown of the chapter times is given below.

Chapter 1 – Laying plans (0:00 – 14:26)

Chapter 2 – Waging war (14:26 – 26:14)

Chapter 3 – Strategic attack (26:14 – 36:25)

Chapter 4 – Tactical dispositions (36:25 – 48:20)

Chapter 5 – Use of energy (48:20 – 1:01:28)

Chapter 6 – Weak points and strong (1:01:28 – 1:18:05)

Chapter 7 – Manoeuvring an army (1:18:05 – 1:35:18)

Chapter 8 – Variation of tactics (1:35:18 – 1:45:56)

Chapter 9 – The army on the march (1:45:56 – 1:57:33)

Chapter 10 – Terrain (1:57:33 – 2:10:54)

Chapter 11 – The nine situations (2:10:54 – 2:20:27)

Chapter 12 – Attack by fire (2:20:27 – 2:30:17)

Chapter 13 – Use of spies (2:30:17 – 2:39:58)

If students express an interest in building on their understanding of *The Art of War*, there are opportunities throughout this resource to link the ideas and content back to the book.

**Reflective question:** How can the business world be considered a modern-day battlefield?

## Learning sequence 2

Students research and assess the strength of evidence used in strategic decisions in either business and/or military action to justify the choices made.

**Note:** Students are given the opportunity to research a military decision and/or business decision. Remind students that hindsight is a luxury we have, but in undertaking this task, we will assess past decisions based on the evidence available at the time.

In some cases, researching the available evidence used by the decision-makers may prove difficult. It is important to note that these activities focus on the thinking and evidence used to drive decision-making.

### Streaming wars

The battle for dominance in television streaming services has become increasingly competitive. It is a far stretch from Netflix's early domination as a monopoly when the popular service effectively defined television streaming. Now, Netflix has become the blueprint for other companies as they launch their own services. Some examples of the new players on the battlefield are Disney+, Stan, Amazon Prime, HBO Max, and Apple TV+, to name a few.

Research and assess why new streaming services want to enter a marketplace that Netflix has dominated for a long time. Why would they take the risk? What was the thinking behind their move, and what evidence would they have used?

Watch [Why Netflix is competing with Disney, Amazon and Apple | FT (2:01)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4VyCN-ldJz0&list=PLftmziinjwVSHvHBPBohQdpYJ4cwUR1e4&index=8) and answer the following questions:

* What type of strategies were and are currently being employed by Netflix to maintain its dominance?
* What evidence would you need to gather to evaluate their current plans? In your opinion, are their plans working?

Support your answer with clear reasoning and evidence. A good starting point for your research may begin with Netflix’s financial/stock market data and related reports. The video [How does the stock market work? – Oliver Elfenbaum (4:29)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p7HKvqRI_Bo) could help clarify the basics of understanding stock market data. The video [Explained | The Stock Market (17:33)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZCFkWDdmXG8) can be viewed to provide a deeper understanding.

**Note:** This activity will require a high level of research skills, and some students may need support. Students will require time to collect and synthesise the information to make meaningful connections. The HSIE faculty, in particular business studies teachers, can be a valuable source of information. You could use this opportunity to collaborate with them in developing exciting case studies for the students.

### Key moments in successful enterprises

**Note:** You may need to give a brief introduction to students on the business leaders in this activity to give students some context on why they should research them.

Table 2 lists successful business leaders from Australia and overseas, and includes links to stimuli that provide background information and/or advice from the business leaders. Choose one of the business leaders from the table or another business leader who interests you.

Research the key moments of their business venture, either as a start-up or while growing the capacity of the business. Keep the following questions in mind when conducting your research:

* Why did they enter the marketplace, and how did they do it?
* What key decisions did they make? What was the evidence or thinking they used?
* Are there key lessons to be learnt from their experiences?

You can use Table 2 or create your own table to organise your research.

