

# Teaching Current Events: A Catalyst for Social Change

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Teachers are the catalyst for global change and kaleidoscopic innovations. By educating students in a non-biased, informative manner, and raising awareness on social injustice, teachers pave the road for a future absent of ignorance and unfounded bigotry. Teachers are responsible for informing their students on national and global current events so that their students may gain critical literacy, and form unique perspectives on the world that they can utilize in their educational endeavors and in their contributions to humanity.

Critical literacy is achieved through developing critical thinking skills which are formed by engaging students in activities that require them to advance beyond simple comprehension. To become critically literate, a student must discern the bias, alternate viewpoints, and deeper meaning of a given text. Teachers often neglect developing critical literacy skills as they place a higher importance on educating students with a massive wealth of information and facts. This myriad of information usually overwhelms students and fades from their memories after studying for exams. Teachers often educate their students in this manner in order to prepare them for standardized ability exams. Such teaching habits are a result from the liability climate formed by the No Child left Behind Act in 2001 (Pescatore, 2008). By teaching students current events and bringing issues of social injustice to light, however, a teacher can meet the goal of many state standards, such as the New York English Language Arts Standard which states, "Students will read, write, listen, and speak for critical analysis and evaluation" (English Language Arts Learning Standards, para. 3.). Advanced skills in critical literacy are also connected with high scores in mandated tests (Pescatore, 2008). In order for a teacher to develop critical literacy skills in their classroom, they must teach students how to discern any bias in a text and allow them to form personal opinions on the subject, which they may share in class discussions.

A critically literate student will view a text, which may be newspaper articles, editorials, political statements, or other media outlets, in a broad sense and as a mere presentation of an attitude or belief. This student will then take the information they have learned and the beliefs and bias reflected in this information, and personally reflect on the issue and form their own beliefs. This is why critical literacy must become an integral part of the education process. Beyond unearthing the ideology of a text, critical literacy ignites the beginnings of social change. Teachers who educate their students on current events not only arm their students with knowledge and improve their critical literacy, but also open up their minds to a plethora of newfound perspectives which could influence their future decisions and shape their character. These perspectives may lead to global change and positive contributions to humanity.

Critical literacy is based on Freire's (1970) notion that "for social change to occur, citizens must not only think critically about what they read and view, but they must also react to transform the world". These reactions are ignited through an awareness of current events. Educating students on current events may enlighten their conscience. This enlightenment may significantly influence the choices a student makes in regards to their future. A student's awareness of social injustices may inspire them to pursue a career with a humanitarian organization. Their passion for maintaining a healthy environment could steer them to a future in environmental law or protection. Teaching is not only about informing students but guiding them on their journey to self-discovery. A teacher who intertwines critical thinking skills and current events in their classroom, aids in evolving the passionate viewpoints that empower students to change the world. Whether a student changes the world through humanitarian work to end social injustices, by writing novels that bring light to

travesties, or founding organizations that aid the environment, the inkling of passion that began their quest for meaning and knowledge, is found in a classroom that promotes critical literacy and educates its students on current events.

In order for social change to occur, teachers must keep their students informed on current events and global issues. Not only does this improve critical literacy, but it also aids in molding a student's character and their unique perspectives that may change the world. A future free of inhumane travesties, pollution that strangles our environment, and a sound economy, begins with a teacher. This teacher will help rid the world of ignorance by educating their students on current events.

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