

# Strategies for Classroom Inquiry

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**Critical and Creative Thinking:  
Strategies for Classroom Inquiry**  
Susan Wilks  
Eleanor Curtain Publishing, 1995

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*reviewed by Berise Heasly*

This is a publication which first and foremost marries historical context, relevant educational theory and practice, with a sensitive understanding of how thinking can be developed within its appropriate cultural milieu today. Intelligent reading by Wilks of the difficulties which face emergent teacher candidates highlight the starting point for those of us who are convinced of the value of all forms of verbal interaction but know the pitfalls of potential conflict in the classroom, in the staffroom, in the community at large. It is necessary to learn to be a participant in a Community of Enquiry.

Susan Wilks has written a lucid, well organised text, explaining the nature and role of enquiry in education, and underlining classroom strategies for philosophical and ethical issues to be undertaken at different points in the universal P-12 curriculum. Wilks situates her work as a comprehensive inspection of all facets of critical and creative thinking, within that concept of education which enhances the students' ability "to value independent and autonomous thinking." (Lipman, 1985)

For the teacher beginning to teach Philosophy as a classroom subject, this publication explains the role of enquiry and gives comprehensive professional advice on encouraging pupil participation. There is valuable content on the teacher's role as the leader of a Community of Enquiry. The needs of ESL and NESB students are attended. There are case studies to give support to the developmental processes of our own classroom progress. Important comment is offered on the business of planning for good questions. This is vital to a teacher's progress and confidence level because there are features of the classroom Community of Enquiry which differ markedly from a general discussion held in today's classrooms.

Finally, and most significantly, there is valuable advice about establishing and valuing philosophy in schools; planning with foresight for sustaining the Community of Enquiry as it begins to flourish; and even units of work set out ready for use. Classroom resources, a comprehensive network list for contacting relevant leaders in other education institutions in Australia, USA, Canada, UK, NZ, Singapore appears. This is accompanied by a satisfying and wide ranging list of References and Further Reading.

As one of the new chums to this significant educational movement, I have found this publication a helpful tool for preparation of classroom work. I am encouraged by the clarity and rationale which addresses the spectrum of needs exhibited by today's generation of young thinkers. I recommend this publication to new and established colleagues with enthusiasm and without reserve. For those colleagues outside the Australian milieu, I would add a caution: it will be helpful to monitor how the activities succeed outside the cultural ambit for which they were first intended. Most would translate to various other cultural and educational classes well. However, it would be a mistake to assume classroom goals without careful reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. (Beckett, 1994)

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