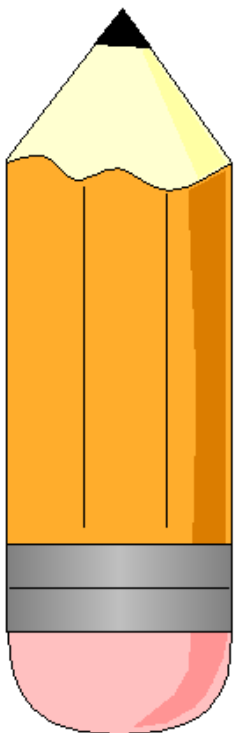




Student

Writing

Edition



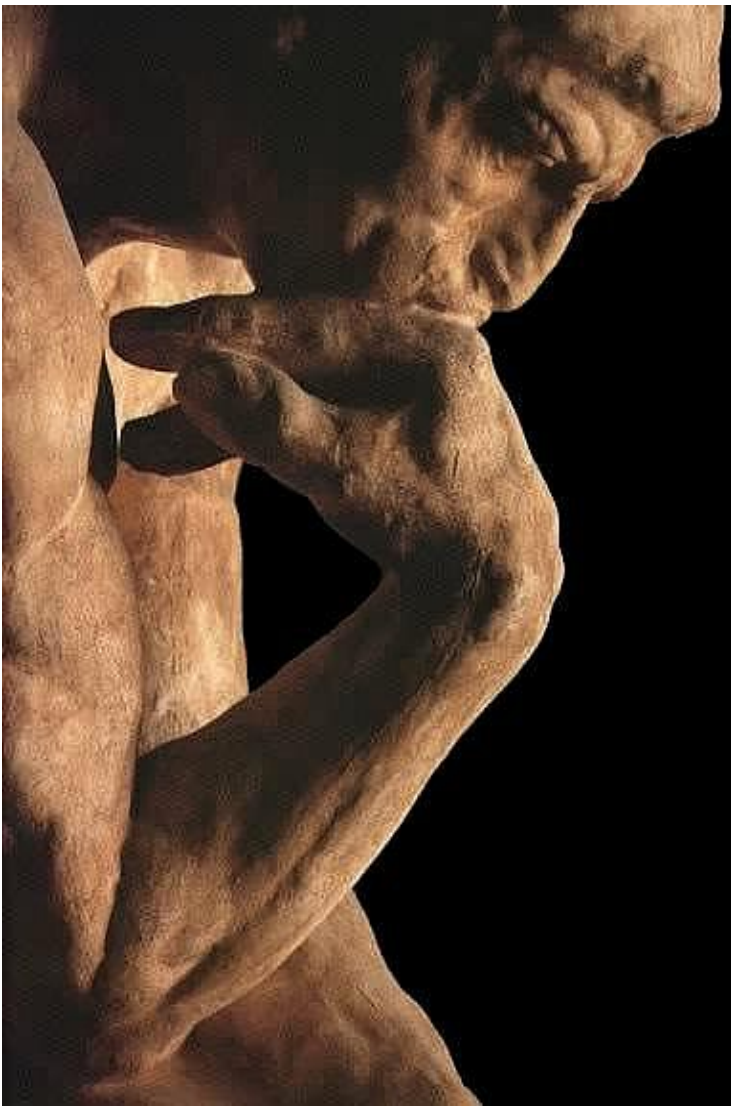
FCS Writing Scores Soar

Franklin County Schools is extremely proud of the hard work the students, parents, teachers, staff and administration puts forth to ensure students are writing to the best of their ability. Just last week, the state writing tests results were released, and FCS showed huge gains across the county. In fact, 12 of 13 schools experienced substantial growth. Complete results are available on the FCS website (www.fcschools.net). The link is located in the important links section. Students in grades 4, 7 and 10 are tested each year. Some schools experienced more than 30 percent gains over the past school year.

This issue of First Thursday contains a student writing sample from each school in the system. Please enjoy the writings and appreciate the talent and effort of each writer.

Thinking Critically

A speech by Katie Payne of Cedar Creek Middle



Critical thinking? What is it? It is the process of actively and skillfully improving your thought processes. The basic adjectives associated with critical thinking are thinking with accuracy, clarity, precision, consistency, relevance, soundness, evidence, depth, fullness, and good reason. Although this may seem like way to much to handle, the basic definition is thinking about the power of your mind, or simply rethinking the problem.

Notice, I include the word thinking a lot. This is due to the fact that thinking is the sport of your mind. When you think of sports, you most likely think of football, baseball, volleyball, etc. The truth is thinking is the most important thing you will ever do in your lifetime, and without it there would be no reason to live.

