

# American English LIVE!

Practical Applications for Critical Thinking  
in English Language Teaching and Learning

May 1st @ 8 am or 1 pm EDT



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# Practical Applications for Critical Thinking in English Language Teaching and Learning

Many educators understand the value of Critical Thinking (CT) and other 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills but may have limited time to create new materials, few hours in a week to work with learners, and/or a set curriculum that they must follow.

This session offers ways to determine how much CT can already be found in your existing materials and practical options for weaving more CT into your materials on a regular basis.

## **During this presentation, we will:**

- review key features of CT and its importance as an element in any learning environment
- discuss ways to analyze current materials for CT content
- identify practical ways to apply CT in language teaching and learning



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Her TESOL research interests include online and hybrid learning, curriculum and program development, OER and accessible teaching practices, and teacher training for everything from camps for youth to specialized English for post-secondary levels.



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# Practical Applications for Critical Thinking in English Language Teaching and Learning

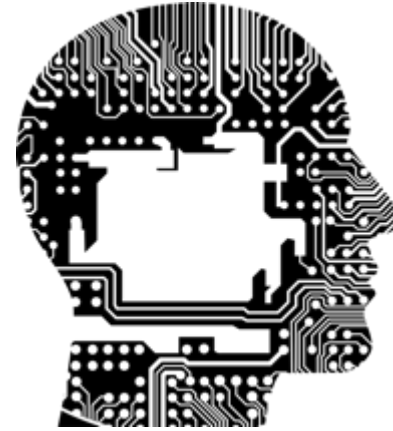


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# Topics

- What is critical thinking (CT)?
- Why is CT important in today's world?
- How do I know if it's CT?
- What are some easy ways to make CT part of language teaching and learning?



