



## Critical Thinking Questions (Sample Answers)

The ideas from this practice activity will be used to build the sample critical comparison essay later in the lesson.

### Point of argument from Wohlsen

#### 1. Point of argument

**Wohlsen argues that being able to use digital technology is not an effective measure of digital literacy; rather, that true digital literacy is in the ability to make the technology do what you want using skills in “computational thinking.”**

#### Evidence:

**Reason** – Digital literacy must include an understanding of the logic of coding because the next generation will need an active, rather than passive, relationship to the technology in order to succeed. In this reason, we can connect to Wohlsen’s motivation for the article. If we don’t define digital literacy in a useful way, we won’t give our students the tools they need going forward.

**Claim to authority** – Wohlsen relies heavily on the ideas and statements of other experts to build his discussion. This suits the journalistic nature of his writing. For example: “Digital literacy, Smith said, also is about ‘how to make it do what you want.’ Or as Geshner put it: ‘Are you an iPad or are you a laptop? An iPad is designed for consumption.’ Literacy, as he described it, means moving beyond a passive relationship with technology. ‘When you get down to coding, you’re creating your own tools.’”

#### Assumptions:

As part of his article, Wohlsen **assumes** that as a society it’s imperative that we define what digital literacy really means because this is how we will know what skills and tools our young people will need in the future. Here’s a quote to illustrate:

“And how digital literacy is defined is important. This isn’t just about filling Silicon Valley jobs. It’s about educators, policy makers, and parents understanding how to give the rising generations of digital natives the tools they need to define the future of technology for themselves.” (Wohlsen)

This is a crucial initial assumption for Wohlsen’s argument. And it goes even deeper. His motivation for writing this argument begins with this **assumption that** digital literacy can be defined – that it’s not an obvious concept. This assumption allows him to push the boundaries of how society understands digital literacy in order to change how we educate young people. We can, for example, now compare how Wohlsen and Prensky define digital literacy and the implications of those assumptions.

#### Consequences:

As a result of his argument that digital literacy should be defined to focus on “computational thinking” rather than passive use of digital technology, Wohlsen is able to offer an argument for changes to the teaching and learning opportunities in schools. One implication of this argument is that we are forced to evaluate how digital technology and skills are taught and used in schools, thus leading to changes and innovations.



## Sample Answers

2. Wohlsen argues that one problem with achieving digital literacy is that teachers do not, generally, have the skills needed to help students become digitally literate.

**Point of argument**

**Evidence:**

Wohlsen cites different authorities and statistics on the limited offerings of computing courses and teacher professional development.

**Assumptions:**

This point of argument assumes that it is generally teachers, and therefore, the education system that should be responsible for ensuring young people grow up digitally literate and able to succeed in a technology-dominated society.

**Consequences:**

The consequence of this argument is that there could be a significant skill gap in those societies that do not revise their educational system to foster the kind of digital literacy Wohlsen is talking about.

Do you agree with this argument? Do you agree with the assumptions behind it? How likely do you think this consequence of a skill gap is? How does this argument compare to Prensky's call for teachers to develop new skills?