No individual uses critical thinking at all times. It is a strategy used on special occasions. People who think critically consistently attempt to live rational and reasonable lives. Critical thinking can be adapted to anything that you can imagine.

So I know you are probably thinking, "why is critical thinking important?" It is important because without it, our mind is biased, distorted, partial, uninformed or just plain prejudice. Our life, what we make, what we produce, what we build depends on what we think.

The truth is improvement is always needed. No improvement is like being paralyzed; you can't move. Critical thinking is needed for everyone. As Bertrand Russell once put it, "The problem with the world is that the stupid are cocksure and the intelligent are full of doubt."

Critical thinking didn't just pop into somebody's mind one day. The intellectual roots of critical thinking are ancient teachings. It is the teaching, practice, and vision of Socrates 2500 years ago. He discovered the need for a deeper thinking method.

In conclusion, critical thinking is a spectacular way to think clearly and has been passed down for many generations. Critical thinking stimulates your brain and allows you to think on your highest level. The next time you sit down to answer a problem, ask yourself this question, and you will be using critical thinking, "Am I thinking on my highest level?" If you ask yourself that every time you come to a question, your mind will think above and beyond your highest capacity. Your thoughts today are your life tomorrow. So would you rather stand still or move forward?

Courage Under Fire

London Dement, Louisburg Elementary
Second Grader



One dark and cloudy day I heard a loud noise. I was scared. I went outside to see what it was. When I got outside I heard the noise again. I looked around. In the dark I couldn't see a thing. But suddenly I saw something. It was a woodpecker. Wow! I thought it was something else. My mom heard me. She wanted me to come back inside. Then she told me that I have guts to get in the dark. When I got back in bed I thought about what my mom said to me. Maybe my mom is right. I really do think I'm a kid with guts! The next day I was proud of myself. I'm glad it was not a skunk!

Poetic Wildcats

People go about your lives.
 Never thinking about mysteries,
 Who, what, when, where,
 But most of all WHY.
 Why is the ultimate
 Question; it gives
 Reason; it gives knowledge.
 People walking.
 People talking.
 But the question I ask is
 Why.

WHY?

Paul Schmitt, Bunn High 9th grader

Just Because

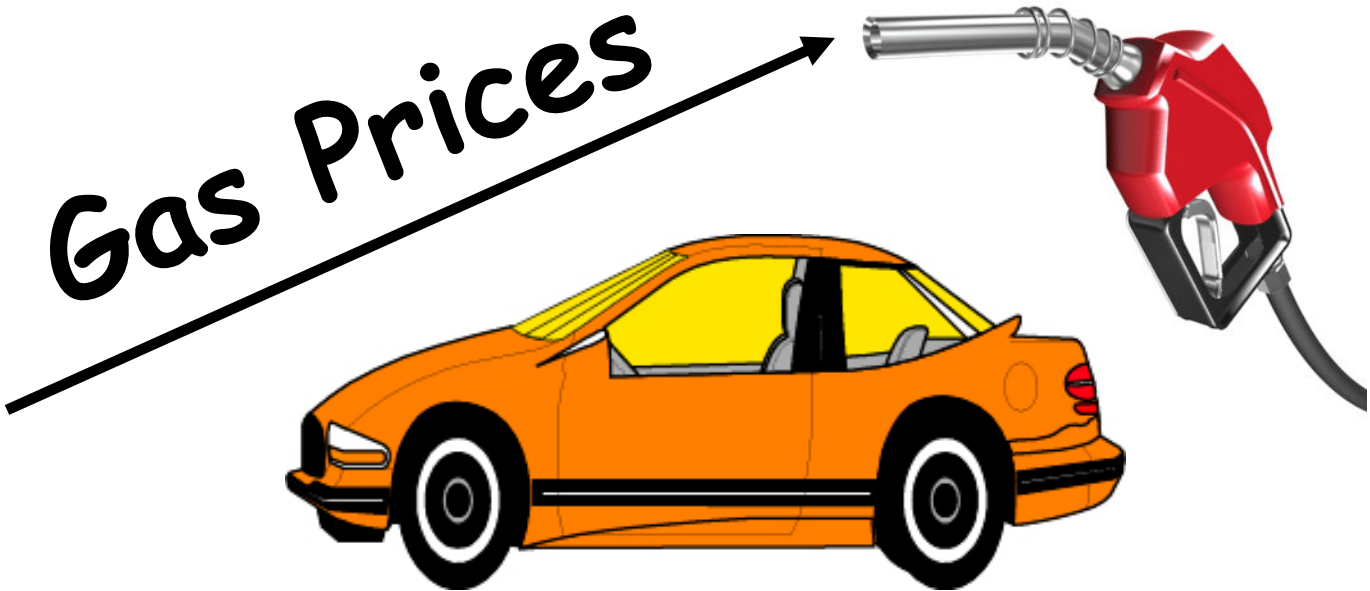
*Just because I'm a girl,
 Don't pick me last to be on your
 team.
 Don't laugh when I don't succeed.
 Just because I'm a girl,
 It doesn't mean I'm not as good.
 It doesn't mean I can't do it.
 It doesn't mean you can joke,
 Just because I'm a girl.
 Don't exclude me from your fun,
 Just because I'm a girl - appreciate me.*

