



In a video on Vimeo, James Nottingham, available to watch and download here:

<https://vimeo.com/128462566>

we hear about creating learning challenges with our students.

“The Learning Challenge is one way to explain why more challenge leads to enhanced learning. It helps teachers structure lessons, and students challenge themselves.”

You can also find more information and resources about the Learning Pit and Growth Mindset on the Challenging Learning page:

<https://www.challenginglearning.com/learning-pit/>

An interesting division of Critical Thinking activities is suggested by Marina Caroselli. (Author: 50 Activities for Developing. Critical Thinking Skills)

Namely, Critical Thinking activities can fall into one, two or three categories: **analysis, creativity and speed**. This provides a means to organize CT activities in the classroom in terms of their **goals** and **expected outcomes**.

**Recommended reading:**

20 Cognitive Biases that Screw up your Decisions

<https://www.businessinsider.com.au/cognitive-biases-that-affect-decisions-2016-7>

## Critical thinking in Cambridge English exams

### Writing

When students write reviews or reports, they should use their critical thinking skills to assess the merits or defects of the things they are reviewing or writing their report on.

In fact, nowadays, our students ARE writing more and more reviews of hotels, restaurants, events, taxis, etc.

### Reading and Listening

Especially at higher levels (B2 and above), in the Reading and Listening papers of the Cambridge English exams, candidates are asked to show they can understand a range of things about a text, including:

- **implication**
- **purpose**
- **opinion**
- **attitude**
- **tone**
- **comparison**
- **exemplification**

And in A1 Movers and A2 Flyers, they are asked to choose the best name for a story. Understanding global meaning is a key critical thinking reading skill.

### Speaking

If we train our students to look critically at photographs, then this should give them more to say in B1 Preliminary Speaking Part 3.

In the photo below, which comes from the Preliminary for Schools Sample Paper:

<http://www.cambridgeenglish.org/images/343147-cambridge-english-preliminary-for-schools-pet-for-schools-digital-handbook-for-teachers.pdf>

we can train students to look at the picture and ask themselves questions like:

How important is the guitar to this girl? (*very important probably, because it's ready to be picked up and played.*)

What's the weather like? (*It must be sunny, because we can see lots of light coming in through the window.*)

Do you think the girl sits on these cushions? *(She probably sits on these cushions when her friends come round. But I guess she doesn't sit on them like this because she might fall off!)*

## Critical thinking about visuals

I guess/think/imagine

must

could

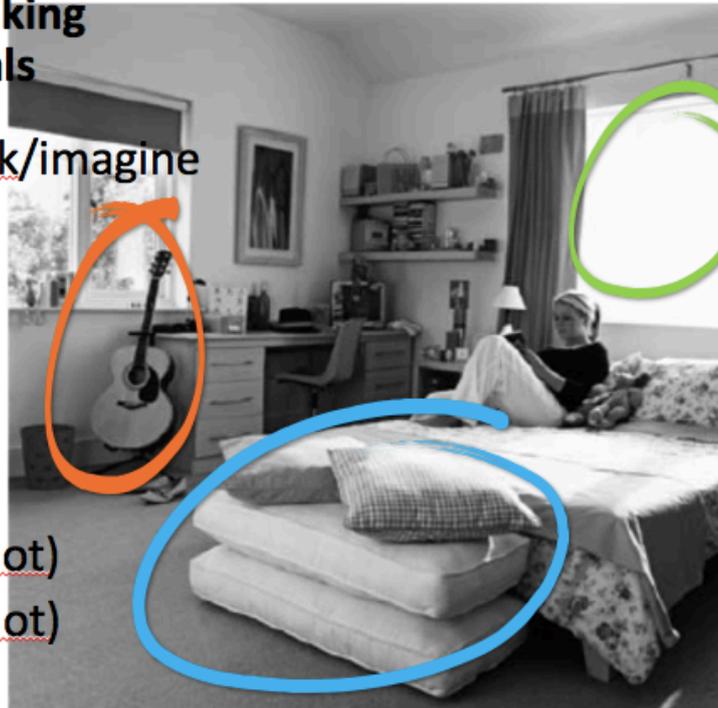
might

may

can't

definitely (not)

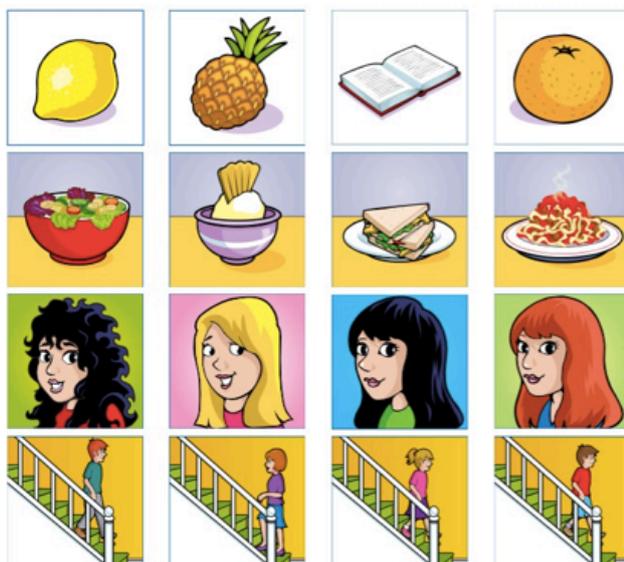
probably (not)



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## Critical thinking in the A1 Movers speaking test

### Which is different and why?



Source: Sample Papers 2, available from:

<http://www.cambridgeenglish.org/teaching-english/resources-for-teachers/>

Every year, in the A1 Movers speaking tests, candidates come up with some wonderful reasons for a particular picture being the one that's 'different'.

