

# Creating New Language Arts Activities

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When creating new activities that foster problem solving, critical thinking, and creative thinking in the language arts, focus should be on the interactive nature of communication. Consider language as a way of thinking and learning.

The ability to think critically and creatively and problem solve are key to cultivating highly developed language skills as both a reader and writer. While these thinking and problem solving activities were developed to stand on their own, you may want to review existing language arts lessons to determine thinking skills may be integrated into these lessons. For example, how might students integrate critical thinking skills to produce high-level responses that illustrate their understanding of a particular text or how might students use their creative thinking skills to produce a piece of writing that demonstrates what they have learned.

Specifically, here are questions that may lead to the focused integration of these skills in language arts.

- Are the skills needed to improve the students' communication through reading and writing?
- Are their opportunities for students to develop their critical thinking, creative thinking and problem solving abilities within the context of the content already taught?
- Are their weaknesses in students' critical, creative or problem solving abilities that need to be addressed?
- How do the use of these thinking skills add a level of depth and complexity to the language arts curriculum?
- What are ways in which students ownership and engagements in their language arts activities might be increased as a result of the integration of training in critical thinking, creative thinking and problem solving.

In each activity, students should:

- focus on the important language art skills. For example, rather than asking students to recall information, students should be asked to respond to the text in a meaningful way. The goal should be to have students develop their communication skills that they read and write.
- focus on important literacy concepts. For example, rather than asking students to identify information in what they read, ask them to make text to text, text to self and text to world connections.
- explore different communication forms in their reading and writing making sure that they explore all genres in both their reading and writing.
- be challenged through high-level questioning that requires students to support their ideas and thoughts.

## Using the Template to Create New Activities

The language arts activities were created using the following template:

### **Objectives**

This section clearly states the content knowledge and thinking skills students should be able to acquire as a result of the activity. The objectives should be written from the point of view of the student, rather than the teacher, and should include language that addresses both the content and the thinking skills.

### **Materials**

This section lists and describes all of the instructional materials, supplies, and equipment a teacher would need to assemble in order to teach the lesson. This would include everything needed by both the teacher and the students for the successful completion of the activity. You may want to have a variety of reading materials reflecting different genres and examples of different writing forms as well for some of the activities. While some of the activities suggest a particular book title, the activities are designed so that other titles may be substituted. For some activities, you may want to have multiple copies of some of the books and activity materials for each student.

### **Introduction and Teaching Suggestions**

This section serves two purposes. First, it introduces students to the content to be explored and engages their interest and curiosity. Since language arts focuses on communication and the various ways that information is communicated, it is crucial to make sure students understand the connections between ideas. Second, this section provides an explanation of the activity and why it was created, suggestions for successful implementation of the activity, and any other information the teacher should know before undertaking the lesson. In this section, it would be helpful to establish the language arts context for the lesson, identifying the communication skills being developed. For example, it would be important for students to know that different genres have characteristics that define the genre. This will facilitate students' sense-making, creating connections, and transfer of knowledge as a result of the activity.

### **Guidance**

This section is the main body of the activity. It includes a detailed explanation of how the students are going to explore and acquire the language arts content and develop the new skill(s) of the lesson, which were articulated in the **Objectives**. This is where essential questions should be listed, exploration activities should be described, and strategies for checking for understanding should be suggested. All steps of the activity should be carefully described, so that someone else could facilitate the lesson, if need be. This section may not provide all of the information but should be viewed as a guideline.

## Practice

In this section of the activity, students apply the information and skill(s) they have just acquired in the **Guidance** section, improving them and internalizing the learning. This section describes the tasks students will perform to demonstrate mastery of both the information of the lesson and skills of the language user.

## Challenge

This section provides an opportunity for students to go beyond the learning they acquired in the **Practice** tasks. It encourages students to apply higher levels of critical and creative thinking, decision-making, and problem-solving than those required in those tasks. This provides an appropriate level of rigor and real-world relevance for students who are able to take advantage of this challenging extension. This section should ask students to do more than transfer the skills to another activity.

The list of classic children's books is included at the end of the document to provide you with a list of suggested books that could be used as the reading materials and stimulus for lessons on critical thinking, creative thinking and problem solving in language arts. Each of these books has characters who model critical and creative thinking and problem solving.

