The Use of Critical Thinking Skills
In Literary Analysis

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ABSTRACT In this article, the authors argue that a successful class in literature should not merely confine itself to traditional classroom methodology in which students follow the teacher's cues. Instead, the instructor should enable the students to exercise their critical thinking skills in interpreting a text. By applying specific cognitive skills in a systematic manner when analyzing literary works, students learn not only to substantiate their interpretations through well-reasoned arguments but also to become aware of the reasoning process itself.

"True teachers use themselves as bridges over which they invite their students to cross; then, having facilitated their crossing, joyfully collapse, encouraging them to create bridges of their own."

—Nikos Kazantzakis

Introduction
Although much has been written about critical thinking skills, college freshmen are still unable to analyze an issue and support an opinion on that issue by providing cohesive reasoning (Paul 1990, 8; Stonewater 1980, 38). How can we help our students to develop their cognitive skills so that they can arrive at well-reasoned solutions to academic as well as everyday problems? We will attempt to answer that question by (a) elucidating the objectives of applying critical thinking in the foreign language classroom, (b) defining critical thinking skills, and (c) demonstrating their application in the reading of foreign language literary texts at the undergraduate level.

Ruggiero (1988, 2) defines critical thinking as "any mental activity that helps formulate or solve a problem, make a decision, or fulfill a desire to understand; it is a searching for answers, a reaching for meaning." Critical thinking involves not only discovering meaning in a work but also substantiating an interpretation by carefully reading and weighing all the "evidence" in the text, by analyzing that evidence in a logical manner, and by drawing well-reasoned conclusions from the material. Paul (1990, ii), Siegel (1988, 33), and Mayfield (1987, 6), among others, define critical thinking as a process that emphasizes the examination and evaluation of information to decide its reliability or worth. Critical thinking also entails the reconciliation of opposites and the interrelation of information. In an analysis of the relationship among various components in a text, readers may confront information that appears to be contradictory and will need to reconcile these differences in their interpretive framework. This approach will assist readers in the twofold task of dealing with the linguistic difficulties of the foreign-language literary work and interpreting the text.

This rational approach requires a methodological shift from traditional teaching in which students are often disinterested listeners to active participants in the classroom. This shift involves the change from a didactic paradigm in which students are passive recipients of information to a critically reflective one, in which they actively analyze and assess knowledge by engaging in a process of exploration and evaluation.

This trend in education is not new. Twenty-
four hundred years ago, Socrates' probing interrogation demonstrated students' inability to justify their claims with rational arguments (Paul 1990, 2). By asking pointed questions, he taught students to become independent thinkers. Socrates' concerns still are valid in the twentieth century. Fifty years ago, the psychologist Jean Piaget argued that true learning consists not in the memorization of facts, but rather in the constructing of knowledge (Resnick and Klopfer 1986). In the 1980s, the teaching of critical thinking at the high-school level (Grant 1988) and at the university level (Stonewater 1980, 33-57) developed quickly. Although still scarce in the late 1970s, critical thinking programs had developed considerably by the mid-1980s. A two-volume study conducted by the National Institute of Education (Segal, Chipman, and Glaser 1985) traces the substantial growth of the "thinking skills movement" from 1985.

Whether critical thinking should be taught as a separate or core subject of the curriculum has been a much-debated issue (Adams and Hamm 1990, 38). Norris (1992, 1-2), for example, favors making critical thinking a separate course of the curriculum whose content can be transferred to other courses. Ruggiero (1988, 9-13) and McPeck (1990, 13, 34) support teaching critical thinking in all disciplines. In this article, we support the latter view. We believe that instructors can assist students in developing critical thinking skills in order to analyze the content of specific subject. Students can also apply the reasoning process learned in this approach to other subjects and to everyday situations, which allows for "maximized transfer" (McPeck 1990, 13).

Several scholars have argued for the application of critical thinking strategies in the reading of literature. Bretz and Persin 1987, 165-170), for example, discuss applying critical approaches to a literary text. Instead of searching for the one "correct" meaning in a text, students are encouraged to discover a multiplicity of meanings by applying the critical approach. Carrell (1984, 332-343) and Bernhardt (1984, 322-331) argue for the building and activation of students' background knowledge in their comprehension of a text. Kramsch (1985, 356-66) discusses how students can discover an author's creation of meaning(s) in a text and traces the process through which they as readers reconstruct potential meanings. Other scholars contend that students should integrate their life experiences into their reading of foreign literature (Swaffar 1985, 15-34). Davis (1989, 420-428) applies the findings of Wolfgang Iser's reader-response theory in his discussion of students' reading of a foreign language text.