Table 2 – business leader research

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Business leader | Type of business and net worth | Key moments in driving success |
| Lorna Jane[60 Minutes Australia: Lorna Jane (13:17)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RJvTwgnHZUg) |  |  |
| Warren Buffett[Warren Buffett shares advice on becoming successful (8:52)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tr6MMsoWAog) |  |  |
| Janine Allis[Building A Global Brand - Janine Allis, Boost Juice (7:50)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ddoai_8Vxa0) |  |  |
| Richard Branson[Richard Branson Explains His Secrets to Success (4:17)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wtCyCoqYT4o) |  |  |
| Denni Francisco[Denni Francisco, Ngali — Fashion Design Award | National Indigenous Fashion Awards 2021 | NITV (3:33)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6fd4IOH3orI) |  |  |
| Business leader of your choice |  |  |

**Note:** The focus of this activity is to allow students to research evidence-based decisions, which have been made to either start a successful business or grow the business. The video [Why evidence-based decision making is crucial – Christian Criado-Perez Chanin (2:54)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lF-xMaGtCEo) provides a stimulus on the importance of evidence in directing decisions in business.

### Battle of Thermopylae

**Note:** The battle of Thermopylae has been covered in detail in popular culture and Hollywood movies. Students may come to this discussion with some prior knowledge and some misconceptions. As with the business activities, students will focus on researching what evidence military leaders used to make their decisions. Students can also look at the military decisions and infer what evidence was used. Your collaboration with the history faculty would be advantageous when developing activities to unpack decisions made in military action, and to source interesting case studies.

Figure 1 – map of Thermopylae area with a reconstructed shoreline in 480 BC



["Map of Thermopylae at the time of the Greco-Persian Wars"](http://eng.travelogues.gr/item.php?view=32182) by [Jean-Jacques Barthélemy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jean-Jacques_Barth%C3%A9lemy) is in the [Public Domain](https://wiki.creativecommons.org/Public_domain).

Figure 2 – a flow map of the battle



["Scheme of the Battle of Thermopylae"](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3ANicolo_arena_battleofthermopylae.svg) by [Nicolo Arena, DensityDesign Research Lab](https://densitydesign.org/) is licensed under [CC BY-SA 4.0](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0).

* Look at Figure 1 and Figure 2. Based only on these figures, why do you think the forces of the Greek City States took up their position for battle? What information would they have needed to come up with a successful strategy?
* Local knowledge is often seen as an advantage in battle. How can foreign armies combat this and gain insight before being drawn into combat?
* Research why this battle is seen as a significant event in halting the invading Persian armies. How does evidence-based decision-making help armies win wars, even though they may lose some battles?
* Investigate other examples of battle strategies where the local terrain was used as an advantage to limit the impact of a larger force. Can you develop a course of action to counteract this sort of tactic? Explain how it could work.

You can use other battles as a context to learn about the impact of evidence-based decision-making and the use of misinformation in military thinking. Some video resources on historical battles can be found below:

* [Defeat in Detail: A Strategy to Defeating Larger Armies (3:31)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zz3JmXSEM4o)
* [Jackson's Valley Campaign 1862 (8:47)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wCgi9BNjj6c)
* [Attack on Pearl Harbor 1941 (17:57)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f6cz9gtMTeI)

**Note:** You must give careful consideration to delivering lessons around battles and wars. The focus should be on the decisions and strategies used in combat, rather than the politics that led to the combat.

### Game theory

**Note:** This activity introduces students to game theory. In game theory, the available evidence may be in the form of mathematical models. Researching game theory and applying the key elements to either business or war would be a good opportunity to extend student learning and help develop evidence-based decisions.

The [Prisoner’s dilemma](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prisoner%27s_dilemma) section of the activity works best if students do not have prior knowledge of the dilemma and do not have the opportunity to research their answers.