### *Classic Children's Books*

#### **Grades K-3**

Aardema, Verna. *Who's in Rabbit's House?*  
Aesop. *Fables*.  
Atwater, Richard and Florence. *Mr. Popper's Penguins*.  
Bemelmans, Ludwig. *Madeline*.  
Blume, Judy. *Freckle Juice*.  
Brown, Marcia. *Stone Soup*.  
Brown, Margaret Wise. *Goodnight Moon*.  
Brunhoff, Jean de. *The Story of Babar*.  
Burton, Virginia Lee. *Mike Mulligan and His Steam Shovel*.  
Carroll, Lewis. *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*.  
Cleary, Beverly. *The Mouse and the Motorcycle*.  
Collodi, Carlo. *Adventures of Pinocchio*.  
Crews, Donald. *Freight Train*.  
Daugherty, James. *Andy and the Lion*.  
dePaola, Tomie. *Strega Nona*.  
Freeman, Don. *Corduroy*.  
Fritz, Jean. *The Cabin Faced West*.  
Gag, Wanda. *Millions of Cats*.  
Galdone, Paul. *The Three Little Pigs*.  
Goble, Paul. *The Girl Who Loved Wild Horses*.  
Grahame, Kenneth. *The Reluctant Dragon*.  
Gramatky, Hardie. *Little Toot*.

Hoban, Russell. *Bedtime for Frances*.  
Johnson, Crockett. *Harold and the Purple Crayon*.  
Keats, Ezra Jack. *The Snowy Day*.  
Kraus, Robert. *Leo the Late Bloomer*.  
Krauss, Ruth. *The Carrot Seed*.  
Leaf, Munro. *The Story of Ferdinand*.  
Lear, Edward. *A Book of Nonsense*.  
Lionni, Leo. *Frederick*.  
Lobel, Arnold. *Frog and Toad Are Friends*.  
Longfellow, Henry Wadsworth. *Paul Revere's Ride*.  
Lopshire, Robert. *Put Me in the Zoo*.  
Marshall, James. *George and Martha*.  
McCloskey, Robert. *Make Way for Ducklings*.  
McDermott, Gerald. *Anansi the Spider*.  
Milne, A. A. *Winnie-the-Pooh*.  
Parish, Peggy. *Amelia Bedelia*.  
Piper, Watty. *The Little Engine That Could*.  
Potter, Beatrix. *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*.  
Rey, H. A. *Curious George*.  
Selden, George. *The Cricket in Times Square*.  
Sendak, Maurice. *Where the Wild Things Are*.  
Seuss, Dr. *The Cat in the Hat*.  
Slobodkina, Esphyr. *Caps for Sale*.  
Steig, William. *Sylvester and the Magic Pebble*.  
Stevenson, Robert Louis. *A Child's Garden of Verses*.  
Taylor, Sydney. *All-of-a-Kind Family*.  
Thurber, James. *Many Moons*.  
Udry, Janice May. *A Tree is Nice*.  
Van Allsburg, Chris. *The Garden of Abdul Gasazi*.  
Viorst, Judith. *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day*.  
Ward, Lynd. *The Biggest Bear*.  
White, E. B. *Charlotte's Web*.  
Yashima, Taro. *Crow Boy*.  
Zion, Gene. *Harry the Dirty Dog*.  
Zolotow, Charlotte. *William's Doll*.

#### **Grades 4–6**

Alexander, Lloyd. *Chronicles of Prydain*.  
Andersen, Hans Christian. *Fairy Tales*.  
Babbitt, Natalie. *Tuck Everlasting*.  
Baum, L. Frank. *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*.  
Boston, L. M. *The Children of Green Knowe*.  
Brink, Carol Ryrie. *Caddie Woodlawn*.  
Brooks, Gwendolyn. *Bronzeville Boys and Girls*.  
Burnett, Frances Hodgson. *The Secret Garden*.  
Byars, Betsy. *The Summer of the Swans*.  
Cooper, Susan. *The Dark Is Rising Sequence*.