# What is critical thinking (CT)?

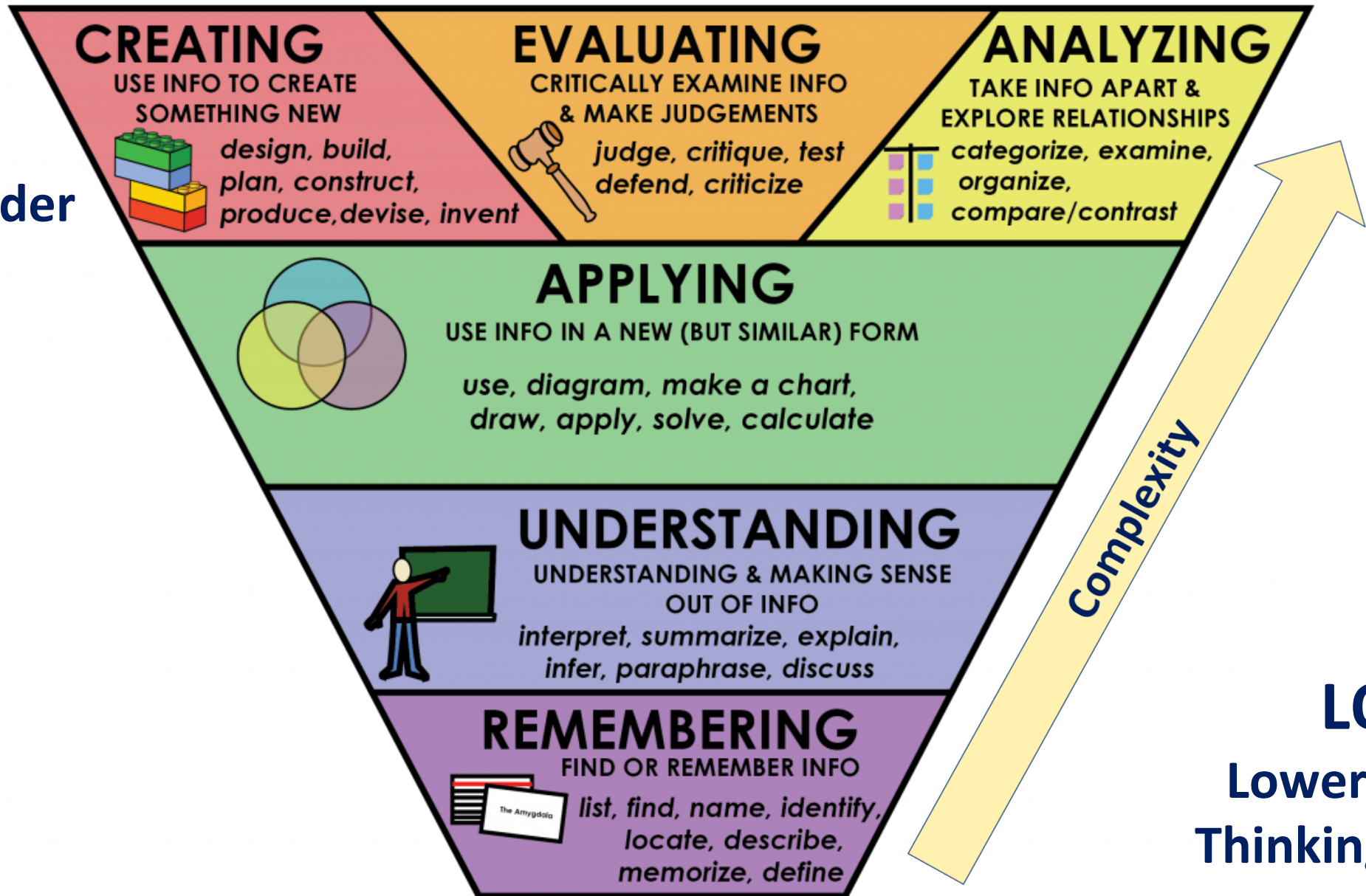
**Tell us what you think!**

- **What does critical thinking mean to you?**
- **What are some examples of critical thinking?**



# BLOOM'S TAXONOMY

**HOTS =**  
**Higher-Order**  
**Thinking**  
**Skills**



**LOTS =**  
**Lower-Order**  
**Thinking Skills**

# What is critical thinking (CT)?

## Traditional 3 Rs

- **R**eading
- **W**riting
- **A**rithmetic

## 21<sup>st</sup> Century 4 Cs

- **C**ommunication
- **C**ollaboration
- **C**reativity
- ★ **C**ritical Thinking



# Why is CT important in today's world?

- What is your opinion?
- What are some ways that CT can benefit our students?



# Why is CT important in today's world?

- ✓ Problem-solving
- ✓ Lifelong learning
- ✓ Autonomy, the ability to work independently
- ✓ Collaboration, the ability to work on teams
- ✓ Multi-perspective thinking, seeing the world through someone else's eyes
- ✓ Employment
- ✓ Making the world a better place

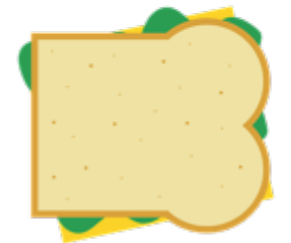


# Let's play a game!

**Topic: Food**

**Task: Introduce Yourself**

1. You will see three pairs of food-related words (nouns).  
For each pair, choose one word to describe yourself.  
Explain how the chosen word relates to you.
2. Get ready to introduce yourself using this sentence:  
“I’m a \_\_\_\_\_ because I \_\_\_\_\_.”  
(noun) (reason)



# Let's try the game together first.

Choose one word from from this pair to describe yourself.

Are you ... a salad or a candy bar?

Why?!



Introduce yourself using this sentence:

I'm a \_\_\_\_\_ because I \_\_\_\_\_."

(noun) (reason)

# Choose one word from each pair to describe yourself.

Share your answers in the comments or chat.

Are you . . .

1. a cup of coffee or a glass of orange juice?



2. a chocolate cake or an ice cream cone?



3. a bowl of soup or a sandwich?



Why?!

Introduce yourself with your favorite choice using the sentence:

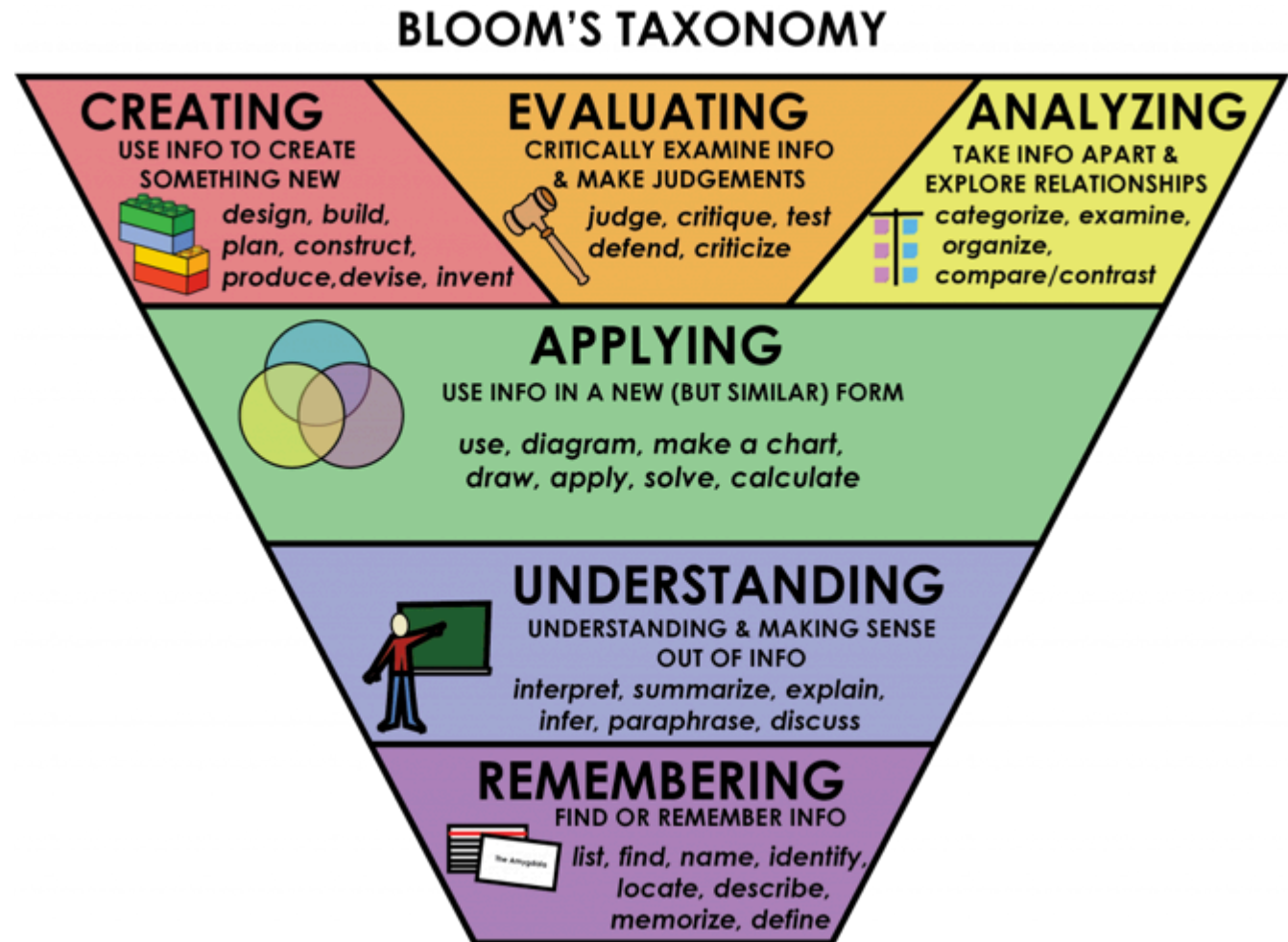
I'm a \_\_\_\_\_ because I \_\_\_\_\_."

(noun) (reason)