Alysha Wonka, Bunn High 9th grader

I Love The Sound of Music

I love the sound of music.
 The way it whispers in
 Your ear.
 The beats on your iPod,
 And the sound of wind.
 I love the days of
 Happiness and the
 Beautiful things to
 Come.
 The peace and calmness
 Of everyday life
 The images of nature
 And the brightness of the sun
 I love the sound of
 Music; the way it
 Whispers in your
 Ear

Jessica Stevenson, Bunn High 9th grader



If I could change one thing...

If I could change one thing in the world to make it better, I would change gas prices. I mean come on people – they are getting too high!

If at least some people who own gas stations lower prices, the people who lowered the prices would get more people to buy gas at their gas station. Sadly, some people are just too greedy for their own good. It is a good idea because you might have a car with bad mileage and have to buy gas a lot. Well, there are only two ways to fix that problem – buy a new car or have the people who own gas stations lower the price! Or even if you have a car with good mileage, you might work far away from where you live and have to buy gas a lot. You will also have a lot more money for groceries or something else.

How may you or I do this? Well, I would go to the gas stations and tell them to lower the prices. You and your friends and family could do the same. If they don't listen or don't care, tell them they will get more money because more people will buy gas there. There is one more thing I have to say about how you can help lower gas prices. Go to the mayor of your town or even try to contact the President to ask if they can help lower the gas prices.

Mackenzie Wantje, Laurel Mill fifth grader

An Alternate Ending

The ending of Tim O'Brien's The Things They Carried does not derive from the scenarios and plots of the rest of the story; it leaves on a personal note from the author. This personal insight can be traced in certain veiled instances within the novel. The bulk of The Things They Carried consists of instances, real or fabricated, in which O'Brien depicts the events of his experience in Vietnam, yet the ending involves his dealing with the death of his childhood sweetheart Linda. The emphasis is placed upon how she still has an impact on O'Brien and his writing several years after her death and the war as well. The last sentence of the novel is what grasps the epitome of the entire story: "I'm skimming across the surface of my own history, moving fast, riding the melt beneath the blades, doing loops and spins, and when I take a high leap into the dark and come down thirty years later, I realize it is as Tim trying to save Timmy's life with a story." Tim O'Brien is trying to relay the message that there is no ultimate epiphany in his story in which he comprehends everything and that he has barely scratched the surface of his own life. He comes to the conclusion that this story is not for the sole purpose of informing people of his war experiences or giving insight into a particular time in his life, but that this story is an attempt to figure out his life, particularly his life as a child. While it may not seem like an appropriate ending, it is nonetheless an exceedingly true one.

There are several instances within The Things They Carried in which O'Brien steps back from the story for a minute and gives what may appear to be "rhetorical insight" to the reader but is actually more an acknowledgement that the reader must infer. For those who are unable to understand these acknowledgments, the ending might appear as ambiguous, but those who comprehended what was said may see the ending as realistic. It may not be the satisfactory or pleasing ending we were looking for, but hopefully this will give substance to the notion that a story's ending shouldn't always be predictable. While the ending doesn't necessarily give a "significant closure" to the story, it does give closure to the author's expression and intentions. There is no glorious moment in the end in which all the soldiers rejoiced or came together. There is no gradual build up to a departure. There is no clear and definite ending to the story because like the war itself, there is no explicit end. There is no joy. The ending to The Things They Carried closely resembles that of the war. It shows how the war truly ended, not in a story-like fashion, but in a real world perspective. Soldiers came. Soldiers fought. Soldiers died. Then the soldiers left. There is no blossoming way to represent this; therefore, the ending could not reflect a blossoming effect either.