Two members of a criminal organisation are arrested and imprisoned. Each prisoner is in solitary confinement and cannot communicate with the other. The prosecutors lack sufficient evidence to convict the pair on the principal charge, but they have enough to convict both on a lesser charge. Simultaneously, the prosecutors offer each prisoner a bargain. Each prisoner is given the opportunity to either betray the other prisoner by testifying that the other committed the crime, or to cooperate with the other prisoner by remaining silent.

The offer each prisoner receives is:

* Betray your partner and receive no jail time, so long as they stay silent. The silent partner receives 3 years in jail.
* Betray your partner, but if they betray you, you both receive 2 years in jail.
* Stay silent, and if you both remain silent, each of you will receive a one-year sentence.

The possibilities can also be presented formally as shown below.

1. If A and B each betray the other, each of them serves 2 years in prison.
2. If A betrays B, but B remains silent, A will be set free, and B will serve 3 years in prison.
3. If A remains silent but B betrays A, A will serve 3 years in prison and B will be set free.
4. If A and B both remain silent, each of them will serve only one year in prison (on the lesser charge).

Adapted from [Prisoner’s dilemma](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prisoner%27s_dilemma) (Wikipedia contributors 2022) under [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported (CC BY-SA 3.0)](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/)

1. Which option gives the possibility of the best outcome for one of the prisoners and which option provides the best outcome for both?
2. Which option would you take and why?

**Note:** An alternative is to role-play the Prisoner’s Dilemma and gather the students' responses, then carry out this activity. Students can be shown [How to outsmart the Prisoner’s Dilemma – Lucas Husted (5:44)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=emyi4z-O0ls) after completing this activity and before moving on to the research activity below.

Research game theory and assess its relevance to making key decisions in business or war. Create a short presentation or a ‘TED Talk’ style speech to share your research and present your findings.

The following videos may help you better understand game theory and its relevance to business and/or war:

* [Game Theory and Oligopoly: Crash Course Economics #26 (9:55)](https://thecrashcourse.com/courses/game-theory-and-oligopoly-crash-course-economics-26/)
* [What game theory teaches us about war | Simon Sinek (9:48)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0bFs6ZiynSU)
* [Game Theory: The Science of Decision-Making (9:49)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MHS-htjGgSY)

**Note:** Students can complete this activity with examples from both business and war. Ask students to investigate the similarities and differences between game theory and either military thinking or business decision-making. You can also take this opportunity to link this activity to Sun Tzu’s *The Art of War*.

**Reflective question:** How important is it in business and/or war to make decisions based on the strength of the evidence you have?

## Learning sequence 3

Students investigate the factors and decisions that resulted in a failed business venture and/or military disaster. Discuss why it ultimately failed and what could have been done better to avoid this outcome.

### What went wrong?

**Note:** Students watch [How Starbucks Became An $80B Business (7:39)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XUBeH7VQaFY&list=PLftmziinjwVSHvHBPBohQdpYJ4cwUR1e4), which describes the growth of Starbucks. Ask students to take notes on why Starbucks became successful and what they did to combat difficult times. This could be completed as a whole class activity before moving on to individual/group work.

Table 3 contains links to short videos about failed business ventures. Watch each video and then complete the table below.

Table 3 – failed business ventures

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Business venture | Why did it fail? | What could have been done to avoid this outcome? |
| Blockbuster[The Rise And Fall Of Blockbuster (8:27)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rTVkUHrprk8&list=PLftmziinjwVSHvHBPBohQdpYJ4cwUR1e4&index=10) |  |  |
| McDonald's Vietnam[Why McDonald’s Flopped In Vietnam (6:25)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l9pthhpd7So&list=PLftmziinjwVSHvHBPBohQdpYJ4cwUR1e4&index=4) |  |  |
| Starbucks Australia[Why Starbucks Failed In Australia (6:49)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_FGUkxn5kZQ) |  |  |

Review the information you gathered from the 3 videos and discuss your findings as a class. Answer the following questions:

* Is there a common trend or pattern as to why these 3 business ventures failed?
* What lessons can be learnt from failed business ventures?
* What advice would you give to a business to avoid failure?

