



Critical Thinking: Practice Activity



Goal: *Adapted from www.insight.typepad.co.uk

This activity will allow youth to practice their group and individual critical thinking skills. Students will be given a list of items that they need to rank based on importance in a ship wreck. They need to do this alone, then argue their case with their group to make a final decision. Compared to the US Coast Guard ranking, who will rank highest?

Materials:

- Blank ranking chart (See below)
- Teacher materials: Coast Guard rankings & score sheet (See below)

Instructions:

1. Break students up into groups of 3-5
2. Explain that they have been in a shipwreck with their friends in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean. The crew managed to get them on a rubber life craft along with 15 other items. You are thousands of miles from land, and may have to get rid of some of those items before you can be saved.
3. Give them 20 minutes to research these items and give them their own rankings (1 is most important, 15 is least)
4. Allow 10-15 minutes to have each group decide on a group ranking
5. Show or tell groups the Coast Guard's rankings below and fill in the center column of their charts
6. Now tell them to fill in the last two columns by finding the difference between Individual/group rankings and Coast Guard rankings (using absolute value)
7. Display group totals: LOWEST score wins!!

Things to point out:

- Group scores should be better than their individual because of the collective information and increased critical thinking by the group's discussion. If it wasn't an improvement – why?
- How did groups compromise on a collective ranking? What information did they use?
- Point out the process of gathering information, evaluating it, and then making sense of it with regards to their situation
- Ask them how they may approach the task differently if given another disaster situation
- Did they wish they had any other information? What is it, and why?
- If time permits, discuss the Coast Guard's reasoning for ranking vs. theirs



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Ranking Chart

Items	Individual Rankings	Team Rankings	Coast Guard Rankings	Difference between individual & Coast Guard	Difference between team & Coast Guard
A sextant					
A shaving mirror					
A quantity of mosquito netting					
A 25 liter container of water					
A case of army rations					
Maps of the Atlantic Ocean					
A floating seat cushion					
A 10 liter can of oil/petrol mixture					
A small transistor radio					
20 square feet of opaque plastic sheeting					
A can of shark repellent					
One bottle of 160 proof rum					
15 feet of nylon rope					
2 boxes of chocolate bars					
An ocean fishing kit & pole					
Totals				Your Score:	Team Score:



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Coast Guard Ranking

A sextant	15	Useless without the relevant tables and a chronometer
A shaving mirror	1	Of all the items, the mirror is absolutely critical. It is the most powerful tool you have for communicating your presence. In sunlight, a simple mirror can generate five to seven million candlepower of light. The reflected sunbeam can even be seen beyond the horizon.
A quantity of mosquito netting	14	There are NO mosquitoes in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean and the netting is useless for anything else.
A 25 liter container of water	3	Vital to restore fluids lost through perspiration. 25 liters will supply water rations for your group for several days.
A case of army rations	4	This is your basic food intake.
Maps of the Atlantic Ocean	13	Worthless without navigation equipment.
A floating seat cushion	9	Useful as a life preserver if someone fell overboard
A 10 liter can of oil/gasoline mixture	2	The second most critical item for signaling. The mixture will float on water and can be ignited using the matches.
A small transistor radio	12	You would be out of range of any radio station.
20 square feet of Opaque plastic sheeting	5	Can be used to collect rain water and shelter from the wind and waves.
A can of shark repellent	10	To repel sharks, of course!
One bottle of 160% proof rum	11	Contains 80% alcohol, which means it can be used as an antiseptic for any injuries, otherwise of little value. Very dangerous if drunk, as it would cause the body to dehydrate, the opposite of what you need to survive.
15ft nylon rope	8	Could be used to lash people or equipment together to prevent being washed overboard. There are a variety of other uses, but none high on the list for survival.
2 boxes of chocolate bars	6	Your reserve food supply
An ocean fishing kit with pole.	7	Ranked lower than the chocolate as there is no guarantee you will catch any fish. The pole might be used as a tent pole.



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Scoring

00 - 25	Excellent	You demonstrated great survival skills. Rescued!
26 - 32	Good	Above average results. Good survival skills. Rescued!
33 - 45	Average	Seasick, hungry, and tired. Rescued!
46 - 55	Fair	Dehydrated and barely alive. It was tough, but rescued!
56 - 70	Poor	Rescued, but only just in time!
71+	Very poor	Your empty raft was washed up on the beach weeks after the search was called off