

# Critical Thinking Exercises

*“What is being asked, and what is expected from me?”*



*Includes:*

- Forced Choice
- Abstract Questions
- “What Would Happen If..” Scenarios



## Sample Critical Thinking Exercise:

# Forced Choice


students must make an abstract choice based on the characteristics of objects



What's the Problem?



Shown below is a "Forced Choice" scenario. This is where students are given several choices, and must pick one based on the teacher directions... and then they must explain the reason for their choice. Not making a choice is not an option! To learn more about "Forced Choice" scenarios, [click here](#).



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**The Choice:**

**Which form of energy are you: mechanical, electrical, chemical, radiant, or thermal? Explain.**

Where do we begin? [Click here](#) to find out how Forced Choice activities work...

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To make their choices, students must go beyond the standard definition of the terms (or what their personal favorite choice may be) and consider characteristics and distinctive attributes of each choice. Here are the type of answers you might hear:

*"I am like \_\_\_\_\_ energy because..."*

<p><b><u>Mechanical</u></b></p> <p><i>"...I like to keep things moving."</i></p>	<p><b><u>Electrical</u></b></p> <p><i>"...I like to be in charge of everything and be in charge."</i></p>	<p><b><u>Chemical</u></b></p> <p><i>"....I keep a lot of things and feelings stored up."</i></p>
<p><b><u>Radiant</u></b></p> <p><i>"...I am very bright and light hearted."</i></p>	<p><b><u>Thermal</u></b></p> <p><i>"...I am hot, I get mad easily."</i></p>	<p><b><u>Nuclear</u></b></p> <p><i>"...I am always splitting hairs and looking at the details."</i></p>





## Sample Critical Thinking Exercise:


# Abstract Questions

students are asked to answer questions that have no definite answer



What's the Problem?

Shown below is an "Abstract Question". In this exercise, students are asked to answer questions that do not have any definite answers. It is up to the students to consider the wording of the question and define for themselves what is being asked and how it should be answered. They must be able to explain and defend their approach with their response. To learn more about "Abstract Questions," [click here](#).




**The Question:**

**The term "exciting calmness" best describes what period of American history? Why?**

Where do we begin? [Click here to find out how Abstract Questions work...](#)

While there is no "correct" answer to the above question, students must prove they used a logical approach in their response. For example, some of the responses that you might hear are shown below:



- The **Cold War** era can be described as "exciting calmness" because, while the United States and Soviet Union never fought against one another in a violent war, the entire period was very tense and quietly stressful.
- The **Industrial Revolution** is a great example of "exciting calmness" because things were changing so quickly that it was an exciting revolution, only without the bloodshed that a revolution often brings.
- I think that **today** is a great example of "exciting calmness" because everyone is carrying on with their normal lives as always, yet the world around us is changing so fast and it's impossible to know what the future holds.



## Sample Critical Thinking Exercise:

# “What Would Happen If...?”

students are asked to consider a specific set of circumstances other than what exists in reality




What's the Problem?



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Shown below is a "What would happen if?" scenario. In this exercise, students are asked to consider a specific set of circumstances than what exist in reality. It forces the students to consider the power of "cause-and-effect" and to allow themselves to step away from traditional responses. To learn more about "What would happen if?" scenarios, [click here](#).



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**The Scenario:**

**What if Martin Luther King, Jr. had never lived?  
Would the Civil Rights Movement proceed as it did?**

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[Where do we begin? Click here to find out how "What would happen if?" scenarios work...](#)

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While there is no "correct" answer to the above "What if" scenario, students must prove they used a logical approach in their response. Students need to consider the types of things that people took when they traveled west during westward expansion.

- "I think the civil rights movement would have happened just the same. Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat on the bus in 1955, and it had nothing to do with Martin Luther King
- "Great people emerge from specific cultural circumstances. If it wasn't MLK Jr., it would have been someone else."
- "Civil Rights were happening during this time. If there had been no MLK, someone else like Malcolm X would have led the way. The movement may have been more violent, Martin Luther King was a peaceful person and believed in nonviolent policies."

