

Critical Thinking

What is critical thinking all about? How can you apply critical thinking to global issues?



An Introduction

Every day we receive a vast amount of information and make many decisions based on it. For example, you might decide to wear a coat to school because the weather forecast says it will rain. Critical thinking is about questioning our first thoughts and reaching a more balanced and thoughtful judgement about the information we're seeing, hearing and reading. For example, before you decide whether to wear a coat to school, you might ask what time it is forecast to rain, how heavy the rain is expected to be and so on.

Critical thinking asks these types of questions:

- Who said or wrote it?
- Is the information reliable?
- Is there evidence or proof to support it?
- Is the person qualified to speak about the topic?
- Does the person have a personal interest in the topic?

Activity – 5 Ws and 1 H





The 5Ws and 1H activity is a method for thinking critically about an issue. You can use it to ask six key questions about any topic or issue.

Who?	Who said it? Was it someone you can trust? Why?
What?	What did they say? Did they say facts or opinions? Did they leave anything important out?
Where?	Where did they say it? Was it in public or private?

	Were people allowed to express different opinions?
When?	When did they say it? Did they say it to influence a later event? Did they say it in response to a previous event?
Why?	Why did they say it? Were they trying to get other people to think or do something?
How?	How did they say it? Did they use biased or emotional language? If you watched a video did it use any emotional music or effects?

Putting Critical Thinking into Practice

Look at these videos, newspaper articles and websites about the Mediterranean refugee crisis and think critically about what they are saying by answering the 5Ws and 1H questions.

 <p>Click on the image</p>	<p>This video is published by Al Jazeera, a global news broadcaster owned by the government of Qatar. It originally broadcast in Arabic before expanding to English in 2003. Al Jazeera says it is editorially independent from its owners, although this has been disputed by its critics. Al Jazeera is one of the world's largest news organisations alongside the likes of CNN, the BBC and RFI. Many viewers believe it offers an alternative view of the news to broadcasters from North America and Europe.</p>
 <p>Click on the image</p>	<p>This is from the website of Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF). MSF is an 'international, independent, medical humanitarian organisation' providing search, rescue and medical aid ships to assist refugees crossing the Mediterranean Sea. MSF is committed to 'bear witness and speak out' so the public and decision makers become more aware of humanitarian emergencies.</p>
 <p>Click on the image</p>	<p>Mashable is a 'leading global media company that informs, inspires and entertains the digital generation'. It uses social media and new digital technology to share its stories.</p>
	<p>The Daily Express is a British tabloid newspaper. Its editorial position is frequently on the 'right wing' of British politics.</p>

Click on the image

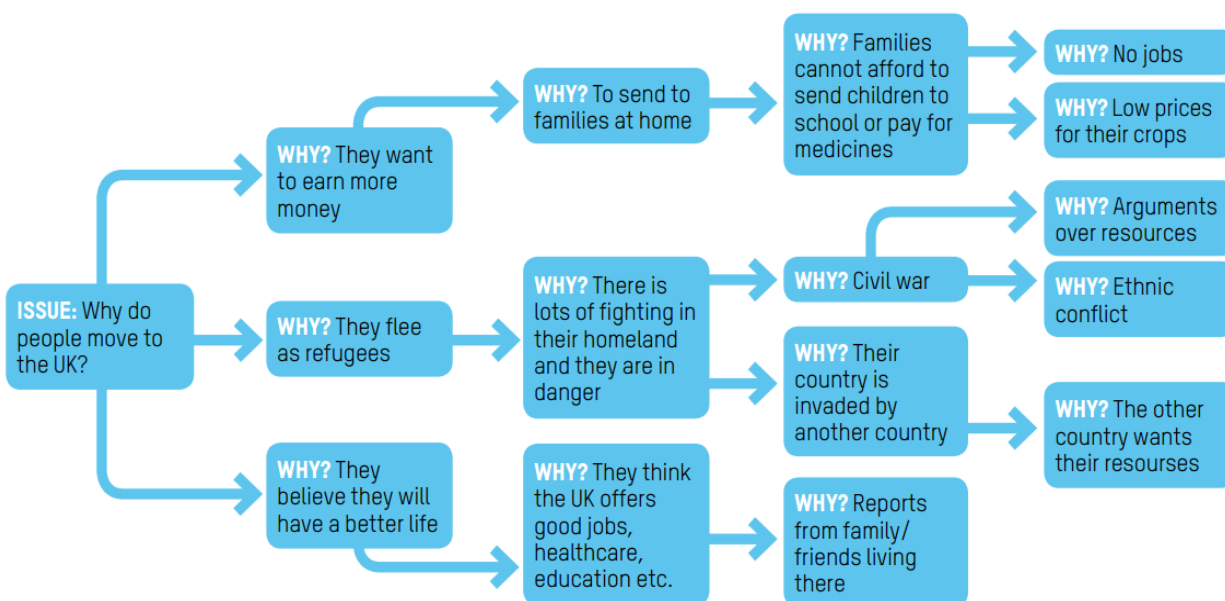
- Take notes on a 5W and 1H sheet for each piece of evidence you look at. Have your opinions and judgements about the evidence changed as a result of thinking more critically?