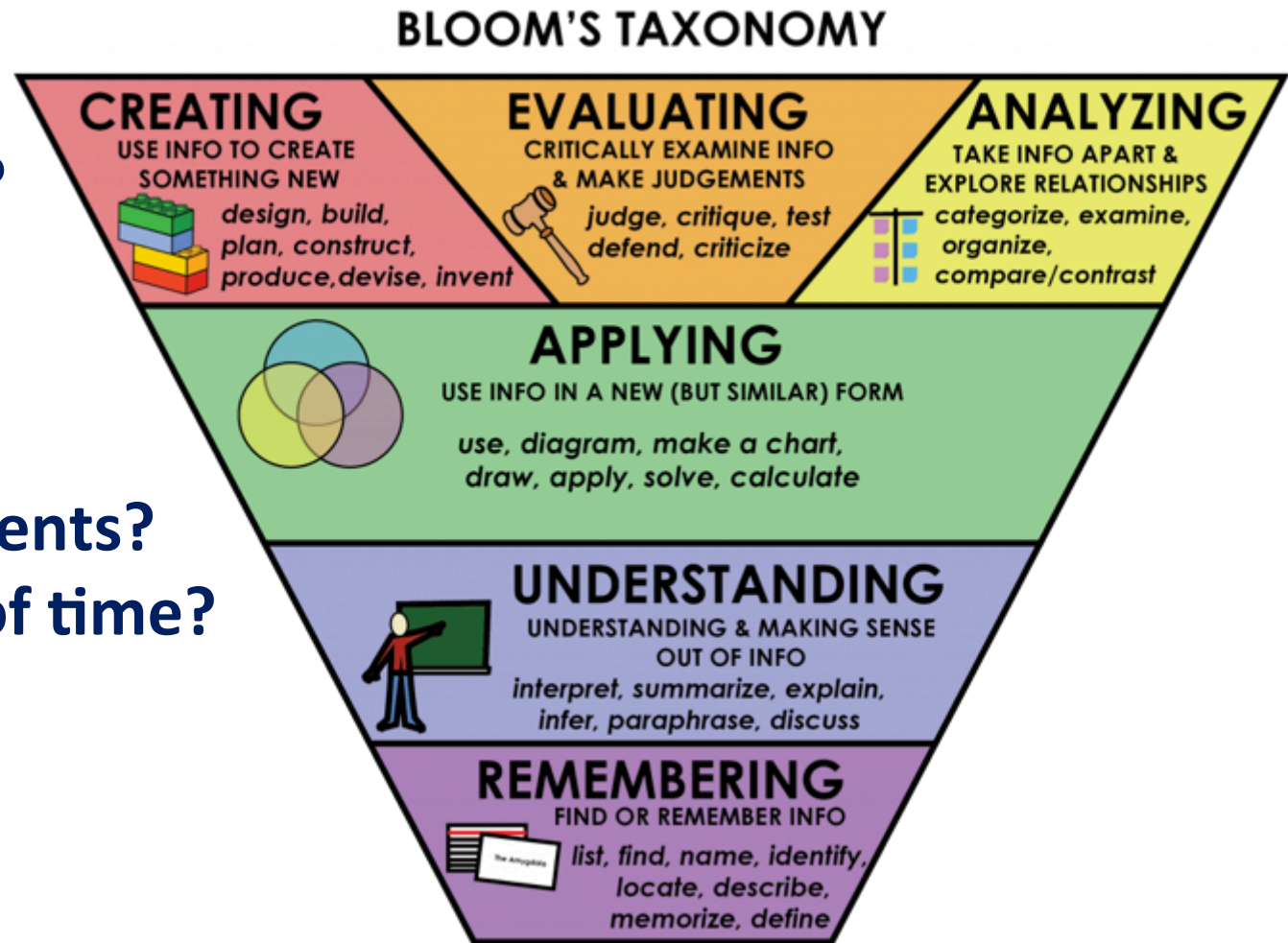
# Is this CT?

1. Does this activity require CT?  
Why or why not?
2. How much time is needed  
to do this in class?



# Is this CT?

3. What are some ways to use this activity in a lesson?
4. How can you change it for ...
  - a) other topics?
  - b) lower- vs. higher-level students?
  - c) a shorter or longer period of time?



# What are other easy ways to make CT part of language teaching and learning?

**Tip #1: Analyze textbooks you're already using and identify CT gaps.**

- Use stickies or paper clips or any other marking tool.
- Go through your textbook or other materials and mark pages for every CT activity.
  - Where are the gaps?
  - Do you need more CT activities?