The critical approach discussed in this article offers a systematic strategy in analyzing three components of a literary text in a foreign language—linguistic features, character analysis, and evaluation of a narrator's reliability. The critical thinking skills outlined below provide a methodical approach to the study of a text that increases students' self-awareness of their reasoning process. As Davis (1989, 424) has noted, the development of metacognition, or consciousness of the comprehension process, cultivates reading comprehension. In particular, readers in the foreign language classroom learn to evaluate such linguistic features as grammar, vocabulary, and syntax. By analyzing the grammatical, syntactic, and semantic features of key passages, students develop a greater command of the language and become more effective thinkers (Moore, McCann, and McCann 1985, 15), writers (Cooley 1993, 3-47), and readers (Paul 1990, 503).

Further, critical thinking helps students gain confidence in the interpretation of literary works. This can be done by encouraging students to draw their own conclusions by using their own rational faculties (Paul 1990, 553) regarding such literary elements as character, theme, and narrator. This process, which includes students' weighing opposing viewpoints, assessing facts and ideas, and drawing conclusions about issues presented in the text, provides students with "higher order learning" (Paul 1990, 551) that enables them to gain a deeper understanding of the work.

The approach we will use in our analysis of the linguistic and literary features of a text is based upon the core thinking skills discussed
by Adams and Hamm (1990, 41-2), which include: 1. focusing skills (identifying and recognizing a problem); 2. information gathering skills (obtaining information, forming questions, and clarifying issues); 3. remembering skills (information storage and retrieval); 4. organizing skills (comparing, classifying, and ordering information); 5. analyzing skills (classifying and examining information or relationships. This includes grasping the main idea, finding errors of analysis, and identifying patterns); 6. generating skills (using prior knowledge to add information beyond what is given including connecting new ideas, inferring, predicting); 7. integrating skills (solving, understanding, forming principles, and creating compositions. This stage includes summarizing, combining information, deleting unnecessary material, outlining, and restructuring the material to incorporate new information); 8. evaluating skills (assessing the reasonableness and quality of ideas, such as establishing criteria and verifying data).

These critical thinking skills enable the student of literature not only to analyze but also to integrate knowledge by showing the interrelationship of various themes and motifs within the work. The application of these skills also teaches the student to evaluate multiple viewpoints and promotes the transference and application of knowledge from and to different disciplines. This teaching approach enhances creative thinking by encouraging students to discover alternative routes to solving problems and respecting various interpretations of the facts. They can apply this flexibility in reasoning and tolerance of other perspectives when solving problems in everyday life.

**Character Analysis**

The initial stage of any literary analysis involves an examination of character, which contributes to a study of plot development. Any interpretation of character will include an observation and explanation of his/her appearance, speech, behavior, and the commentary of other characters or the narrator about the protagonist. Since, at this stage, students may still be grappling with the linguistic features of the text, a linguistic analysis is the most beneficial approach for understanding the story. In this section, we will demonstrate how to use critical thinking skills in our dissection of a literary text. We will examine the syntax, semantics, and figurative language of the character’s speech. This type of linguistic investigation can be applied to the study of a character’s appearance and behavior and to any commentary in the text.

Ferré’s short story “Juan Bobo va a oír misa”/“Juan Bobo Goes to Mass” (1981) focuses on a poor, retarded boy who mistakes a Mass for a party and is beaten by worshippers for attempting to eat some of the hosts. A linguistic analysis of his speech reveals his simple character and social class, which make him all the more endearing to the reader. This sympathy toward Bobo intensifies the reader’s indignation at the crowd’s brutality and increases the reader’s disapproval of the church and, by extension, of a hypocritical Christian society. Thus, what has begun as a linguistic analysis of a character’s speech develops into an interpretation of the text as a critique of society.

