Teaching Critical Thinking and Writing Using Hypertext: Student- and Teacher-constructed Examples

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Analyzing texts as models of good writing is a common teaching heuristic, but when students have weak critical reading and thinking skills, this approach often fails and bringing students up to an appropriate skill level in class is time-consuming. In response, a web-based interactive tutorial using hypertext was developed by a writing professor consulting with an instructional designer and integrated into a sophomore-level writing course.

“Pop-up boxes” pose questions -- progressing from the literal, to inferential, evaluative, and metacognitive--within short texts to model approaches to critically evaluating a text. This heuristic has application across-the-curriculum and has been tailored to fiction and literature classes<http://www.stedwards.edu/hum/drummond/hypertext.html>.

Assessment reveals that students, given the opportunity for self-paced learning, improved their ability to pose critical questions and understand the choices writers made in constructing a text. By creating their own hypertext essay, students demonstrated their ability to ask critical questions and their grasp of writing strategies.