Choose a business venture which has failed and create a short recount of what led to the failure of the business. Record some recommendations in retrospect (looking back) that could have been implemented to save the business. Support your claims with strong reasoning and evidence.

### Military disasters

The list below shows some examples of failed military campaigns that could be used to explore critical thinking. Investigate the factors which ultimately led to the failure of these campaigns. Make recommendations of how the failures could have been avoided. Choose at least 2 of the failed military campaigns for investigation.

Present your research as a lesson directed at military students who study strategic decisions and tactics. The aim of your lesson is for students to learn from past mistakes. Your lesson should contain a summary of the chosen battle and an activity for the students to test their understanding.

#### Failed military campaigns

* Battle of Hattin
* Battle of Agincourt
* Spanish Armada
* Battle of the Little Bighorn
* Battle of Singapore
* Battle of Lone Pine

**Reflective question:** Why does history tend to repeat itself, even though we have an opportunity to learn from it?

## Additional information

**Resource evaluation and support**: Please complete the following [feedback form](https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=muagBYpBwUecJZOHJhv5kbKo2q_ZUXlHndJMnh2Wd8NUOUk0VTIzUDVVSlVFQVM5MkdOMkJGTjVKNCQlQCN0PWcu) to help us improve our resources and support.

The information below can be used to support teachers when using this teaching resource for Critical thinking.

### Assessment for learning

Possible formative assessment strategies that could be included:

* Learning intentions and success criteria assist educators to articulate the purpose of a learning task to make judgements about the quality of student learning. These help students focus on the task or activity taking place and what they are learning and provide a framework for reflection and feedback. [Online tools](https://app.education.nsw.gov.au/digital-learning-selector/LearningActivity/Card/622) can assist implementation of this formative assessment strategy.
* Eliciting evidence strategies allow teachers to determine the next steps in learning and assist teachers in evaluating the impact of teaching and learning activities. Strategies that may be added to a learning sequence to elicit evidence include all student response systems, [exit tickets](https://app.education.nsw.gov.au/digital-learning-selector/LearningActivity/Card/543), mini whiteboards (actual or [digital](https://app.education.nsw.gov.au/digital-learning-selector/LearningActivity/Card/575)), [hinge questions](https://app.education.nsw.gov.au/digital-learning-selector/LearningActivity/Card/560#.Y9w1CT4W5as.link), [Kahoot](https://app.education.nsw.gov.au/digital-learning-selector/LearningTool/Card/621), [Socrative](https://app.education.nsw.gov.au/digital-learning-selector/LearningTool/Card/587), or quick quizzes to ensure that individual student progress can be monitored and the lesson sequence adjusted based on formative data collected.
* Feedback is designed to close the gap between current and desired performance by informing teacher and student behaviour (AITSL 2017). AITSL provides a [factsheet to support evidence-based feedback](https://www.aitsl.edu.au/teach/improve-practice/feedback#:~:text=FEEDBACK-,Factsheet,-A%20quick%20guide).
* [Peer feedback](https://app.education.nsw.gov.au/digital-learning-selector/LearningActivity/Card/549) is a structured process where students evaluate the work of their peers by providing valuable feedback in relation to learning intentions and success criteria. It can be supported by [online tools](https://app.education.nsw.gov.au/digital-learning-selector/LearningActivity/Browser?cache_id=1d29b).
* Self-regulated learning opportunities assist students in taking ownership of their own learning. A variety of strategies can be employed and some examples include reflection tasks, [Think-Pair-Share](https://app.education.nsw.gov.au/digital-learning-selector/LearningActivity/Card/645), [KWLH charts](https://app.education.nsw.gov.au/digital-learning-selector/LearningActivity/Card/562), [learning portfolios](https://app.education.nsw.gov.au/digital-learning-selector/LearningActivity/Card/583) and [learning logs](https://app.education.nsw.gov.au/digital-learning-selector/LearningActivity/Card/583).