Before students read the story, the instructor planned a twofold approach to the analysis of the excerpt. First, she tapped their background knowledge of the Catholic Mass. Background information (Hadley 1993, 131-137; Carrel 1984, 332-343; and Adams and Collins 1979, 1-22) enhances students’ comprehension by helping them anticipate and understand issues discussed in the text. Second, the instructor prepared a plan of decoding strategies (focusing on grammatical structures, word-meaning, etc.), which helped less proficient readers, and “global” strategies (textual organization and overall meaning) for more proficient readers. This approach made students aware of the process of the linguistic analysis.

Before starting the analysis of a selected excerpt, the instructor wrote on the blackboard the issue to be solved: How do syntax, semantics, and figurative language depict Bobo’s character? (See Appendix A.) First, students learned to apply focusing skills, which clarified issues of language and meaning by defin-
ing terms and identifying problems. General questions posed by the teacher helped students focus on particular linguistic features and triggered their analytical thinking about these features. Since Bobo speaks in simple language and in dialect, which reveals both his mental deficiency and lower social status, the professor posed such questions as: What particular words or sentences draw your attention? What do you notice about the vocabulary, sentence structure, and spelling? Students quickly noticed such words as "jincha" and the misspelling "terminao." Jotting down the meaning of words or linguistic structures enhanced their writing skills. This integration of listening, reading, and writing promoted students' foreign language skills and their understanding of literature.

Next, students applied information gathering skills that helped them select relevant linguistic features in Bobo's language. Readers focused, for example, on the protagonist's Puerto Rican dialect. His vocabulary ("mai" and "jincha"), particular pronunciation ("terminao" for "terminado"), and use of exclamatory interjections drew students' attention to his simple origins. Thus, linguistic, cultural, and reading competence complement each other (King 1990, 65-70; Evans 1993, 39-48; and Purcell 1988, 1924).

Students employed analyzing skills to examine syntax and figurative language that they selected as significant in their character study. Readers answered such general questions as: What kind of sentences does the author use: simple, compound, or complex? What is their syntactical pattern? His unsophisticated and repetitive syntax, for example, portrays Bobo's rural background. Moreover, the absence of all figurative language—symbols, metaphors, similes, and other figures of speech—underscores his simple-mindedness. Extensive note-taking of ideas discussed in class promoted students' independent use of the language and furnished them with material for the following homework assignment.

Next, students employed generating skills (connecting, inferring, and elaborating upon ideas already discussed) to elucidate the character. The instructor's question—Why does Ferré use this type of language?—elicits students' responses dealing with Bobo's personality, levels of intelligence, and social status.

Finally, students applied evaluating skills to verify their conclusions about Bobo. Students searched in the text for further examples of his personality traits and investigated how other literary features (tone, other characters, and the narrator's commentary) contribute to the creation of Bobo's image. Students answered in Spanish a short questionnaire on Bobo's speech and wrote a brief summary of the main ideas discussed, which tested both their linguistic comprehension of the text and their understanding of the analytical thinking process.

By employing these core thinking skills in their linguistic analysis, students not only enhanced their listening, reading, speaking, and writing skills but also learned to recognize the tools an author employs to create a portrait of a character. Moreover, these steps can be used to analyze other aspects of the text such as plot, theme, and narrator.

In the next two sections, we will analyze the theme and the narrator of a novel that invites a literary rather than a linguistic analysis. Although a literary explication of a prose work also involves an analysis of its language, we shall move beyond this level and discuss an interpretation of the text's meaning or main point.

**Theme Analysis**

Even though linguistic analysis is crucial to understanding the text, thematic analysis is also fundamental to any study of a literary work. The comparison of the treatment of an issue in other disciplines with that in the literary text can serve as an effective approach in analyzing a theme. By integrating knowledge gleaned from other subjects and life experiences into an explication of the text, students become aware of the interconnection between classroom work with other fields and their own lives.

We applied our thematic analysis to Rosa Montero's short novel *Amado amo/Beloved Master* (1988). By employing critical thinking, students formulated logical and creative an-
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swers to the novel's main theme. To accomplish this literary objective, we interpreted this novel from sociological, psychological, and Marxist-feminist perspectives, which allowed students to become familiar with various literary theories and alternative evaluations for the same events or issues.

The novel explores the theme of power in Golden Line, a multinational American business in Spain. To protect their jobs and advance their careers, employees slander and betray each other. Although the company mistreats both sexes, the exploitation of women is especially severe, since neither the company's ethics nor the machismo of the male employees acknowledges female rights.