Dodge, Mary Mapes. *Hans Brinker, or the Silver Skates*.  
 Eager, Edward. *Half Magic*.  
 Edmonds, Walter D. *The Matchlock Gun*.  
 Enright, Elizabeth. *Thimble Summer*.  
 Estes, Eleanor. *The Moffats*.  
 Farley, Walter. *The Black Stallion*.  
 Field, Rachel. *Hitty: Her First Hundred Years*.  
 Fitzhugh, Louise. *Harriet the Spy*.  
 George, Jean Craighead. *My Side of the Mountain*.  
 Grahame, Kenneth. *The Wind in the Willows*.  
 Grimm, Jacob and Wilhelm. *The Complete Grimm's Fairy Tales*.  
 Hamilton, Virginia. *The House of Dies Drear*.  
 Henry, Marguerite. *Misty of Chincoteague*.  
 Howe, Deborah. *Bunnacula*.  
 Hughes, Langston. *The Dream Keeper and Other Poems*.  
 Irving, Washington. *Rip Van Winkle*.  
 Juster, Norton. *The Phantom Tollbooth*.  
 Kipling, Rudyard. *The Jungle Book*.  
 Konigsburg, E. L. *From the Mixed-up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler*.  
 Lamb, Charles and Mary. *Tales From Shakespeare*.  
 Lawson, Robert. *Ben and Me*.  
 Lenski, Lois. *Strawberry Girl*.  
 Lester, Julius. *To Be a Slave*.  
 Lewis, C. S. *The Complete Chronicles of Narnia*.  
 Lindgren, Astrid. *Pippi Longstocking*.  
 Lofting, Hugh. *Doctor Dolittle*.  
 Lovelace, Maud Hart. *Betsy-Tacy*.  
 Macaulay, David. *Castle*.  
 MacLachlan, Patricia. *Sarah Plain and Tall*.  
 McCloskey, Robert. *Homer Price*.  
 Merrill, Jean. *The Pushcart War*.  
 Montgomery, L. M. *Anne of Green Gables*.  
 Nesbit, E. *The Railway Children*.  
 North, Sterling. *Rascal*.  
 Norton, Mary. *The Borrowers*.  
 O'Brien, Robert C. *Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of Nimh*.  
 Paterson, Katherine. *Bridge to Terabithia*.  
 Pearce, Philippa. *Tom's Midnight Garden*.  
 Perrault, Charles. *The Complete Fairy Tales*.  
 Sawyer, Ruth. *Roller Skates*.  
 Sewell, Anna. *Black Beauty*.  
 Sharp, Margery. *The Rescuers*.  
 Spyri, Johanna. *Heidi*.  
 Travers, P. L. *Mary Poppins*.  
 Wilder, Laura Ingalls. *Little House on the Prairie*.  
 Wyss, Johann David. *Swiss Family Robinson*.

## Grades 7–8

Alcott, Louisa May. *Little Women*.  
Bagnold, Enid. *National Velvet*.  
Bradbury, Ray. *Fahrenheit 451*.  
Bunyan, John. *The Pilgrim's Progress*.  
Christopher, John. *The White Mountains*.  
Cooper, James Fenimore. *The Last of the Mohicans*.  
Defoe, Daniel. *Robinson Crusoe*.  
Dickens, Charles. *A Christmas Carol*.  
Douglass, Frederick. *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*.  
Doyle, Sir Arthur Conan. *Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*.  
Dumas, Alexandre. *The Count of Monte Cristo*.  
Eckert, Allan W. *Incident at Hawk's Hill*.  
Engdahl, Sylvia Louise. *Enchantress From the Stars*.  
Forbes, Esther. *Johnny Tremain*.  
Forester, C. S. *The Horatio Hornblower Series*.  
Frank, Anne. *Diary of a Young Girl*.  
Frost, Robert. *Poems*.  
George, Jean Craighead. *Julie of the Wolves*.  
Hautzig, Esther. *The Endless Steppe*.  
Hilton, James. *Goodbye, Mr. Chips*.  
Hinton, S. E. *The Outsiders*.  
Hugo, Victor. *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*.  
Hunt, Irene. *Across Five Aprils*.  
Hunter, Mollie. *A Stranger Came Ashore*.  
Irving, Washington. *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*.  
Keith, Harold. *Rifles for Watie*.  
Keller, Helen. *Story of My Life*.  
Kipling, Rudyard. *Kim*.  
LeGuin, Ursula K. *A Wizard of Earthsea*.  
L'Engle, Madeleine. *A Wrinkle in Time*.  
London, Jack. *Call of the Wild*.  
Malory, Sir Thomas. *Le Morte d'Arthur*.  
Mazer, Harry. *The Last Mission*.  
McCaffrey, Anne. *Dragonsong*.  
O'Dell, Scott. *Island of the Blue Dolphins*.  
O'Hara, Mary. *My Friend Flicka*.  
Paterson, Katherine. *Jacob Have I Loved*.  
Peck, Richard. *The Ghost Belonged to Me*.  
Peck, Robert Newton. *A Day No Pigs Would Die*.  
Pyle, Howard. *The Merry Adventures of Robin Hood*.  
Rawlings, Marjorie Kinnan. *The Yearling*.  
Rawls, Wilson. *Where the Red Fern Grows*.  
Reiss, Johanna. *The Upstairs Room*.  
Saint-Exupéry, Antoine de. *The Little Prince*.  
Schaefer, Jack. *Shane*.

