

Performing Critical Thinking in Written Language: Defining Critical Thinking from the Assessor's View

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Beneath the auspicious consensus on critical thinking in contemporary scholarship, there exist several frameworks for defining and cataloguing it. This article contends that writing studies has drawn widely from the critical thinking framework developed in education, championed largely by Robert Ennis. After outlining this framework, the article points out some of its limitations, including a) that it does not adequately account for the role of language in producing and demonstrating critical thought and b) that it avoids an articulation of language performances involved in and expressing critical thought. The authors explore a new perspective with attention to language performances by presenting five definitional themes for critical thinking from the vantage point of faculty seeking to assess it in their disciplines. The authors consider what kinds of language performances might be at work in each view of critical thinking and consider the opportunities and limitations for evaluating critical thinking through writing assessment.

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