Through questions, newspapers articles, or other tasks, the instructor elicited students' background knowledge on the corporate world and its treatment of women. This preliminary work helped students understand the content of the literary text as well as triggered critical thinking by finding relationships between the text and the real world.

A brief discussion of the plot to clarify the main actions of the novel led to an analysis of female exploitation. The teacher wrote on the blackboard: "How are female employees treated in the corporate world?" in order to remind students of the goal of their discussion. First, individually or in groups, the class identified and focused on the social, historical, and economic factors in the plot that influence the lives of the female characters. Readers concentrated, for example, on the female protagonists' lack of assertiveness, their servient dependence on men in Spanish society, and their stagnant position in their jobs (see Appendix B).

Next, students gathered additional information from other disciplines such as history, economics, and psychology. Individually or in groups, students researched a specific topic for homework. For example, they conducted research on Franco's dictatorship, on the social condition of women in Spain in the twentieth century, on psychological issues (the Oedipus complex, the ego, and the superego) and on the influence of Marxist ideology on post-Civil War Spain. Other techniques in gathering information included interviewing specialists in other disciplines, listening to lectures, viewing films, and participating in discussions. Depending on the difficulty of the topics, students gave five- to fifteen-minute oral reports in Spanish on their findings. The presenters furnished students with a questionnaire to help them focus on the main ideas of the presentations while practicing their listening, reading, and writing skills. This transference and application of knowledge to the literary text enabled students to practice such reasoning skills as comparing, classifying, and organizing information from various subjects as well as the oral and writing skills of the foreign language.

In the next stage, students employed analyzing skills to assess the information gathered and select the most relevant. The instructor led a brief class discussion and provided the class with questionnaires to help them apply their findings to the analysis of the text. Using specific approaches (Marxist-feminist or sociological), small groups identified how these critical perspectives apply to the novel. For example, the students who had investigated Marxist-feminist ideology examined the effects of the sexually and economically exploitative capitalist system in the text. Students also investigated the conflicts arising from social class (the wealthy executives and the middle-income employees) and from gender inequity (the exploitation of the female employees by the male employers). To share their findings with the class, the groups gave brief oral presentations and conducted class discussions. On occasion, the groups also submitted a one-page written report, which the instructor corrected and duplicated for the class.

Depending on the difficulty of the topic, the instructor can also expand students' research by presenting a short lecture. In our case, the teacher's expositions on the psychological approach to the text helped students understand the female characters' submissiveness to employers and husbands.

Using the information obtained in the analysis of the text, students generated possible ex-
plannations for female victimization. From the Marxist-feminist approach, the class derived political, economic, and social answers to issues in the text. From the psychological approach, the readers gained knowledge about the personality traits, modes of awareness (rational, instinctual, emotional, instinctive), and moral stature of the characters (Eastman 1965, 20-29). Students’ explanations consisting of just one or two lines were written on the blackboard.

In the final stage, the class evaluated the accuracy, relevance, and validity of their explanations by finding in the text additional examples and thematic patterns to support their view. These explanations led to class discussions and debates to establish their weaknesses and strengths. After the discussion, the instructor designed a writing assignment (a summary, narrative, or essay) to help students bridge the gap between critical thinking and writing.

The sociological, Marxist-feminist, and the psychological approaches added multiple perspectives to the interpretation of the text. Most importantly, this interdisciplinary, analytic interpretation engaged students in listening, reading, speaking, and writing in the foreign language as well as in reasoning through their findings and explanations.

**Narrator**

In the fourth undergraduate year when novels and short novels are read, students analyze the work’s narrator, usually the text’s most complex narrative element, as well as the plot, characters, and themes. Because of his/her unreliability, for example, the analysis of the narrator requires more sophisticated thinking skills and more guidance from the instructor. After establishing the type of narrator—first or third person, omniscient, figurative, etc.—readers analyze such factors as the narrator’s reliability in relating a story, which may include deliberate manipulation of the “facts.” The narrator’s biases for or against certain characters as well as his or her worldview (scientific, religious, political, etc.) and emotions (such as jealousy, anger, love) may color his/her interpretation of the story’s events. Such narrators often have committed a crime or sin of omission and attempt to confess to the reader. This narrative can be unreliable because the narrator, who often speaks in the first person, may be giving a biased interpretation of past occurrences to put himself/herself in the best light. Such obviously unreliable narrators provide the best opportunity for students to question and examine the veracity of their narratives, because the narrator’s blatant techniques of manipulation, which are often motivated by guilt, are usually the easiest to discern, analyze, and explain.