If an effective literary work concludes and doesn't simply cease or stop, can it be said that the work is ineffective? The answer is no, and the reason is that there is no grounds for defining a literary work as "effective" save generalized public opinion. When Tim O'Brien wrote his ending, his concern was not for the overall esthetic appeal to a conclusion, but for an experience that still confronts him, death and how death found its way to his life again and again. Death found him when it took Linda. It found him when Kiowa drowned in a horrid field. It found him when Curt Lemon played catch with a grenade and when Ted Lavender was shot in the head. The ending is not a part of the story but actually a place. For Tim O'Brien, this was a place where there was no death. It was a place where there were no bodies. He could see Linda, Kiowa and all the others. It isn't meant to appear as some delusional fantasy but a personal vision. No matter how hard we attempt to construe or depict the ending, there will always be a portion which only the author can comprehend. The ending is not meant for the readers but for the author. As Tim O'Brien eloquently puts it, "... I realize it as Tim trying to save Timmy's life with a story."

Tyler Duncan

LHS, 12th grader

MY

By, Reid Wheeler, YES 4th grader

ADVENTURE

“Yawn,” I yawned as I woke up sleepily one frosty aired Saturday morning. Tiredly, I sat up in bed drowsily staring at a brown blur sitting on the edge of my covers patiently. A moment later, I rubbed my eyes in disbelief at the sight of the hairy looking object. Before I knew it, I slapped myself to see if I was dreaming and realized that I wasn’t still asleep. My eyes widened as I spied that the odd figure was Scooby Doo.

Suddenly, Scooby asked me to come to Coolsville and help the gang investigate a museum robbery case. It was hard to ignore the sound of that, so I stammered to reply, but finally replied, “Yes.” So I got out of bed and changed from my plaid pajama pants and T-shirt into blue jeans and an Old Navy shirt. As I darted down the stairs, I noticed that the T.V. was paused at a commercial that had a picture of Scooby’s gang. Everyone was in the picture except for Scooby who was now hopping off the last step. While I went to the T.V. with Scooby by my side, Scooby jumped into the T.V. and I reluctantly followed, hoping I would not bump my head on the glass. Surprisingly, I did not, and I landed in Fred’s arms feeling a tight grasp as I stared in bewilderment at all of the police cars in front of the museum. In the blink of an eye, I joined Scooby, Shaggy, Fred, Velma, and Dafney in a huddle after Fred put me down. Just then, we agreed to set a trap using only clear fishing line. As soon as everyone packed into the Mystery Machine, Fred started the engine and drove away from the museum towards their clubhouse. A moment later, we darted inside, snatched clear fishing line, and were back at the museum before I knew it. All of a sudden, Scooby and I tied the wire from one end of the museum to the other, hoping to catch the masked figure. Before I knew it, the masked figure appeared just as Scooby and I finished tying the fishing line. Just then, it started to chase me into the museum, but thanks to the trap, that didn’t happen. As I hopped

SCOOBY-DOO!

over the fishing line, I whirled around and watched in great satisfaction as the masked figure tripped over the wire. As soon as the police put him in hand cuffs, we pulled off the gorilla mask, and it revealed Jonathan Jacobs, a master criminal. As he was being put into the police car, he was forced to tell where the costumes were.



After Scooby and the gang thanked me, Scooby stamped on the ground with his foot, and I was transported at lightening speed back into my room and under the covers. As I lay in my bed, not making a sound, I remembered this adventure with the cartoon character, Scooby Doo. As I shut my eyes, trying to catch some more sleep, even though the sun was just now starting to slowly rise, I hoped to do that again, but with another cartoon character next time.

Just Dreaming

Timothy Wilson, FES 4th grade

'AAAWWW' I yawned when I woke up that frigid winter morning. When I lifted my head I realized I was lying on my pillow. The pillow was 20 times as big as me! I was completely dumbfounded. That is when I came to my senses and found out that I had shrunk to one inch tall during the night. I knew the day would be a great adventure.

I leaped down from my bed and hit the ground with a thump. I galloped to the doorway and turned into the kitchen. I jumped from ledge to ledge and finally got to the countertop. I was exhausted. I saw that the faucet was running. By the faucet was a piece of gum. I strode over and plucked it up. I placed it on the sink and saw it could float. So I hopped on and started surfing. Swoosh! Swoosh! I heard as the waves came from the faucet. I had so much fun until I heard the bus coming. It was time for school! I ran out the door and hopped on my pet rabbit. I pulled on its ears, and it hopped off with me hanging on for dear life. When it hopped by the open bus door, I leaped off onto the bus.

At school, things had changed. I went to the classroom and picked up an enormous pen. It took me ten minutes to sign in. Then I ran to my desk and climbed up its leg. The teacher started asking questions but never called on me because my hand was too microscopic to see. Eating lunch was harder, though. I had to pick crumbs up off the floor before the greedy ants got them. I had to run from side to side of the table. It was grueling work. By the end of lunch, I didn't think I could take another step.

