

Preface

Purpose

The purpose of this book is to teach students to think for themselves—not *what* to think, but *how* to think—about the world around them, the issues of the day, and their own role in a society that needs independent and critical thinkers more than ever. It is organized around the principle that the classroom comprises a community where knowledge and skills are shared, practiced, and mastered, then applied to the wide variety of contexts in the *real* world.

For this purpose and context, this book focuses on the development of **critical thinking** skills. Critical thinking is broadly defined as the ability to objectively evaluate the merits and faults of things or ideas in order to make judgments about them. But how is this actually achieved? Or more importantly, what specific skills are involved? How are they taught and practiced? How are they applied to real world contexts? If critical thinking were a simple matter, everyone, presumably, would be doing it. Our real-world experience tells us that this is not the case. Many people accept uncritically what they see or hear in the media, what their elders and teachers tell them, or simply what they wish to be true. Clearly, critical thinking is learned, and like a foreign language, one's abilities improve with practice. This book has been designed with all of this in mind. It arms students with the principles, skills, and practice to develop critical thinking ability, to take this ability out of the classroom and into the real world, and to practice and improve this ability throughout their lives.

Critical Thinking

This book presents critical thinking as a set of three distinct and progressive practices. The first and broadest practice is the *critical stance*, or the general attitude of skepticism that critical thinkers bring to that which they seek to understand, including themselves. Assuming a critical stance means to take nothing at “face value,” to assume nothing, and to challenge conventional wisdom and what might seem to others to be “common sense.” It means to continually interrogate the very ideas by which we define ourselves and the world we inhabit. Throughout this book students are challenged to consider and reconsider what they know, what they think they know, and what they can know about themselves and the world.

The critical stance is the catalyst for the second, more specific set of practices: *critical analysis*. Students learn how to distinguish between facts, opinions, beliefs, and prejudices. They learn to stake out a position on an issue, look for and evaluate evidence to support their positions, and constructively critique the positions of others. They learn to distinguish relevant facts from irrelevant ones, identify generalizations and assertions, and draw inferences from limited information. Each of the first ten units presents a specific analytic practice, which taken as a whole comprises a toolbox of critical thinking skills that students will carry with them and draw upon whenever they engage ideas and issues in the real world.

The third practice is the identification and negation of *logical fallacies*. Each of the last five units presents one of the most common logical fallacies, including the *either/or* argument, the *slippery slope*, the *ad hominem* attack, the *straw man*, and the *red herring*. Students learn to recognize these fallacious arguments when they are encountered, to draw attention to them, and to counter them with sound arguments of their own. In doing so, they learn to avoid the mistake of using logical fallacies as the basis of their own ideas.

Unit Structure

Each unit in this book is structured to ease students into the unit topic with low-production activities. First, the topic is previewed, providing students with some content knowledge and preparing them for discussions to come. Next, students' own knowledge is activated with warm-up questions designed to elicit their initial thoughts on the topic. Students are then guided to produce an initial position on the topic, which will be developed and refined throughout the unit.

Next, a critical thinking skill is introduced. The book starts with the most general skills and proceeds to the more specific ones, encouraging the progressive development of the three levels of practice. Students develop the critical stance early on, and apply it to each successive topic. Each skill is explicitly defined, and examples are provided. Exercises are then provided for students to practice and internalize the skill.

After the specific skill is learned, students read a text related to the unit topic. Students are introduced to a different text type in each unit as a means of building their genre knowledge and modes of expression. Each text is between 400 and 500 words, composed primarily of words at or below the JACET 3000 word level. Teachers are encouraged to leverage each text to practice the critical skills learned throughout

the book as they see fit.

Immediately following each text is a set of multiple-choice comprehension questions. Most questions require students to draw on their inferencing skills to answer correctly. After the comprehension questions, students use their awareness of context to complete sentences with highlighted words from the text. Finally, students use the highlighted vocabulary to express their own ideas on the topic in sentence form.

Each unit then presents a list of useful expressions that can be used in relation both to the critical thinking skill and the main text of the unit. Pair work exercises are provided for students to practice the expressions and use them to discuss the unit topic.

Next, students listen to a friendly conversation on the unit topic and fill in the blanks with the words or phrases they hear. The conversations are highly colloquial and idiomatic, exposing students to English as it is used in everyday life. Three comprehension questions require students to infer answers not stated directly in the text.