# What are other easy ways to make CT part of language teaching and learning?

**Tip #2: Set goals for adding more CT.**



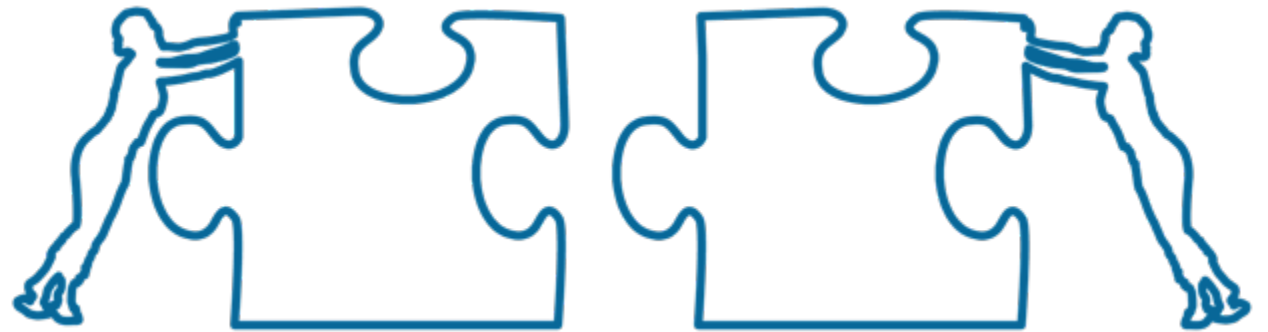
## Example goals

- All of our units need more CT. I'm going to work with one other instructor who teaches the same class. I will find activities for half of the units and she will find them for the other half. We will share them with each other.
- I only have a little free time and our curriculum is full already. I will look for very short CT activities I can add to any unit whenever I have a few extra minutes in class.

# Let's look at some approaches to adding CT activities . . .

1. Role Plays and Verbal Activities

2. Problem-Solving and Puzzles





# Activity 1: Role Plays and Verbal Activities

- Put students in small groups or teams to maximize speaking time for all.
- Vary the tasks to make it interesting.
- Give students choices.
- Use active listening.

Let's review some example role-play cards about Food to give to different groups of students . . .



# Role Play: Thinking about Food

**Card A:** Plan a menu for a wedding dinner for 200 guests using only chicken, ice cream, carrots, and bananas.

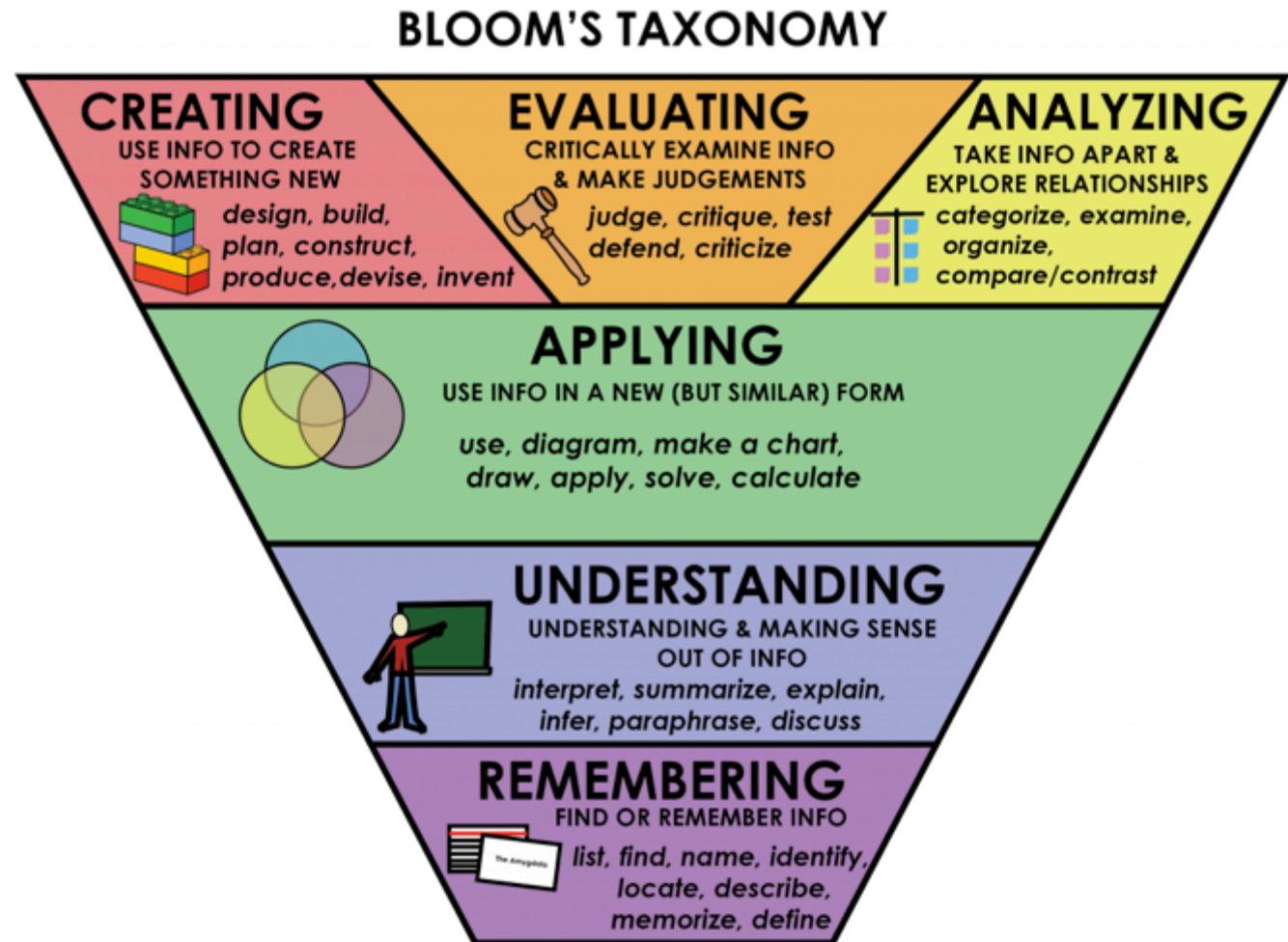
**Card C:** It's your job to make lunch for everyone at school today. You can cook your four favorites. Prepare a shopping list.