Two such unreliable narrators are Artemio Cruz, the ruthless, wealthy businessman in Carlos Fuentes’ novel *The Death of Artemio Cruz* (1991) and Don Casmurro, an aging widower whose jealousy destroys his family, in the novel with the same name by Machado Assis (1966). In the former novel, Cruz is dying in a hospital and recounts his youthful adventures as a rebel and his later exploits as an unscrupulous businessman. In the latter, Don Casmurro recounts his passionate love for, and marriage to, the beautiful Capitu and attempts to justify his exiling her and their son forever by claiming that she committed adultery. Since readers only have Casmurro’s version of events, it remains a mystery whether Capitu actually had an affair or not.

In the initial stage of reading, the instructor asked students to focus on identifying the type of narrator in the text, in particular whether s/he is reliable or unreliable or harbors any biases, worldviews, or strong emotions that may slant his/her depiction of events. The instructor then listed on a study sheet typical ways in which a writer furnishes a reader with significant information about the narrator, often in the initial chapters. This list (see Appendix C) was used as a guide that enabled students to read novels more critically. First, students learned that names, for example, may indicate something about a narrator/protagonist’s personality. A “casmurro” means a “morose, tight-lipped man withdrawn within himself.” In Assis’s day “casmurro” meant “obstinate, stubborn, and wrong-headed.” Moreover, “dom” is
a titular prefix to the name of a member of nobility and is derived from the Latin "dominus," which, as a title, means "master." All these attributes describe Santiago, Assis's protagonist, who receives Dom Casmurro as a nickname. Furthermore, students asked why an obstinate, tight-lipped, withdrawn man suddenly feels compelled to write his life story. This questioning led them to search for the events in his past that triggered the narrative.

Second, a narrator's initial description of himself frequently will set the tone for the rest of the novel. Cruz's perception of himself reflected in the squares of glass of a woman's handbag not only reveals his hidden rage, a driving force in his life, but also anticipates the rather fragmented narrative of his life, which consists of flashbacks from significant moments of his past:

Soy este ojo. Soy esto. Soy este viejo con las facciones partidas por los cuadros desiguales del vidrio. soy este ojo. soy este ojo. soy este ojo surcido por las raíces de una cólera acumulada, vieja, olvidada, siempre actual. Soy este ojo abultado y verde entre los párpados. (1982, 9)

Third, the interaction between the narrator and other characters often supplies a clue to his nature. In the first chapter of Fuentes' novel, we learn that Cruz's relatives believe he is not really ill, but merely "faking it." This assumption indirectly reveals Cruz's rather duplicitous life—although he remains married, he carries on discreet affairs—and may cause the reader to wonder about the veracity of his story. Finally, the narrator himself may sprinkle hints throughout the work that his word is not completely reliable. Casmurro, for example, notes the influence of daydreams on memory (58) and later admits the strong role that his imagination has played in his life (84). These statements, therefore, can be read as warnings that daydreams, wishful thinking, even illusions, may color the aging narrator's story. There are, of course, other ways in which an author warns readers to take the narrator's version of events with a grain of salt and the teacher can add them to this list.

Once the class defined the type of narrator they were dealing with, students gathered information substantiating their hypothesis. Once again, the instructor supplied a general list of ways in which an author paints a portrait of a narrator (and a character). In these two novels, students searched for character traits already existing in the narrator's childhood or key events, such as traumas, disappointments, significant mentors, even historical events, that exercised a powerful effect on the narrator's personality. Dom Casmurro already exhibited fits of jealousy in his adolescence—even if someone merely admired Capitu's great beauty he was violently jealous (147). The death of his first love, Regina, and his participation in the Mexican Revolution constitute pivotal experiences in Cruz's youth and help the reader to understand his coldness toward others.