Scott, Sir Walter. *Ivanhoe*.  
Shelley, Mary. *Frankenstein*.  
Smith, Betty. *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*.  
Speare, Elizabeth George. *The Witch of Blackbird Pond*.  
Sperry, Armstrong. *Call It Courage*.  
Steinbeck, John. *The Red Pony*.  
Stevenson, Robert Louis. *Treasure Island*.  
Taylor, Mildred D. *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*.  
Tolkien, J. R. R. *The Hobbit*.  
Twain, Mark. *Adventures of Tom Sawyer*.  
Uchida, Yoshiko. *Journey to Topaz*.  
Verne, Jules. *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*.  
Webster, Jean. *Daddy-Long-Legs*.  
Wells, H. G. *War of the Worlds*.  
Wilder, Thornton. *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*.  
Yep, Laurence. *Dragonwings*.  
Zindel, Paul. *The Pigman*.

### **Grades 9–12**

Achebe, Chinua. *Things Fall Apart*.  
Agee, James. *A Death in the Family*.  
Angelou, Maya. *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*.  
Anonymous. *Beowulf*.  
Austen, Jane. *Pride and Prejudice*.  
Baldwin, James. *Go Tell It on the Mountain*.  
Bolt, Robert. *A Man for All Seasons*.  
Brontë, Charlotte. *Jane Eyre*.  
Brontë, Emily. *Wuthering Heights*.  
Buck, Pearl. *The Good Earth*.  
Camus, Albert. *The Stranger*.  
Cather, Willa. *My Ántonia*.  
Cervantes, Miguel de. *Don Quixote*.  
Chaucer, Geoffrey. *The Canterbury Tales*.  
Chekhov, Anton. *The Cherry Orchard*.  
Collins, Wilkie. *The Moonstone*.  
Conrad, Joseph. *Lord Jim*.  
Cormier, Robert. *The Chocolate War*.  
Crane, Stephen. *The Red Badge of Courage*.  
Dante. *The Divine Comedy*.  
Defoe, Daniel. *Moll Flanders*.  
Dickens, Charles. *Great Expectations*.  
Dickinson, Emily. *Poems*.  
Dostoevsky, Fyodor. *Crime and Punishment*.  
Dreiser, Theodore. *An American Tragedy*.  
Eliot, George. *Silas Marner*.  
Eliot, T. S. *Murder in the Cathedral*.