**Card B:** You are famous in the world of sports. You will swim in a 20-km race at Manhattan Island next month. You need to gain weight but stay strong. What 5 foods will you eat daily and why?

**Card D:** Your family is very sick. One person has a cold, one person has a broken hand, and one person has the hiccups. What will you feed them to help them feel better?

# Activity 1: Thinking about Food

1. Which card did you choose and what was your answer?
2. What LOTS (lower-order thinking skills) are necessary for this activity?
3. What HOTS (higher-order thinking skills), including CT, are part of this activity?



# Resources for Activity 1: Role Plays and Verbal Activities

- **Critical Thinking Activities for Kids - JumpStart**

<http://www.jumpstart.com/parents/activities/critical-thinking-activities>

Ages: Primary and Up

- **Critical Thinking Workbook - K. Schrock**

<http://www.schrockguide.net/uploads/3/9/2/2/392267/critical-thinking-workbook.pdf>

Ages: Secondary – Adult

# Activity 2: Problem-Solving, Puzzles

- Give different problems to different students.
- Allow for open-ended solutions (more than one “right” answer).
- Encourage respect for other points of view and ways of thinking.
- Let students create puzzles and problems, too.



Here is an example an activity with problem-solving and puzzles . . .



# Problem-Solving Activity: Lost at Sea

- Each group is in a life boat and lost at sea.
- Each group has a book of matches and things from the ship that sank.

## Group A

- a large water bottle
- an axe
- mosquito repellant
- map and compass
- candy bars
- fishing pole