In the next stage of their analysis, students remembered key events and character attributes from the literary text and organized the occurrences and individual traits they considered most significant for their reconstruction of the narrator's personality. They ordered these factors in a sequence from most influential to least important. Dom Casmurro's numerous statements regarding his unreliability as a storyteller and his insecurity and jealousy serve as his two central attributes as a narrator that color his entire narrative.

Students' organization of their collected material led to an analysis of that material, which constitutes the heart of critical thinking (Adams and Hamm 1990, 17). The prioritizing of various facts compelled students to determine which components they considered most significant and to argue about and analyze why those elements are significant. Elements of analysis include "recognizing and articulating attributes and component parts, focusing on details and structure, identifying relationships and patterns, grasping a central idea, and finding errors" (Adams & Hamm 1990, 17). Students' collected material included the numerous deprivations and hard-
ships that Cruz must undergo, particularly his relationships with women. A careful analysis of this material shed new light on Cruz’s role as a narrator. Because these personal relationships constitute formative experiences of his life, they also influence his reliability as a narrator in depicting other characters, particularly women.

The instructor assisted students in their analysis by pointing out various techniques that a writer often employs to signal to the reader important themes. The repetition of a particular idea, image, or event can serve as one technique that draws the reader’s attention to its significance. In Don Casmurro, students discovered that the protagonist’s self-reflective statements on his role as a narrator undermine the veracity of his story. As they were reading the novel, students wrote down words and phrases such as “verisimilitude,” “fantasies,” “imagination,” “veracity of the author,” and “illusion” that cast doubt on the accuracy of his narrative and his interpretation of events. The narrator may also juxtapose contrasting scenes in order to jolt the reader into noticing a significant connection between seemingly unrelated events. Small discussion groups analyzed the effect of Regina’s death on Artemio Cruz, for instance, and found an explanation for his ruthlessness. Immediately after he remembers discovering Regina’s corpse, which, the narrator notes, was the first time he had cried since becoming a man (75), Cruz thinks about his wife and daughter whom he treats with disdain because of their greediness. At this time he also remembers an episode in which he forbids a reporter to print news of police repression in a newspaper he owns. By examining the juxtaposition of these scenes (see Appendix D), students recognized that the narrator inadvertently reveals the effect of this early tragedy on his character development. Regina’s brutal death hardens him and explains his later heartlessness toward his family and his indifference to the oppressed protesters.

An analysis of such key passages in a work, pivotal events the narrator selects to recount, and the narrator’s own traits steered students into applying their generating skills, which involves, among other operations, connecting ideas, inferring, making comparisons, and providing explanations (Adams and Hamm 1990, 17). In the case of Don Casmurro, students connected the numerous references to his earlier tendency toward possessiveness and violence with his later jealousy of his wife’s alleged “lover” and his treatment of her and their child. While analyzing Cruz’s attitude toward his family and acquaintances, students concluded that early tragedies—childhood poverty, the brutality of war, the loss of significant loved ones—shaped his character. He became a bitter man, incapable of loving and indifferent to the oppressed.

The final stages of any interpretation involve integrating skills that include summarizing information, outlining, deleting unnecessary material, and restructuring an argument to incorporate new information as well as an evaluation of ideas in which students assess the reasonableness and quality of ideas (Adams and Hamm 1990, 17-18). In an analysis of these two novels, small groups recapitulated their initial impressions of the narrators by writing a brief summary in which they outlined their line of reasoning in their first impressions of the narrator and incorporated new facts that altered these impressions. The final scenes depicting Cruz’s deprived childhood, for example, soften his image and awaken more sympathy in the reader toward him. When evaluating their portraits of the narrators, students decided if they had arrived at an accurate and complete description of them and discovered how the image they had created influenced their reading of the text.

Conclusion

In this paper, it has been demonstrated how the teacher can integrate critical thinking skills into a linguistic and literary analysis of a prose work. The eight core critical thinking skills that we have employed can be used, however, in an analysis of any text, whether it is a literary text, an article in a newspaper or journal, a television news story or commercial, or a film. By teaching students a specific
subject, as well as arming them with skills that can be applied in everyday life, an instructor enables students to become educated citizens who are able to critically evaluate the numerous messages that bombard them in everyday life, whether they are commercial advertisements urging them to buy a certain product or political campaign advertisements urging them to buy into the agenda of a particular candidate. As Ruggiero (1988, 8) states, "Thinking must be taught not just because it is the fundamental academic skill, but because it is the fundamental coping mechanism, the means by which we ensure people's mental health and enable them to play a constructive role in society."