The last classroom activity is open discussion of questions related to the unit topic. Students use the new expressions, vocabulary, and critical thinking skills learned in the unit to engage their classmates in critical discussion. Finally, two research questions are provided, giving students the opportunity to deepen their understanding of the topic and express their own ideas in written form or as a presentation to the class.

It should be noted that the positions and opinions expressed in this textbook are not necessarily those of the author or publisher. In fact, a very wide range of positions are expressed, and not all of them are particularly thoughtful. This is intentional. They are included to give students experience analyzing and responding to weak arguments.

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**Preview**

Japan is a nation of about 127.1 million people. But that number is expected to drop to about 90 million by the year 2050. The social and economic effects of such a large and rapid change has many people concerned about the future of the nation. In response, a number of policy changes have been proposed. One of the most controversial proposals is to greatly increase the number of foreigners living and working in Japan.

**Warm-up Discussion**

A Rate your level of agreement with the following statements from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Discuss your answers in your group.

1. Immigrants can help Japan with its declining population problem.

1	2	3	4	5
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2. Japanese people will accept foreigners living permanently in Japan.

1	2	3	4	5
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3. Foreigners have difficulty adjusting to Japanese society.

1	2	3	4	5
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B Do you think immigration to Japan should be encouraged? Why or why not? Write one reason in support of your position. Share with your group.

I think immigration should/should not be encouraged because _____
_____.



Critical Thinking Skill 3: Belief or Prejudice?

A **belief** is an assertion that something exists or is true without any evidence to support the claim. Beliefs are usually deeply held and personal. They can be based on cultural or religious values, and they can play a very positive role in people's lives. However, beliefs cannot be supported with facts and therefore are not useful for critical discussion.

A **prejudice** is a negative belief, based on ignorance or hatred. Unlike beliefs, which cannot be supported by facts, prejudices are often easily proven to be untrue. For example, the assertion, "Women are bad drivers" is easily disproven by reference to accident statistics and police records that show that women tend to drive more carefully and have fewer accidents than men. A person who believes that women are bad drivers has chosen to ignore the evidence because it does not support what he or she already wants to believe. Prejudice often generalizes an idea to an entire group or class of people. Prejudice is the opposite of critical thinking.

Practice

A Read each of the following assertions and decide if it is a belief (B) or a prejudice (P). Check your answers with a partner.

1. There is life outside of our solar system. []
2. Good people go to heaven when they die. []
3. People with dark skin are not as intelligent as people with light skin. []
4. Women are not smart enough to be effective managers. []
5. People with long noses cannot be trusted. []
6. The death penalty is just legalized murder. []
7. Every good deed is someday rewarded. []
8. Ambition is necessary for a happy life. []
9. The devil is real. []
10. People from the city are better than people from the countryside. []

B Now write two assertions, one of belief and one of prejudice. Ask a partner to label each assertion as a belief or prejudice.



Read the following proposal for dealing with Japan's population problem and the public comments that follow.

Call for Public Comment: Immigration Reform Policy

In 2014, the birth rate was 1.4 per woman. By 2055, 38% of the population will be over 65, and the total population is expected to decline by 25% by 2050.

Clearly, Japan faces a **demographic** crisis that will cause serious social and

5 economic problems. Research shows that we cannot reverse this trend domestically:

We do not have enough people. Therefore, we propose increasing immigration to Japan.

We propose "The Big Option," which calls for the immigration of 20 million people over the next 50 years. **Large-scale** immigration will help Japan retain its

10 current economic status and standard of living.

We understand that this requires big changes to Japanese society and the way foreigners are **integrated** into local communities. We seek the public's input on this proposal.

Comments

15 submitted by Brave New World on 8/26 at 11:15am

I completely agree with The Big Option and hope it is adopted. In 1960, there were 11 workers to support each retiree. Today there are only two. Without more workers, the pension system may soon collapse. Entire generations will suffer economic effects. We should welcome as many immigrants as possible!

20 submitted by Love Japan on 8/27 at 3:22pm

No way! Japan is **unique**. No other country is so beautiful and refined. A rapid increase of foreigners will destroy the country. Thousands of years of tradition will be lost. We need to find a solution that saves Japan without changing it.

submitted by Skeptical Foreigner on 8/29 at 10:45pm

25 As a foreigner in Japan, I am encouraged by the government's willingness to accept more immigrants. I have been treated very well here, and I believe that most Japanese people are willing to accept more foreigners. My concern is with the pace and scale of The Big Option. There are about two million foreigners living and working in Japan now. The Big Option will double that number every four years!

