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ABSTRACT
        This document consists of a collection of six information
summary sheets and worksheets, and a bibliography. The information sheet
entitled "What is Literacy" defines literacy, and asks seven pedagogically
useful questions about the subject. "What is Critical Literacy" discusses
critical literacy as the analytic habits of thinking, reading, writing,
speaking, or discussing that go beneath surface impressions. There are
"Critical Literacy Lesson--Low Level" and a "Critical Literacy
Lesson--Advanced Level" information/worksheets. Also included are a "Brief
Glossary of Terms," "Points to Consider When Incorporating Critical
Literacy," and a bibliography with 14 references. (KFT)

Critical Literacy in the Adult ESL Classroom

TESOL 2000: Navigating the New Millennium
March 14-18, 2000
Vancouver, B.C. Canada

MaryAnn Cunningham Florez
National Clearinghouse for ESL Literacy Education
Washington, DC

What is Literacy?

"an individual's ability to read, write, and speak in English, and compute and solve problems at levels of proficiency necessary to function on the job and in society, to achieve one's goals, and develop one's knowledge and potential."

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"Literacy makes good sense not just at work, but also at home..... My son, when he was three years old, was the main reason for me to seek help. He would ask me to read bedtime stories to him, but because I could not read, I would push him away angrily by saying 'I don't have time.' As he left the room, I could see his eyes water and a lump would grow in my throat and my heart would ache. I knew that this was not what being a father was all about."

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"the quality or state of being literate, esp. the ability to read and write."

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"...literacy is not simply a technical and neutral skill but is imbued with relations of power and ideology and with deep cultural meanings about identity both personal and collective."

1. What is the topic?

2. What are some of the differences (stated or implied) in the way the topic is presented in each quotation?

3. What might purpose have been for writing each quote?

4. Who might have written each quote? What might that person's affiliation be?

5. What is the writer assuming about shared information or attitudes on the topic?

6. Which quote most closely matches your personal view of the topic? Why?

7. How does this (answer to #2) impact your practice in the classroom?

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National Literacy Act (P.L. 102-73), 7/25/91

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Enrique Ramirez, testimony for *The Price We Pay for Illiteracy*, hearing of the Senate Committee on Labor and Human Resources, 12/11/98

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"the quality or state of being literate, esp. the ability to read and write."
Random House Dictionary of the English Language, 2nd edition, unabridged (1987).

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"…literacy is not simply a technical and neutral skill but is imbued with relations of power and ideology and with deep cultural meanings about identity both personal and collective."
Street, B. (1994). Struggles over the meaning(s) of literacy. In Hamilton, M., Barton, D., & R. Ivanic (Eds.) *Worlds of literacy*. Clevedon, UK & Toronto: Multilingual Matters, Ltd. & Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Ontario. p. 20.

1. What is the topic?

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6. Which quote most closely matches your personal view of the topic? Why?

7. How does this (answer to #2) impact your practice in the classroom?

M. Florez, TESOL 2000, Vancouver, B.C., Canada, 3/16/00

What is Critical Literacy?

"...critical practice connects issues of power; inequality, and knowledge with the literacies we teach and learn."
(Shor in Brown, 1999, p. 4)

"[Critical literacy refers to the] analytic habits of thinking, reading, writing, speaking, or discussing which go beneath surface impressions, traditional myths, mere opinions, and routine cliches; understanding the social contexts and consequences of any subject matter; discovering the deep meaning of any event, text, technique, process, object, statement, image, or situation; applying that meaning to your own context."
(Shor in Brown, 1999, p. 4)

"Critical literacy teaching begins by problematising the cultures and knowledges of the text - putting them up for grabs, for critical debate, for weighing, judging, critiquing. Learning the linguistic structure of texts can be a crucial part of this process. But a social analysis of texts also requires classroom frames for talking about how and in whose interests social institutions and texts can refract and bend social and natural reality, manipulate and position readers and writers. Such analysis can also provide the groundwork for 'changing the subject' of texts, and for strategically intervening in social contexts."
(Luke, O'Brien, and Comber in Brown, 1999, p. 4)

"To read critically is to use decoding and pre-reading strategies to comprehend and interpret text--distinguish fact from opinion, understand different text perspectives, and compare personal knowledge and experiences to other information sources."
(Stein, 1997, p. 9)

"However, there are certain difficulties in attempting to develop critical literacy skills in the classroom. While it is not difficult to find theoretical and philosophical/political discussions of critical literacy, the term itself is interpreted in many different ways and is often discussed in very abstract terms."
(Brown, 1999, p. 7)

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Critical Literacy Lesson - Low Level

Objectives: 1. Learners will collect and practice vocabulary and simple phrases to describe learning environments and experiences.
2. Learners will examine different examples of learning environments and express their preferences for characteristics of them.
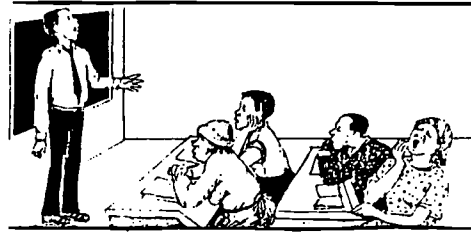
(Pictures reproduced from Auerbach, 1992, pp. 10-11)

1. Build vocabulary. Have learners participate in a prep activity where they brainstorm vocabulary for the classroom, label items in their own classroom, etc. Provide them the opportunity to practice the vocabulary and become comfortable using it.

2. Use a language experience approach (LEA) to generate text. Present the two pictures above (or others you find appropriate) as examples of two examples of adult ESL classes in the U.S. Lead students in a process of creating a text for each. Elicit descriptive phrases and sentences about each picture (can be done in native language if necessary) that are then transcribed (in English) by the teacher.

