



Lesson 22: Challenging Assumptions

Level: Upper Intermediate – Advanced

Time: 60-90 mins

How to use this lesson:

This lesson is about building self-awareness and encourages students to think about themselves and their critical thinking skills and to reflect on how quickly we make assumptions. This lesson can be done in class but if you are short of time, parts of the lesson can be done at home as a written exercise. Try to allow time in class for students to discuss the different exercises. This will give them useful practice in asking and answering questions, as well as an opportunity to use the lesson vocabulary.

Who am I? – 10-20 minutes

Show learners the series of images.

Encourage them to write down or call out their immediate thoughts on each image. Encourage this by asking things like:

- ▶ *"What sort of music does this person like?"*
- ▶ *"Does this person have a job?"*
- ▶ *"What newspaper does he/she read?"*
- ▶ *"What kind of music does he/she like?"*

Once you have done this, ask the group:

- ▶ *"How do you know this person likes xxx?"*
- ▶ *"How quickly did your brain come up with judgements?"*

Explain that we all do this automatically and part of learning to think critically is to question our natural quick assumptions.

Extend the activity by asking learners about other occasions when they may have made assumptions about something which later turned out to be wrong.

Exercise 1 – Stereotypes – 10 minutes

Write the word STEREOTYPE in the middle of the whiteboard. Ask learners to tell you what they think stereotype means.

If this is a difficult concept for students to grasp tell them that a stereotype is often given to a group of people in relation to how people behave or look. Often people are stereotyped on visible qualities – how people dress, look, behave.

Try to link this with what happened in the previous exercise when they looked at the series of images.

Exercise 2 – Fact or Opinion? – 20 minutes

Ask learners: *"Do you always know fact from opinion?"* It's not so easy to do sometimes.

Explain that if you *don't* learn the difference between fact and opinion, you'll get stuck reading and watching things that only reinforce beliefs and assumptions you already own. And that is the opposite of learning!



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Put learners into pairs and distribute the statement handout below:

- ▶ My telephone number is difficult to memorise.
- ▶ The deepest part of the ocean is 35,813 feet (10,916m) deep.
- ▶ Dogs make better pets than turtles.
- ▶ Smoking is bad for your health.
- ▶ Eighty-five percent of all cases of lung cancer in the U.S. are caused by smoking.
- ▶ If you flatten and stretch out a Slinky toy it will be 87 feet (26.5m) long.
- ▶ Slinky toys are fun.
- ▶ One out of every hundred people is colour blind.
- ▶ My friend doesn't like dancing.
- ▶ I'm not very good at languages.

Try to determine whether each statement sounds like a fact or an opinion, and discuss with your partner.

You will probably find some of the statements easy to judge, but other statements difficult. If you can debate the truthfulness of a statement with your partner, then it's probably an opinion!

Exercise 3 – Brain Teasers – 20 minutes

Split the class into groups and hand each group one of the questions. Give them a time limit to solve the problem/answer the question:

1. You have only one match. You walked into a room where there was an oil burner, a kerosene lamp, and a coal-burning stove. Which one would you light first?
2. There are two letters of the alphabet that mean zero/nothing? Which two are they?
3. What is the furthest that a bear can run into the woods?
4. Your doctor gives you three pills. She tells you to take one every half hour. How long will the pills last?
5. Why do you always find something in the last place you look?

You can then distribute the answers or show them on slides after each group has presented their solution. Allow students to discuss how they reached, or failed to reach a satisfying solution.

1. The match
2. MT (empty)
3. Half way. After that he is running out of the woods.
4. One hour
5. Because when you find it, you stop looking.

Reflection – homework activity:

1. When do I tend to make assumptions about things in my everyday life?
2. When could I avoid this in future?
3. How can I strengthen my critical thinking skills?



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Exercise 1 – Who am I?

Can you answer each of these questions for the images attached? (Can you think of two other questions?)

Q.1. What sort of music does this person like?

Q.2. Does this person have a job?

Q.3. What do they do in their free time?

Q.4. _____

Q.5. _____

How did you come up with the answers?

Now think about yourself. How do you think people see you ...

a) on your way to class?

b) out with your family?

c) out with your friends?

Why do they think this?

Exercise 2 – Fact or Opinion?

	Fact	Opinion
My telephone number is difficult to memorise.		
The deepest part of the ocean is 35,813 feet (10,916m) deep.		
Dogs make better pets than turtles.		
Smoking is bad for your health.		
Eighty-five percent of all cases of lung cancer in the U.S. are caused by smoking.		
If you flatten and stretch out a Slinky toy it will be 87 feet (26.5m) long.		
Slinky toys are fun.		
One out of every hundred people is colour blind.		
My friend doesn't like dancing.		
I'm not very good at languages.		

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Exercise 3 – 20 minutes – Brain Teasers

Can you solve the problem/answer the question:

1. You have only one match. You walked into a room where there was an oil burner, a kerosene lamp, and a coal-burning stove. Which one would you light first?

2. There are two letters of the alphabet that mean zero/nothing? Which two are they?

3. What is the furthest that a bear can run into the woods?

4. Your doctor gives you three pills. She tells you to take one every half hour. How long will the pills last?

5. Why do you always find something in the last place you look?

Reflection – 20 minutes (or homework activity):

1. When do I tend to make assumptions about things in my everyday life?

2. When could I avoid this in future?

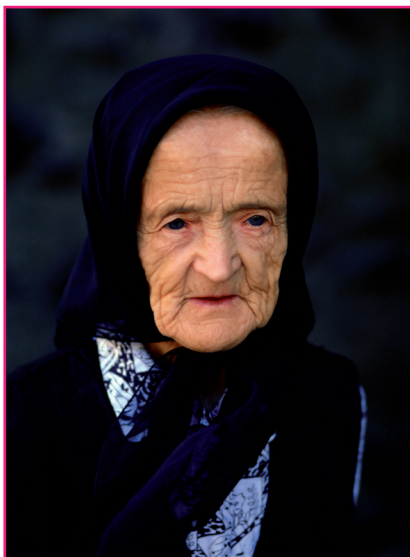
3. How can I strengthen my critical thinking skills?



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Student's copy

CRITICAL THINKING



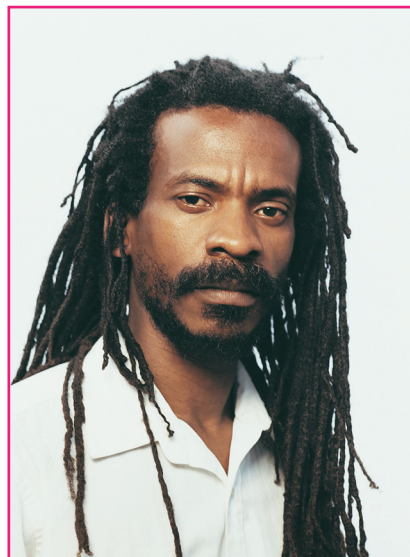
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Student's copy



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CRITICAL THINKING