The primary role of assessment is to establish where individuals are in their learning so that teaching can be differentiated and further learning progress can be monitored over time.

Feedback that focuses on improving tasks, processes and student self-regulation is the most effective. Students engaging with feedback can take many forms including formal, informal, formative, summative, interactive, demonstrable, visual, written, verbal and non-verbal.

[What works best: 2020 update](https://education.nsw.gov.au/about-us/educational-data/cese/publications/research-reports/what-works-best-2020-update) (CESE 2020a)

### Differentiation

Differentiated learning can be enabled by differentiating the teaching approach to content, process, product and the learning environment. For more information on differentiation go to [Differentiating learning](https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/professional-learning/teacher-quality-and-accreditation/strong-start-great-teachers/refining-practice/differentiating-learning) and [Differentiation](https://education.nsw.gov.au/campaigns/inclusive-practice-hub/secondary-school/teaching-strategies/differentiation).

When using these resources in the classroom, it is important for teachers to consider the needs of all students in their class, including:

* **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students**. Targeted [strategies](https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/aec/aboriginal-education-in-nsw-public-schools) can be used to achieve outcomes for Aboriginal students in K-12 and increase knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal histories and cultures. Teachers should utilise students’ Personalised Learning Pathways to support individual student needs and goals.
* **EAL/D learners**. EAL/D learners will require explicit English language support and scaffolding, informed by the [EAL/D enhanced teaching and learning cycle](https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/curriculum/literacy-and-numeracy/resources-for-schools/eald/enhanced-teaching-and-learning-cycle) and the student’s phase on the [EAL/D Learning Progression](https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/curriculum/multicultural-education/english-as-an-additional-language-or-dialect/planning-eald-support/english-language-proficiency). In addition, teachers can access information about [supporting EAL/D learners](https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/curriculum/multicultural-education/english-as-an-additional-language-or-dialect/planning-eald-support/english-language-proficiency) and [literacy and numeracy support specific to EAL/D learners](https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/curriculum/literacy-and-numeracy/resources-for-schools/eald).
* **Students with additional learning needs**. Learning adjustments enable students with disability and additional learning and support needs to access syllabus outcomes and content on the same basis as their peers. Teachers can use a range of [adjustments](https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/disability-learning-and-support/personalised-support-for-learning/adjustments-to-teaching-and-learning) to ensure a personalised approach to student learning. In addition, the [Universal Design for Learning planning tool](https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/learning-from-home/teaching-at-home/teaching-and-learning-resources/universal-design-for-learning) can be used to support the diverse learning needs of students using inclusive teaching and learning strategies. Subject specific curriculum considerations can be found on the [Inclusive Practice hub](https://education.nsw.gov.au/campaigns/inclusive-practice-hub).
* **High potential and gifted learners**. [Assessing and identifying high potential and gifted learners](https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/high-potential-and-gifted-education/supporting-educators/assess-and-identify#Assessment1) will help teachers decide which students may benefit from extension and additional challenge. [Effective strategies and contributors to achievement](https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/high-potential-and-gifted-education/supporting-educators/evaluate) for high potential and gifted learners help teachers to identify and target areas for growth and improvement. In addition, the [Differentiation Adjustment Tool](https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/high-potential-and-gifted-education/supporting-educators/implement/differentiation-adjustment-strategies) can be used to support the specific learning needs of high potential and gifted students. The [High Potential and Gifted Education Professional Learning and Resource Hub](https://schoolsnsw.sharepoint.com/sites/HPGEHub/SitePages/Home.aspx) supports school leaders and teachers to effectively implement the High Potential and Gifted Education Policy in their unique contexts.