NOTES
2 For more information on didactic vs. critical theory, see Paul (1990, 21-28).
3 The findings of this study are briefly discussed in McPeck (1990, 34).
4 James N. Davis (422) argues that, in the recreation of a text, a reader needs more than just "literary competence," which involves both linguistic and historical/cultural knowledge and the understanding of literary conventions inherent in a genre. The reader must also know how to produce meaning through "the interaction between the textual instructions and the reader's own life experiences."
5 Marva Barnett's study "Teaching Reading Strategies: How Methodology Affects Language Course Articulation" shows that students trained to use reading strategies during the second semester (1988, 109-116) "perform better in the third semester than their untrained peers."
6 Note that only those critical thinking skills relevant to this analysis are included.
7 The translations into English have been done by the authors.
8 For more information on metacognitive awareness in second language reading, see Carrell (1989, 121-134).
9 Marva Barnett's study "Syntactic and Lexical/Semantic Skill in Foreign Language Reading: Importance and Interaction" (1986, 343-49) investigates the importance of lexical/semantic knowledge to reading comprehension.
10 Ruggiero (1988, 38-39) discusses in more depth the three sources of information, "ourselves, the people around us, and authorities."
11 For an explanation of Marxist feminism, see A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature by Wilfred Guerin et al. (1992, 194-96).
12 For an explanation of the psychological approach, see Guerin et al., Chapter Three (1992).
13 This information was provided in the translator's introduction to the novel (v).

REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

Sample (Advanced, Third- and Fourth-Year College Students)
Character Analysis: Linguistic Approach

"¡Avelaría purísima, pero que salao está este sanccho! ¡Si se comieron tó el guiso y no me dejaron más quel agua! ..............................................
¡Ay Mai, si supiera qué misa más móndriga he oído! ¡Si me siento como si no me hubiera ni desayunao! Llegué a la iglesia y esperé con mucha paciencia a que la ceremonia hubiese terminao. Pero cuando llegó la hora de la comia, me quisieron dal un caldero e agua salá y una galleta bien jincha, y cuando les pedí que me dieran más, me molieron las espaldas a palos. ¡Ahora sí que fui a paral aonde no era!"

Objectives: (a) Students deduce meaning from grammatical, syntactical, and semantic features by applying the following critical thinking skills: focusing, information gathering, analyzing, generating and evaluating skills. (b) Students enhance their listening comprehension and writing skills by engaging in note-taking.

Student Tasks: (a) Students read the excerpt above and, guided by the instructor’s questions, apply the core thinking skills to linguistic analysis (for examples of these questions, see the section titled “Character Analysis” in this study). (b) Students take notes of the ideas discussed.

Follow-up Task: Students answer a questionnaire or write a paragraph about the significance of Bobo’s language in the portrayal of his character.

APPENDIX B

Sample (Advanced, Third- and Fourth-Year College Students) Theme Analysis

Objective: To help students formulate logical and creative answers to the novel’s theme and interpret it from a sociological, psychological, and Marxist-feminist approach.

Student Tasks

I. To focus in the social, historical, and economic topics of the plot, students answer the following questions:
1. What was the sociopolitical climate of the 1970s and 1980s in Spain?
2. What was the position of women in the post-Franco corporate world?

II. A. To gather information from other disciplines (history, economics, psychology), students conduct research, interview specialists, listen to lectures, view films, and participate in discussions.
B. To share their findings with the class, students present oral reports.

III. To apply their findings to the analysis of the text, students answer the following questions:
1. What kinds of exploitation stem from the capitalist system?
2. What social classes are represented in the novel? What is their role in the corporate world? in life? What causes are mainly responsible for the conflicts between the classes, and how? Is there a possible solution?
3. What causes the strifes between the genders? Can the characters overcome their frustrating circumstances? How and why?
4. What are the personality traits of the main characters? Their virtues and/or vices? Through what modes of awareness do the characters respond to their circumstances: rational, instinctual, emotional?

IV. To generate explanations for female victimization in the corporate world, students answer the following questions: What brings about the victimization of women in the corporate world? Why?