This is wonderful - they are demonstrating creativity and critical thinking! We can work on this in class.

For example, for the second row of (food) pictures.

The salad is different because it doesn't contain flour.

The ice cream is different because you must keep it in the freezer.

The sandwich is different because you eat it with your hands.

The pasta is different because it's hot. **or:** The pasta is different because it has a sauce.

Or row 4:

Picture 1 – We can't see the man's legs because he's wearing trousers.

Picture 2 – She's going up the stairs, not down. **or:** She has both feet on a stair. The others have one foot in the air.

Picture 3 – She has the longest hair.

Picture 4 – He's got the darkest hair.

**Activity 1**

You are driving down the road in your new 2-seat sports car on a wild, stormy night, when you pass by a bus stop and you see three people waiting for the bus:

1. An old lady who looks as if she is about to die.
2. An old friend who once saved your life.
3. The perfect partner you have been dreaming about.

A kind-hearted person, you stop to offer one of them a lift. Knowing that there can only be one passenger in your car, whom would you choose?

**Suggested answer:**

Give your car keys to your old friend, who then takes the old lady to hospital, then you get to stay and get to know your perfect partner!

## Activity 2

In *Die Hard with a Vengeance* Bruce Willis and Samuel L. Jackson have to diffuse a bomb by placing a 4 gallon jug of water on a set of scales. They have a 5 gallon bottle and a 3 gallon bottle.

How can you make sure there are 4 gallons in the 5 gallon bottle?

You have 2 minutes.

You can NOT run away!

### Answer 1

1. Fill the 5 gallon can from the tap.
2. Empty the 5 gallon can into the 3 gallon can - leaving 2 gallons in the 5 gallon can.
3. Pour away the contents of the 3 gallon can.
4. Fill the 3 gallon can with the 2 gallons from the 5 gallon can - leaving 2 gallons in the 3 gallon can.
5. Fill the 5 gallon can from the tap.
6. Fill the remaining 1 gallon space in the 3 gallon can from the 5 gallon can.

Leaving 4 gallons in the 5 gallon can.

### Answer 2

1. Fill the 3 gallon can from the tap.
2. Empty the 3 gallon can into the 5 gallon can.
3. Fill the 3 gallon can again and pour 2 gallons into the 5 gallon can - leaving 1 gallon in the 3 gallon can.
3. Pour away the contents of the 5 gallon can.
4. Fill the 5 gallon can with the 1 gallon from the 3 gallon can.
5. Fill the 3 gallon can from the tap.
6. Pour these 3 gallons from the 3 gallon can into the 5 gallon can.

Leaving 4 gallons in the 5 gallon can.

### Activity 3

If you could be an animal for a day, what animal would you choose and why? What would you do on that day?

Source: <https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Product/Early-Finishers-Task-Cards-137901>

Give students detailed questions to consider this topic:

Which animal?  
Why?  
What does it do during the day?  
What are the advantages of being this animal?  
What are the disadvantages?  
What does it eat?  
Does it have any enemies?  
How long does it live?  
How does it perceive the world?  
What relationships does it have?  
Does it live alone or in groups?  
Where does it live?  
What is happening to its natural habitat?  
Etc.

## Activity 4 Revenge questions

This activity, inspired by *Once upon a Time*, a wonderful book full of inspiring activities by John Morgan and Mario Rinvoluceri. Each student chooses a different person in the class to answer each question, or students think of different people that they know that they could ask the questions.

The next stage would be for them to interview the chosen people and share the answers they gave.

**What colours are you wearing today?**

**Why are you wearing those colours?**

**What's your favourite colour for a car?**

**What colour car don't you like?**

**What colour is your toothbrush?**

**Do you like coloured toothpaste?**

**Can you name all the colours in the rainbow?**

## Revenge questions

**What colour do you associate with spring/summer/autumn/winter?**

**Have you ever changed the colour of your hair?**

**Would you ever change the colour of your hair?**

**Have you got any tattoos?**

**Would you ever have a tattoo?**

**What colour is your favourite food?**

**Do you know anyone who's colour blind?**

**What colour eyes do you think are sexy?**

**What colour is your beach towel?**

**What colour is your swimming costume? Does it match your towel?**

**What colour does your favourite football team wear?**

**What colour do television presenters usually wear?**

**What colour pyjamas do you normally wear?**

**What's the first colour you see when you open your eyes in the morning?**

**How many song titles can you think of which contain a colour?**

**How many film titles can you think of which contain a colour?**

I wrote about revenge questions and other activities with questions in a post on my webpage:

<http://teachingtogether.info/creative-question-activities-colours/>

## Activity 5 10 words

# 10 WORDS

How many sentences can you make from these 10 words?

1. I	6. YOU
2. STOP	7. GO
3. YES	8. NO
4. OH	9. GOODBYE
5. SAY	10. HELLO

Students make sentences and they can create something like this:

You say "Yes", I say "No".

You say "Stop" and I say "Go, go, go".

Oh no.

You say "Goodbye" and I say "Hello, hello, hello".

I don't know why you say "Goodbye", I say "Hello, hello, hello".

I don't know why you say goodbye, I say hello.

Does this ring a bell????