30 That's not realistic.

submitted by Japan Forever on 8/30 at 6:04pm

Foreigners don't have the brains to **assimilate** into Japanese culture. Maybe some can enter as unskilled workers, but they should live separately from Japanese people because their living habits are filthy.



Reading Comprehension

Answer the following questions.

- What is the purpose of The Big Option?
 - To integrate foreigners into local communities
 - To reverse the declining population
 - To improve international cooperation
- Which commenter provides evidence for his position?
 - Brave New Word
 - Love Japan
 - Japan Forever
- Which commenter asserts a positive belief about Japan?
 - Brave New World
 - Love Japan
 - Japan Forever
- Which commenter asserts a prejudice toward foreigners?
 - Love Japan
 - Skeptical Foreigner
 - Japan Forever



Vocabulary Review

A Fill in the blanks in the sentences with the bold words from the main reading.

- Some immigrants never become _____ into their new communities and communicate only with people from their home countries.
- _____ change takes time. We cannot change society overnight.
- I tried to _____ the new information, but at times I was greatly confused.
- Every culture is _____ in some way; it is the differences that make them special.
- Because of recent _____ changes in the United States, more than half of the population will soon be non-white.

B Now write sentences using three of the bold words to express your own opinion on the subject of immigration in Japan.

- _____
- _____
- _____

Compare your sentences with a partner and help each other correct grammar and spelling errors. Check for beliefs or prejudices.



Useful Words and Expressions

Some people, when making an argument, might assert an opinion as if it were a fact, or a belief as if it were an opinion or a fact. Most people who make assertions of prejudice do not see themselves as prejudiced. They see their assertions as beliefs, opinions, or facts. A critical thinker knows how to distinguish between these types of assertions when they are encountered. Critical thinkers also know how to respond to such assertions in a polite way without attacking the person making them. Remember: *Be critical of ideas, not people*. Following this rule will help keep discussions civil and respectful.

Practice

A Put a ○ next to statements that politely challenge assertions. Put an × next to statements that violate the rule.

1. Can you point to evidence to support that? []
2. You are an idiot. []
3. Are you sure that statement is factual? []
4. Do you think that might be a generalization? []
5. You are prejudiced against... []
6. Only a child could believe such a thing. []
7. Let's look at the facts. []

B Use the expressions above to respond to the following assertions. Remember the rule: *Be critical of ideas, not people*.

1. Immigrants can't learn Japanese or understand Japanese values.

2. American culture and the English language are superior to others.

3. Women do not have the ability to lead a large corporation.

4. Foreigners don't work as hard as Japanese.



Listening

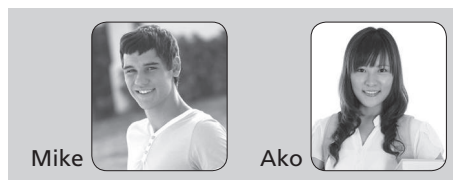


DL 07



CD1-19

A Listen and fill in the blanks with the words or phrases you hear.



Mike



Ako



Mike: Hey Ako, did you hear about the government's proposal to
1.() in Japan? Isn't that crazy?

Ako: What do you mean?

Mike: Well, everyone knows that foreigners can't adjust to Japanese culture.

Ako: Mike, are you sure about that? 2.() your claim?

Mike: Oh, we all know it's true. Just look around you.

Ako: But that's not really evidence. Maybe you've met a few foreigners
3.(). But don't paint with too broad a brush.

Mike: What does that mean?

Ako: It means that you cannot generalize about foreigners in Japan based on a few examples. Many foreigners learn Japanese language and 4.() Japanese culture and society without any real problem.

Mike: But what about all the crime committed by foreigners?

Ako: Let's look at the facts: Government statistics show that foreigners commit crimes at about 5.() as Japanese people do.

B Now listen again and answer the following questions.

1. Why does Mike think the government's proposal is crazy?

2. What two prejudices does Mike hold against foreigners?

a. _____ b. _____

3. What expression does Ako use to call attention to Mike's prejudices?

a. _____ b. _____



Critical Discussion

1. Which of the comments in the reading passage is closest to your own view?

Provide evidence to support your position.

2. Discuss other reasons why some people are for or against increased immigration to Japan. Make a list and look for evidence for each.



Critical Reflection

1. Research current government policies regarding immigration. Do you agree or disagree with current policies? Support your position with evidence.

2. Imagine Japan in the Year 2050. What role will foreigners play in that future? How will they help or hinder Japanese society at that time?