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## BE A CRITIC

**Grades:** 6 and up

**Time:** 30-45 minutes

**Materials:** Any printed material

**Relevant Subjects:** Social Studies, Language Arts, Health, and Science

***Pertinent Information:*** Professor Wayne Bartz has come up with a method to teach students to be critical thinkers. The acronym for the method is C.R.I.T.I.C., which stands for: **C**laim? **R**ole of claimant? **I**nformation backing the claim? **T**est? **I**ndependent testing? **C**ause proposed? By using the questions in this acronym to analyze printed material in class, students will be able to bring critical thinking skills to all information they receive.

1. Divide students into groups of four or five and give each group a single piece of printed material (such as an advertisement, a pamphlet from an organization, company, or the government, a poster from an industry or non-profit group). Ideally, hand out items that contradict one another, so that one group might have a pamphlet that makes a strong case for a position, and another group would have a pamphlet that makes the opposite case.

2. Introduce the C.R.I.T.I.C. questions, and demonstrate how to ask these questions about an item. For example, if you've distributed an ad that claims that a particular diet is healthy and leads to weight loss, you can ask:

- What is the claim? (Their diet is healthy and leads to weight loss.)
- What is the role of the claimant? (Their role is to sell the diet to the public.)
- What information backs up the claim? (Perhaps there are before-and-after pictures of someone who went on the diet.)
- Was any test to prove the claim conducted? (The ad might claim that 90% of people on their diet succeed in losing weight.)
- Was any independent testing conducted? (The ad may or may not have this information.)
- What is the cause for the weight loss? (The ad may or may not say this.)

3. Have students analyze their printed item, asking the C.R.I.T.I.C. questions.
4. Ask one student from each group to present their analysis to the class and have students discuss whether or not the ad, pamphlet, article, etc., proves its position and perspective.
5. Discuss any contradictory positions.
6. Lead a discussion about what students learned from the activity.

**Activity from *The Power and Promise of Humane Education***