V. To evaluate the validity of their explanations, students (a) find further examples in the text, (b) locate thematic patterns, and (c) participate in discussions and debates.

VI. Students do a writing assignment (a narrative, summary, or essay).

APPENDIX C

Sample (Advanced. Fourth-Year, Undergraduate-Level)

Questions on the Nature of the Narrator

Objectives: Students form an opinion concerning the narrator's reliability and discover techniques with which the author reveals the narrator's point of view, biases, unreliability, etc.

Student Task: Students read the following questions keeping them in mind as they read the novel. They write down any relevant information concerning the narrator (along with the page number) under the appropriate question.

1. What type of narrator do we have? Is the narrator omniscient (all-knowing) or figurative (a character)? Does s/he speak in first or third person?
2. Is the story narrated retrospectively? If so, when do the fictional events take place and when is the story itself being narrated?
3. If the narrator is also a character, does his/her name have any significance or suggest any personality traits?
4. Does the narrator describe him/herself? If so, is there any significant information about the narrator that may reveal his or her point of view, biases, beliefs?
5. Does the narrator favor certain characters or is s/he critical of particular characters? How do we know his/her attitude?
6. If the narrator is also a fictional character, describe his/her childhood. Are there any significant or traumatic events that shape his/her world view or attitude toward life and others? Is there one central event that altered the narrator's personality? (Often a narrator will frequently refer to one or more formative events in his/her life.) If so, describe the event and how it changed the narrator's perception of life and others.
7. Are there any apparent discrepancies, inaccuracies, gaps of information, exaggerations or understatements, or implausible explanations in the narrator's story? Does the narrator appear to manipulate "facts" in any other way? If so, which events does the narrator appear to avoid or distort? How does s/he depict these events and why would s/he distort the "facts"? Do you think these events may have caused the narrator pain or guilt?
APPENDIX D

Sample (Advanced, Fourth Year, Undergraduate Level)
A Close Reading Exercise: The Manipulation of Information

Objectives: Students learn how to read a literary text more carefully by examining the narrator’s or author’s manipulation of information. Often the order in which events are presented tells the reader something about the connection between these events (such as a cause/effect relationship).

Student Task: One student in the group reads the following passage out loud. Students pay attention to the order in which events are narrated and think about any possible connection among these occurrences. In particular, do students think there is any relationship between Regina’s brutal death and Cruz’s quest for money and power, his bitterness toward his wife Catalina and daughter Teresa, and his indifference toward the strikers? Students brainstorm ideas. One student writes down all the ideas in a list. Then the group returns to the list and decides which ideas form the most convincing argument.

Reading Passage (Abridged Version)

El dedo del joven teniente Aparicio recorrió el montón de árboles cercanos a la barranca: las sogas de henequén, mal hechas, crudas, arrancaban, todavía, sangre a los cuellos; pero los ojos abiertos, las lenguas moradas, los cuerpos inánimes apenas mecidos por el viento que soplaba de la sierra, estaban muertos...

[Cruz] abrazó la falda almidonada de Regina con un grito roto, flemoso: con su primer llanto de hombre...

Yo sobreviví. Regina. ¿Cómo te llamabas? ... Ustedes murieron. Yo sobreviví... Ah, no. No les debo la vida a ustedes. Se la debo a mi orgullo, ¿me oyen? ... No se puede vivir sin orgullo. ¿Caridad? ¿A quién le hubiera servido? ¿Humildad? Tú, Catalina, ¿qué habrías hecho de mi humildad? Con ella me habrías vencido de desprecio, me habrías abandonado...

No se puede vivir sin orgullo. ¿Qué habrías hecho odiándome en la miseria, insultándome en la pobreza? ...

... Díaz: tenga mucho cuidado que no se vaya a filtrar una sola línea sobre la represión de la policía contra estos alborotadores.

*Pero parece que hay un muerto, señor. Además, fue en el centro mismo de la ciudad. Va a ser difícil...

*Nada, nada. Son órdenes de arriba.

*Pero sé que una hoja de los trabajadores va a publicar la noticia.

*¿Y en qué está pensando? ¿No le pago yo para pensar? ¿No le pagan en su ‘fuente’ para pensar? Avise a la Procuraduría para que cierren esa imprenta..."

Fuentes, Carlos. La muerte de Artemio Cruz (80-86)