

## Assessing Critical Thinking by Evaluating an Essay

*The following critical thinking assessment was distributed at a SUNY-GEAR sponsored workshop on General Education assessment. Students were asked to read a specific essay and respond to a series of questions. The assessment was used in a specific class (not identified) for General Education assessment of critical thinking. Notice that questions 1-4 generally address the first SUNY critical thinking learning outcome (students will identify, analyze, and evaluate arguments as they occur in their own and others work) and questions 5 & 6 generally address the second learning outcome (students will develop well reasoned arguments). This method of assessment might be appropriate for inclusion in capstone courses in a few programs but I don't believe it is appropriate for most. Certainly you would modify the questions to fit your particular reading assignment if you select this type of project.*

J. Sprague

*Here is the assignment exactly as presented at the workshop.*

### Critical Thinking

Take a few minutes to read the essay "Television and Cultural Behavior" by Conrad Kottack before answering the following questions.

1. Using your own words and/or quoting directly from the article, explain what you think are the author's major points.
2. Based on whatever you have identified as the major points of the article in No. 1 above, present two major pieces of evidence the author provides to support his central point.
3. Do you find the supporting evidence cited in No. 2 above to be convincing? Explain why you think it supports, or does not support, the author's main points.
4. All of us operate from certain assumptions and we can never fully state all of them when we write. Referring to any parts of the article you find particularly relevant, present two of the author's unstated assumptions. What biases or beliefs seem to be behind what he is saying?
5. Explain which of the author's main points you most strongly agree and/or disagree with. Be sure to explain why you feel this way.
6. What does this article suggest or imply about the role of fine arts and great literature in American culture? Explain whether you agree or disagree with the implications you have identified and why.

**Scoring:** (from rubric)

SUNY Learning Outcome 1: sum of scores for questions 1 - 4

**10-12 exceeds expectations**

**6-9 meets expectations**

**0-5 does not meet expectations**

SUNY Learning Outcome 2: score for questions 5 - 6

**5-6 exceeds expectations**

**3-4 meets expectations**

**0-2 does not meet expectations**

## Critical Thinking Rubric for Evaluating an Essay

	Approaching (1 point)	Meeting (2 points)	Exceeding (3 points)
Q1: identify author's main points <b>CT-1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• some confusion in identifying author's main points</li> <li>• choices are not based on author's statements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identifies author's main points</li> <li>• some effort made to support choices based on author's statements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identifies author's main points</li> <li>• clearly supports choices based on author's statements</li> </ul>
Q2: identify evidence that supports author's central point <b>CT-1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does not identify the author's central point</li> <li>• confuses evidence with own opinion or irrelevant information to support central point</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identifies the author's central point but not clearly articulated</li> <li>• some effort made to identify two pieces of evidence author provides to support central point</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• correctly identifies and clearly articulates the author's central point</li> <li>• identifies two pieces of evidence author provides to support his central point</li> </ul>
Q3: analysis of evidence used in Q2 to support central point <b>CT-1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• does not clearly state argument for deciding if evidence in Q2 supports author's main points; little or no supporting reasoning or evidence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• presents argument, using at least some evidence or logical reasoning, to decide whether evidence in Q2 supports author's main points</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• develops a clearly articulated argument, using evidence or logical reasoning, whether evidence in Q2 supports author's main points</li> </ul>
Q4: unstated assumptions <b>CT-1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• fails to identify two of the author's unstated assumptions</li> <li>• attempts to identify biases but uses no evidence or logical reasoning to support choice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• identifies two of the author's unstated assumptions</li> <li>• identifies biases but uses little evidence or logical reasoning to support choice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• clearly and correctly identifies two of the author's significant unstated assumptions</li> <li>• identifies biases using evidence or logical reasoning</li> </ul>
Q5: agree or disagree with author <b>CT-2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• identifies at least one major point for agree/disagree</li> <li>• develops an argument for agree/disagree but not really based on evidence or logical reasoning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• clearly identifies at least two major points for agree/disagree</li> <li>• develops a clearly articulated argument for agree/disagree using at least some evidence or logical reasoning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• clearly identifies at least two major points for agree/disagree</li> <li>• develops a clearly articulated argument for agree/disagree using evidence or logical reasoning</li> </ul>
Q6: what does essay imply about role of art and literature <b>CT-2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• does not really identify or presents a confused interpretation of the implications suggested in the article</li> <li>• develops an argument for agree/disagree but not really based on evidence or logical reasoning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• generally identifies the implications suggested in the article</li> <li>• develops an argument for agree/disagree using at least some evidence or logical reasoning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• clearly identifies the implications suggested in the article</li> <li>• develops a clearly articulated argument for agree/disagree using evidence or logical reasoning</li> </ul>