3. Use the created text to further linguistic goals. Examine grammar or other points as present and appropriate. Practice reading using the created text (can be done as a whole group, small group, or in pairs).

4. Expand upon the experience. Have learners draw pictures of classrooms in their native countries and write a few lines of description (based on the writing they did for the given pictures). Invite learners to read their "stories" to their classmates.

5. Analyze the contexts. Create a checklist using the phrases from the original LEA and any different phrases learners developed to describe their classroom experiences in their native countries. Have learners use the checklist to individually compare the two examples of U.S. classrooms and the classroom from their country. Ask learners to discuss their results in groups.

6. Support learners in using the information to impact themselves and their environment. Have learner groups come to a consensus list of descriptors they feel are important for a good classroom, write them on butcher paper, and post for review of the class. After time is provided for learners to review all the lists, class votes on/creates a list of target descriptors that all (teacher included) will use to shape the character of their class.

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Critical Literacy Lesson - Advanced Level

Objective: 1. Learners will increase their awareness of how U.S. culture and values are reflected in everyday texts like commercial advertisements

1. Tap prior knowledge and experiences. Place the word "advertisement" in the center of the board. Have learners free associate the words and phrases that the word brings to mind. Create a mindmap or web on the board as they do this.

2. Present a common commercial advertisement (like those shown above) to the class. Have the class briefly describe the ad, to be sure that all have the vocabulary to describe what is represented, the product being sold, etc.

3. Provide learners with a copy of the following set of questions. Have the learners answer the questions as a group, based on the ad that they are examining.

<u>Worksheet Questions</u>
1. What is the topic of the ad?
2. What is the purpose of the ad?
3. To what audience is the ad addressed (age group, income level, race, gender)
4. What organization or interest group created the ad?
5. Who are the main participants or what are the main objects in the ad?
6. What are the participants doing or what is happening to the objects?
7. How much focus is given to the item being sold? What is given more focus?
8. What assumptions does the creator make about the readers' beliefs or attitudes?
9. What assumptions does the creator make about the U.S. social context (trends, how things work, etc.)?
10. Is there a message that the creator doesn't write but that you get from the ad?
11. What do you notice about the language that the creator uses to support purpose?
12. What is your reaction to the ad?
13. How might an ad like this look in your country?
14. Does the ad tell you anything about U.S. culture? If so, what?

(Adapted from Burns & Hood, 1998)

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4. Debrief on how the steps of the worksheet helped the learners critically examine the ad and make connections to broader social trends. Ask them to provide examples from their own experiences in U.S. to support or refute their conclusions.

5. Have learners bring in ads of their choice and repeat the activity on their own.

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Brief Glossary of Terms

Critical (social) theory - A theory of education that focuses on the social context in which learning and pedagogy occur. The objective is primarily to support individuals in identifying the political, social, cultural, and ideological forces that exert influence on their lives and to empower them in their individual and collective efforts to shape or change these forces.

Critical literacy theory - Critical literacy theory refers to the empowerment of learners through development of critical and analytical reading and writing skills, in addition to basic components of literacy such as decoding, predicting, summarizing, or grammar mastery. It is based in the assumption that literacy practices have the capability to both reflect and shape the issues and power relationships at play in the larger society. It encourages critical examination of text, especially the social, political, and ideological elements that exist in texts.

"*The aim of all literacy programs should be the development of a critical literacy where learners focus not just on the mechanics or content of written texts, but on the construction and the way that readers are positioned within the texts.*"
Hammond, et al. In Brown, K. (1999). *Developing critical literacy*. Sydney: National Centre for English Language Training and Research

Functional linguistics - An approach to the study of language, which looks specifically at the ways in which language is used within different situations. For functional linguists, language is a resource which people use to make meanings within social settings, to fulfill social functions. Therefore, acquiring a knowledge and understanding of these functions and the language one needs or is expected to use in fulfilling them is important for the language learner.

Genre theory - An approach that looks at the specific discourse structures that have evolved to fulfill particular social functions within a culture. For example, the generalizable pattern of the exchange that occurs when a person approaches a salesperson for help in a department store, or when a subordinate approaches a supervisor to complain about working conditions.

Points to consider when incorporating critical literacy

- Start small (add a few analytical questions to a set of comprehension questions for a reading; in writing drafts, ask learners to specify their target audience and give examples of the type of language they plan to use to address them)

- Start with texts that are obvious--obviously biased, obviously ideologically loaded, etc. and then progress to more subtle texts

- Raise awareness by pointing out critical literacy skills when they are exhibited, either by you or by the learners

- Choose readings or writing activities that are relevant and interesting for your learners

- Prompt learners to examine how their own experiences and values relate to topics and/or influence their approaches to topics

- Have learners formulate questions as well as answer them

- Create situations where learners must consider a variety of perspectives

- Make critical thinking and critical analysis a regular part of classroom work

- Provide support for challenging aspects of a task (pre-practice new vocabulary or grammar points, make main idea of a text clear, choose a familiar topic, etc.) so that learners can focus on critical or analytical points

- Use authentic texts (newspaper articles, advertisements, letters, etc.)

- Build in time for learners to become comfortable with texts or activities before asking them to look at them critically

- Include less traditional literacy texts like cartoons, advertisements, or graffiti

- Recycle critical literacy practices throughout the course of instruction

- Balance instruction in basic literacy skills (for example, mastery of grammar points, vocabulary expansion, predicting or summarizing in reading, mindmapping or webbing in writing) with practice in critical analysis skills

- Shift from an emphasis on finding a right answer to eliciting ranges of interpretations that are supported by sound reasoning and thoughtful examination

- Provide examples of critical literacy practices in the course of your teaching

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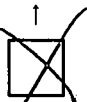| The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 1 documents	The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 2A documents	The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 2B documents
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