

Critical Literacy Overview

In schools, a critical literacy model reflects a “practical approach to curriculum” melding “social, political, and cultural debate and discussion with the analysis of how texts and discourses work, where, with what consequences, and in whose interests” (Luke, 2012). Within the English language arts, critical literacy practices are taken up based on teachers’ and students’ contexts related to their relationships with different issues or struggles.

While there is not a “universal model” of critical literacies, there are four basic dimensions to the critical literacy framework in the classroom:

1. Disrupting the commonplace: considering “new frames from which to understand experience” through varied texts, analysis of language, and critique.
2. Considering multiple viewpoints: considering our own viewpoints and viewpoints of others.
3. Focusing on the sociopolitical: interrogating how “sociopolitical systems and power relationships shape perceptions, responses, and actions.”
4. Taking action: taking informed action in service of social justice.
(Lewison, Seely Flint, Van Sluys, & Henkin, 2002)

Depending on the classroom context, methods for teaching with a critical literacy lens will vary.

Suggestions for Further Reading

Elementary:

- Aukerman, M. (2012). ‘Why do you say yes to Pedro but no to me?’ Toward a critical literacy of dialogic engagement. *Theory Into Practice*, 51, 42-48.
- Labadie, M., Wetzel, M., & Rogers, R. (2012). Opening spaces for critical literacy: Introducing books to young readers. *The Reading Teacher*, 66(2), 117-127.
- Van Sluys, K., Lewison, M., & Seely Flint, A. (2006). Researching critical literacy: A critical study of analysis of classroom discourse. *Journal of Literacy Research*, 38(2), 197-233.

Secondary:

- Christensen, L. (2000). *Reading, writing, and rising Up: Teaching about social justice and the power of the written word*. Rethinking Schools: Milwaukee, WI.
- Johnson, E. & Vasudevan, L. Seeing and hearing students’ lived and embodied critical literacy practices. *Theory Into Practice*, 51, 34-41.

English Language Learners:

- Man Chu Lau, S. (2012). Reconceptualizing critical literacy teaching in ESL classrooms. *The Reading Teacher*, 65(5), 325-329.

Teachers beginning to implement critical literacy practices:

- Lewison, M., Seely Flint, A., Van Sluys, K., & Henkin, R. (2002). Taking on critical literacy: The journey of newcomers and novices. *Language Arts*, 79(5), 382-392.

History and background:

- Luke, A. (2012). Critical literacy: Foundational notes. *Theory Into Practice*, 51, 4-11.
- McLaughlin, M. & DeVoogd, G. (2004). Critical literacy as comprehension: Expanding reader response. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, 48(1), 52-62.