

3.4 CRITICAL THINKING

3.4.1 Dilemma thinking

Brief description, and rules of the implementation of the learning activity

“Dilemma thinking” activity develops critical thinking and empathy in students aged 6 to 10. During the exercise, pupils work in pairs or small groups to analyse a realistic and meaningful dilemma, such as weighing the pros and cons of living near a volcano. Students make deliberate choices, articulate their reasoning, and justify decisions with evidence. This collaborative exercise encourages children to evaluate multiple perspectives and respect diverse viewpoints during class discussions.

Skill focus

- **Primary Skill Focus**
 - Critical thinking
- **Complementary/Secondary Skill Focus**
 - Empathy

Age group	Student number	Duration
6-10 years old	Individual or whole class working in pairs or small groups	50-100 minutes

Proposed step by step implementation of the learning activity

1. Introduction to the theme and giving the dilemma.
2. giving content
3. thinking activity in small groups and making a decision
4. class discussion. Each group presents their opinion and arguments. Encourage a variety of viewpoints.
5. Reflection on thinking

Indoor/Outdoor Classroom layout notes

This activity can be carried out flexibly both indoors and outdoors, as long as students are able to sit in small groups and engage in focused discussion.

How does this learning activity develop this particular skill?

Students are working at critical thinking because:

- they weigh multiple perspectives against each other.
- they are required to make deliberate choices and justify them.

What do we want to achieve regarding primary skill development (student understanding and/or behaviour)?

As a result of completing this task, students will:

- be able to analyse a real-world dilemma (living near a volcano) by identifying and weighing advantages and disadvantages.
- be able to articulate their reasoning, justify their decisions, and support their viewpoint with evidence.
- be able to demonstrate collaborative problem-solving skills by discussing, negotiating, and reaching a decision in small groups.
- be able to show critical thinking and reflection by considering multiple perspectives and evaluating the reasoning behind their own and others' choices.

Suggested use, and practical subject-related examples

The dilemma must be realistic and meaningful. Examples of dilemmas;

- Geography: Would you live near a volcano?
- Biology: Should we eat fruit or cookies every day?
- History: Should we preserve old historical buildings or replace them with modern ones?
- See attachment: Would you live near a volcano?

Materials and tools needed for implementation

It depends on the dilemma. But provide enough information about the topic so that pupils can make well-considered choices

Guiding questions

Analysing the Problem / Situation

- What are the main aspects of this situation?
- What information do you need to make a well-informed judgment?
- Are there different ways to look at this problem?

Weighing Pros and Cons

- What are the possible advantages of this choice?
- What disadvantages or risks do you see?
- Which advantage or disadvantage do you consider most important, and why?

Reasoning and Justifying

- How can you explain your choice to others?
- What evidence or examples support your opinion?
- What objections might someone raise, and how would you respond?

Tips and Tricks for dealing with challenges

- **Challenge:** If pupils struggle to start thinking
Tip 1: Encourage them to first list any advantages and disadvantages they can think of.
Tip 2: Suggest focusing on one aspect at a time to avoid feeling overwhelmed.
- **Challenge:** If pupils give vague or shallow answers
Tip 1: Ask prompting questions like: “Why do you think that is important?” or “Can you give an example?”
Tip 2: Encourage them to consider both sides of the dilemma before deciding.
- **Challenge:** If pupils disagree strongly in groups
Tip 1: Remind them that it’s okay to have different opinions.
Tip 2: Encourage listening to each other and finding common ground or compromises.
- **Challenge:** If pupils are stuck on the decision
Tip 1: Ask them to think about what additional information would help them decide.
Tip 2: Suggest imagining the situation from different perspectives (e.g., farmer, tourist, child).
- **Challenge:** If pupils rush the process
Tip 1: Remind them that careful thinking is more important than quickly choosing an answer.
Tip 2: Encourage them to write down reasons and evidence before announcing their decision.

Difficulty level tailoring

- **Beginner (6-7 years old):** Provide clear, concrete dilemmas with pros and cons that are easy to understand. Use short texts, pictures, or videos to give context. Example: “Should we eat fruit or cookies every day?”
- **Advanced learners (8-9 years old):** Provide more complex dilemmas where multiple factors play a role. Let pupils think of pros and cons themselves and justify their choices. Example: “Should people live near a volcano?”
- **Expert learners (9-10 years old):** Provide abstract or real-world dilemmas where pupils must weigh multiple perspectives. Encourage them to justify their decision with evidence or data and reflect on possible counterarguments. Example: “Should governments invest in nuclear energy or renewable energy to combat climate change?”

Debriefing and Reflection questions

- What helped you to think more deeply?
- What helped you think carefully about your choice?
- What was difficult about making a decision?
- Would you change your decision if you had more information?