All students need to be challenged and engaged to develop their potential fully. A culture of high expectations needs to be supported by strategies that both challenge and support student learning needs, such as through appropriate curriculum differentiation (CESE 2020a:6).

### About this resource

All curriculum resources are prepared through a rigorous process. Resources are periodically reviewed as part of our ongoing evaluation plan to ensure currency, relevance and effectiveness. For additional support or advice contact the Teaching and Learning Curriculum team by emailing secondaryteachingandlearning@det.nsw.edu.au.

**Alignment to system priorities and/or needs**:

This resource aligns to the School Excellence Framework elements of curriculum (curriculum provision) and effective classroom practice (lesson planning, explicit teaching).

This resource supports teachers to address [Australian Professional Teaching Standards](https://educationstandards.nsw.edu.au/wps/portal/nesa/teacher-accreditation/meeting-requirements/the-standards/proficient-teacher) 2.1.2, 2.3.2, 3.2.2, 7.2.2.

This resource has been designed to support schools with successful implementation of new curriculum, specifically the NSW Department of Education approved elective course, Critical thinking © 2021 NSW Department of Education for and on behalf of the Crown in right of the State of New South Wales.

The resource is produced to assist schools with promoting and implementing the course for the first time. As the course may be taught by teachers from a range of key learning areas, the resource is designed to support teachers from a variety of KLA expertise.

**Department approved elective course**: Critical thinking

**Course outcomes**: CT5-3, CT5-4, CT5-5, CT5-7

**Author**: Curriculum Secondary Learners

**Publisher**: State of NSW, Department of Education

**Resource**: Teaching resource

**Related resources**: Further resources to support Critical thinking can be found on the [Department approved elective courses](https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/curriculum/department-approved-courses/critical-thinking) webpage including course document, sample scope and sequences, assessment materials and other learning sequences.

**Professional Learning**: Join the [Teaching and Learning 7-12 statewide staffroom](https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/curriculum/statewide-staffrooms) for information regarding professional learning opportunities.

**Universal Design for Learning Tool**: [Universal Design for Learning planning tool](https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/learning-from-home/teaching-at-home/teaching-and-learning-resources/universal-design-for-learning). Support the diverse learning needs of students using inclusive teaching and learning strategies.

**Consulted with**: Aboriginal Outcomes and Partnerships, Inclusion and Wellbeing, EAL/D.

**Reviewed by**: This resource was reviewed by Curriculum Secondary Learners and by subject matter experts in schools to ensure accuracy of content.

**Creation date**: 7 December 2022

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**Evidence Base**:

‘The long-term vision is for a curriculum that supports teachers to nurture wonder, ignite passion and provide every young person with knowledge, skills and attributes that will help prepare them for a lifetime of learning, meaningful adult employment and effective future citizenship’ (NESA 2020:xi).

The development of the course and the course document as part of department approved electives aims to respond to the goals articulated in NESA’s curriculum review. Consistent messages from the review include:

* ‘flexibility’ was the word most used by teachers to describe the systemic change they want
* teachers need more time to teach important knowledge and skills
* students want authentic learning with real-world application.

This teaching resource provides teachers with some examples of explicit and authentic learning experiences. The option to adjust these learning sequences leads to ‘increased local decision making in relation to the curriculum’ as this ‘is associated with higher levels of student performance’ (NESA 2020:52).

The suggested strategies for teaching and learning align with the principles of explicit teaching. ‘The evidence shows that students who experience explicit teaching practices perform better than students who do not. Explicit teaching reduces the cognitive burden of learning new and complex concepts and skills, and helps students develop deep understanding’ (CESE 2020a:11).

## References

**Links to third-party material and websites**

Please note that the provided (reading/viewing material/list/links/texts) are a suggestion only and implies no endorsement, by the New South Wales Department of Education, of any author, publisher, or book title. School principals and teachers are best placed to assess the suitability of resources that would complement the curriculum and reflect the needs and interests of their students.

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