5Ws and 1H	
Who?	
What?	
Where?	
When?	
Why?	
How?	

Why – Why – Why Chain

A Why-Why-Why chain helps you to think beyond the first things that come into your mind and begin to examine an issue in greater depth and detail.

This is an example of a Why-Why-Why chain asking the question: *Why do people move to the UK from overseas?*

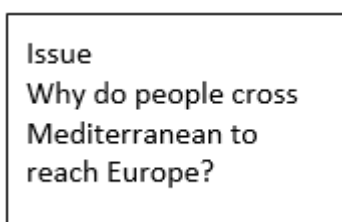


Adapted from Oxfam GB's 2015 [Global Citizenship Guide for Teachers](#).

Activity

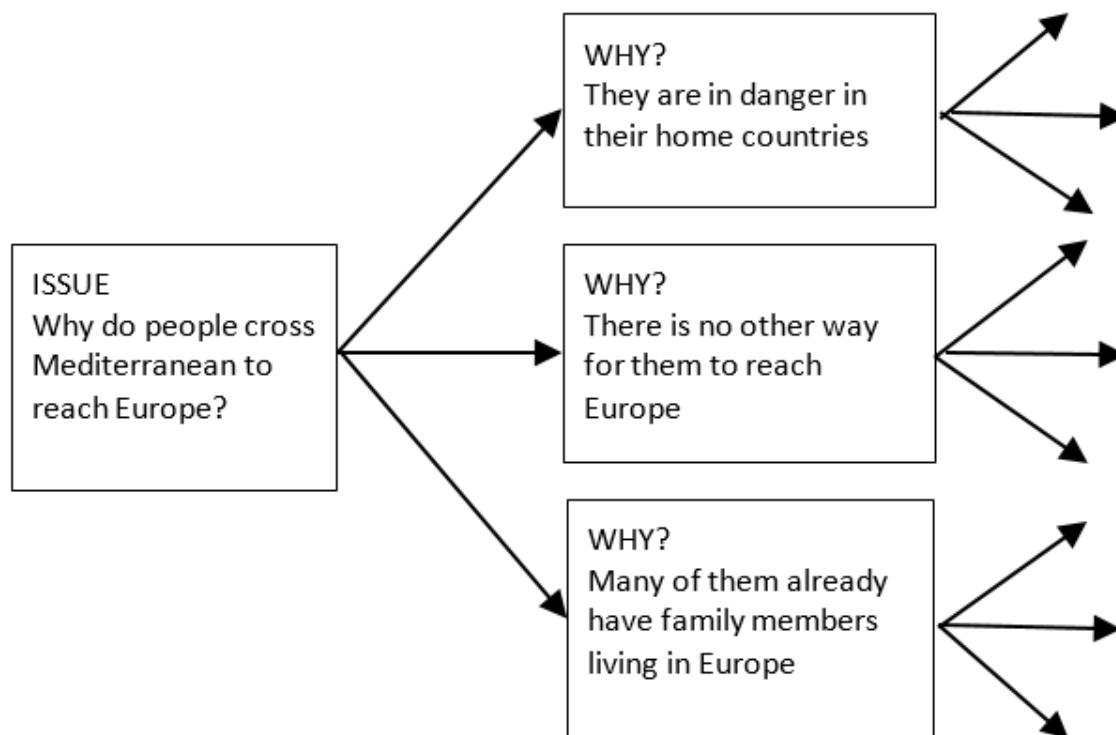
Now try a Why-Why-Why chain for yourselves. You can do this activity by yourself but it's better to do it with two or three other people.

Begin by writing a question on the left hand side of a large piece of paper. For example, *Why do people cross the Mediterranean to reach Europe?*



Next, write down the **three** most important *reasons why* you can think of, to the right of the issue and link them with arrows. The direction of each arrow shows you believe that the issue at the end of the arrow is a *reason why* the first issue occurs.

Your Why-Why-Why chain should begin to look something like this:



These three answers now become new issues that you try to answer with as many *reasons why* as you can think of. Repeat this process as many times as you can and use arrows to show how the issues are linked. When you finish you should understand how complex your issue is and that events often have many interlinked causes.