Ellison, Ralph. *Invisible Man*.  
 Emerson, Ralph Waldo. *Essays*.  
 Faulkner, William. *The Sound and the Fury*.  
 Fielding, Henry. *Tom Jones*.  
 Fitzgerald, F. Scott. *The Great Gatsby*.  
 Flaubert, Gustave. *Madame Bovary*.  
 Forster, E. M. *A Passage to India*.  
 Franklin, Benjamin. *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*.  
 Galsworthy, John. *The Forsyte Saga*.  
 Golding, William. *Lord of the Flies*.  
 Graves, Robert. *I, Claudius*.  
 Greene, Graham. *The Power and the Glory*.  
 Hardy, Thomas. *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*.  
 Hawthorne, Nathaniel. *The Scarlet Letter*.  
 Hemingway, Ernest. *For Whom the Bell Tolls*.  
 Henry, O. *Stories*.  
 Hesse, Hermann. *Steppenwolf*.  
 Homer. *The Iliad*.  
 –. *The Odyssey*.  
 Hughes, Langston. *Poems*.  
 Hugo, Victor. *Les Misérables*.  
 Hurston, Zora Neale. *Their Eyes Were Watching God*.  
 Huxley, Aldous. *Brave New World*.  
 Ibsen, Henrik. *A Doll's House*.  
 James, Henry. *The Turn of the Screw*.  
 Joyce, James. *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*.  
 Kafka, Franz. *The Trial*.  
 Keats, John. *Poems*.  
 Kennedy, John F. *Profiles in Courage*.  
 Koestler, Arthur. *Darkness at Noon*.  
 Lawrence, D. H. *Sons and Lovers*.  
 Lawrence, Jerome and Robert E. Lee. *Inherit the Wind*.  
 Lee, Harper. *To Kill a Mockingbird*.  
 Lewis, Sinclair. *Babbitt*.  
 Llewellyn, Richard. *How Green Was My Valley*.  
 Mann, Thomas. *The Magic Mountain*.  
 Marlowe, Christopher. *Dr. Faustus*.  
 Maugham, W. Somerset. *Of Human Bondage*.  
 McCullers, Carson. *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*.  
 Melville, Herman. *Moby-Dick*.  
 Miller, Arthur. *The Crucible*.  
 Monsarrat, Nicholas. *The Cruel Sea*.  
 O'Connor, Flannery. *Wise Blood*.  
 O'Neill, Eugene. *Long Day's Journey into Night*.  
 Orwell, George. *1984*.  
 –. *Animal Farm*.



Pasternak, Boris. *Doctor Zhivago*.  
 Poe, Edgar Allan. *Short stories*.  
 Potok, Chaim. *The Chosen*.  
 Rand, Ayn. *The Fountainhead*.  
 Remarque, Erich Maria. *All Quiet on the Western Front*.  
 Rostand, Edmond. *Cyrano de Bergerac*.  
 Salinger, J. D. *The Catcher in the Rye*.  
 Sandburg, Carl. *Abraham Lincoln*.  
 Sayers, Dorothy L. *The Nine Tailors*.  
 Shakespeare, William. *Hamlet*.  
 –. *King Lear*.  
 –. *Much Ado About Nothing*.  
 –. *Sonnets*.  
 Shaw, George Bernard. *Pygmalion*.  
 Sheridan, Richard Brinsley. *The School for Scandal*.  
 Shute, Nevil. *A Town Like Alice*.  
 Sinclair, Upton. *The Jungle*.  
 Solzhenitsyn, Alexander. *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*.  
 Sophocles. *Oedipus Rex*.  
 Steinbeck, John. *Of Mice and Men*.  
 Stowe, Harriet Beecher. *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.  
 Swift, Jonathan. *Gulliver's Travels*.  
 Thackeray, William Makepeace. *Vanity Fair*.  
 Thoreau, Henry David. *Walden*.  
 Tolkien, J. R. R. *The Lord of the Rings*.  
 Tolstoy, Leo. *Anna Karenina*.  
 Trollope, Anthony. *Barchester Towers*.  
 Turgenev, Ivan. *Fathers and Sons*.  
 Twain, Mark. *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.  
 Updike, John. *Rabbit, Run*.  
 Valladares, Armando. *Against All Hope*.  
 Virgil. *The Aeneid*.  
 Voltaire. *Candide*.  
 Warren, Robert Penn. *All the King's Men*.  
 Waugh, Evelyn. *A Handful of Dust*.  
 Welty, Eudora. *Collected Short Stories*.  
 Wharton, Edith. *The Age of Innocence*.  
 White, T. H. *The Once and Future King*.  
 Wiesel, Elie. *Night*.  
 Wilde, Oscar. *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.  
 Wilder, Thornton. *Our Town*.  
 Williams, Tennessee. *A Streetcar Named Desire*.  
 Wolfe, Thomas. *Look Homeward, Angel*.  
 Woolf, Virginia. *To the Lighthouse*.  
 Wouk, Herman. *The Caine Mutiny*.  
 Wright, Richard. *Native Son*.