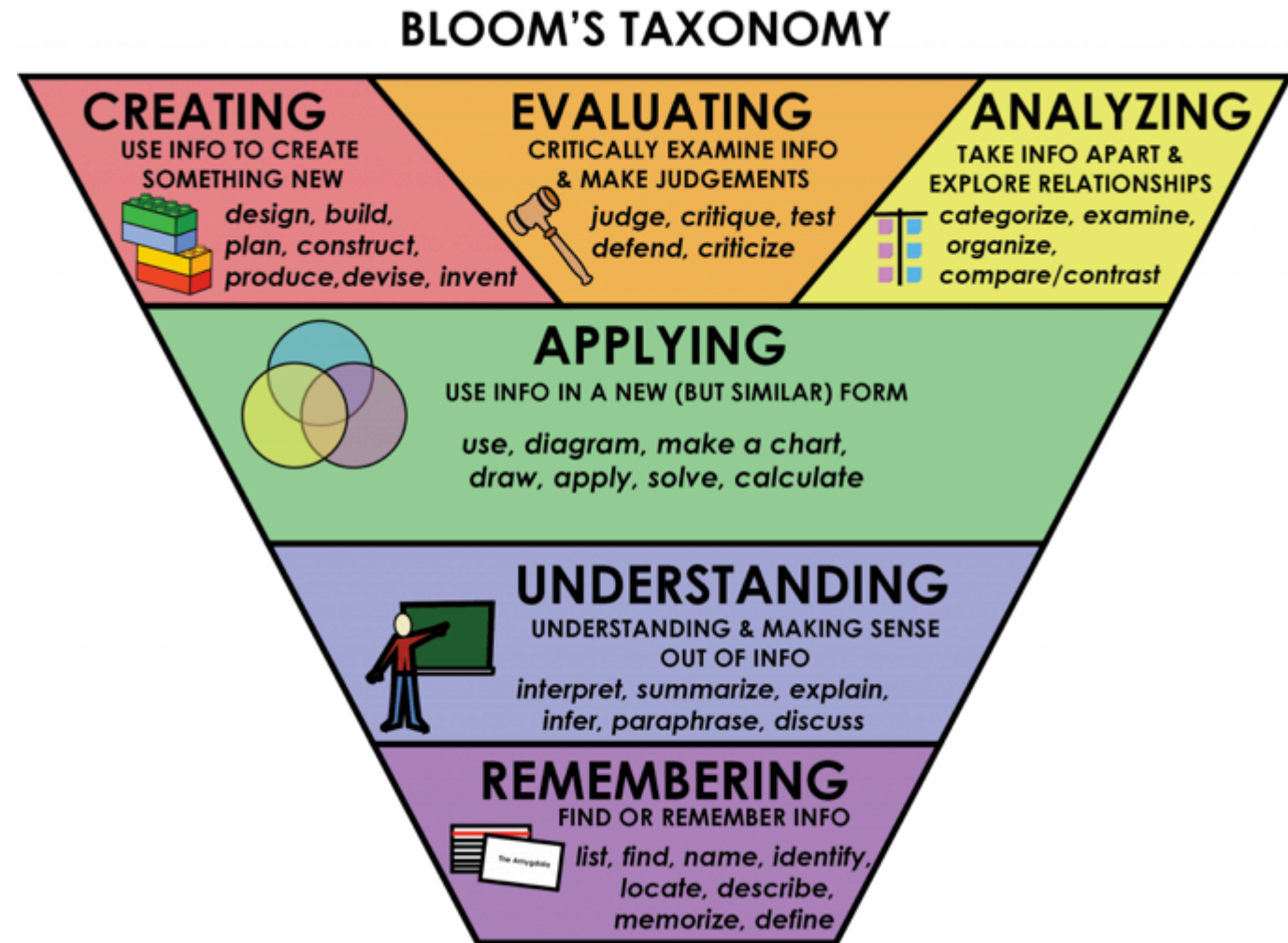
## Group B

- a shovel
- freeze-dried food
- satellite radio
- shark repellant
- rope
- plastic sheet

- Rank the items in order of importance, first individually (secretly!) and then as a group. Create one list per group. Be ready to explain your choices.

# Activity 2: Lost at Sea

1. Which card did you choose?  
What was most important item? Why?
2. What LOTS (lower-order thinking skills) are necessary for this activity?
3. What HOTS (higher-order thinking skills), including CT, are part of this activity?



# Resources for Activity 2: Problem-Solving, Puzzles

- **10 Team-Building Games that Promote Critical Thinking - TeachThought**  
<https://www.teachthought.com/critical-thinking/10-team-building-games-that-promote-critical-thinking/>

Ages: All

- **50 Activities for Developing Critical Thinking Skills - M. Caroselli**  
<http://spers.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/50-activities-for-developing-critical-thinking-skills.pdf>

Ages: All

# More Problem-Solving and Puzzles

- **Multiple Perspectives: Building Critical Thinking Skills - ReadWriteThink**  
<http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/multiple-perspectives-building-critical-30629.html?tab=4>

Ages: Primary and Up

- **10 Great Critical Thinking Activities - Wabi Sabi Learning**  
<https://www.wabisabilearning.com/blog/10-great-critical-thinking-activities-that-engage-your-students>

Ages: Secondary – Adult

# References

- Integrating Critical Thinking into the Exploration of Culture (n.d.), Teacher's Corner, U.S. Department of State - American English website  
<https://americanenglish.state.gov/resources/integrating-critical-thinking-exploration-culture>
- Üstünlüoğlu, E. (2004) Language Teaching through Critical Thinking and Self-Awareness, *English Teaching Forum*, 42(3)  
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# Thank you!

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