At recess I tried to climb the rock climbing wall. It took every bit of energy I had, but I was determined to reach the top. About halfway up, I slipped and fell. "AAAHHH" – I screamed as I toppled down the face of the wall. I hit the ground with a thud. I quickly sat up in my bed and realized it was just a dream. "I hope that never happens again," I muttered to myself as I started getting dressed.

The Ballad of Equality



In the future of New York City,
There lived a street sweeper named Equality.
Day by Day, Night by Night
He walked through a tunnel, and found the light.

Behold the truth.
Upon working the field, he gazed upon her beauty.
He called her the Golden one, and her name was Liberty.
Equality learned the truth, and then asked "why?"
He uncovered the flame and brought it to life.

The place of corrective detention.

He was lashed and blooded.
His thoughts were flooded.
Still they asked, but Equality said nothing.
From jail he escaped; they knew he knew something.

Soft layer of grass - Equality was free.

Upon his freedom in the forest, the Golden one found him.
And from words, she spoke. She said she loved him.
They lived together, newly named.
And from then on, a new word has been tamed.

"Ego..."

Sara Zappa, FHS Freshman

Hummingbirds



Tough Catch

A tiny Hummingbird is very hard to catch because it flies quick. It has a long straight bill. A tiny Hummingbird eats nectar from all the flowers to help it grow. It lives in tiny nests made from spider webs, plants, seeds and fluffy down.

Noelle Easterling, Royal First Grader

A Day As A Snowman

As I stretched and peered out from under my soft covers, I wondered why it was so cold. I rushed out of my warm bed and dashed to the bathroom. I glanced in the mirror and saw a snowman looking back at me. "Aaahhh!" I yelled. "What happened to me? I look like Santa Claus' beard." I whispered.

My stomach churned, and my mind raced. "What if no one knows who I am?" My heart pounded with fear. Then my eyes widened, and I felt like I was in a cartoon. A light bulb went off in my head. "What if I go to the North Pole?" I pondered to myself. I slid across the floor and left a note for Mom and Dad. The note read:

Dear Mom and Dad,

I went to the North Pole to try to become a human again. I'll try to be back as quick as I can. I'll see you soon.

Love your son,

Jake

I flew outside and grabbed the sled in the old shed. I got on and started gliding. Immediately, I flew up and down hills until I finally reached it. (The North Pole) I read off a sign. Sliding across the slick snow, I saw a silhouette of a building. I ran as close as I could and spotted a sign on the door that said — **Santa's Workshop**.

"Whoa", went the icy wind as my body started to tremble. I was nervous and excited about meeting Santa Claus. What will I tell him? Can he really help me? Eeek, the door opened slowly. The warmth of his workshop filled my body. I crept into the colorful room. There were tiny green elves scurrying everywhere. All of a sudden, there was a chubby, old man in a bright red suit smiling at me.

As I ran toward him, the fluffy white snow began to melt off my body. I could see my arms and legs again. We both stared at each other's eyes, and with a quick wink of his eye, I was back in my warm bed.

All night my mind was filled with fascinating memories. What a story I have to tell my friends!

Written by Jake Murphy

Edward Best 4th grader

The Best Gift Ever

One day my best friend Connor came over to exchange Christmas gifts. We exchange every year. This year I gave Connor my gift first. When Connor opened his gift, he said "WOW, just what I wanted. Thank you, Shane." I gave him a Wii game system. It was then my turn to open mine. When I opened my present I was disappointed. It was a Carolina Ram stuffed animal, but it was only a stuffed animal. I told Connor thank you even though I already had one. We played with Connor's Wii all day long until it was time to go to bed. When we went to bed, I decided to take my stuffed ram with us. When I was resting in bed, I was still disappointed that Connor didn't give me a toy to play with. What I didn't know about this ram was that he would do magical things while we were asleep.



While Connor and I were asleep, the Ram came to life and had done wonderful things in my room. The ram had looked around my room and saw it was a mess. He decided right away he could get to work. He cleaned out the whole room and turned everything to Carolina Tar Heels. Connor woke up first and was amazed. He woke me up and said, "Shane, how did you do that?" I woke up and looked around. I told him that I had no idea how it had happened. My mom heard us up and came to say good morning. When she came in, she looked around and said, "Shane, how did you do this?" My dad came in behind her and said the same thing. I said to them all, "I didn't do it." We were all in shock I think. My room didn't look anything like it did when Connor and I went to bed.

The Ram had turned my room to completely Carolina Tar Heels. He turned my computer to a beautiful sparkling Carolina blue. He had turned my comforter from red and black to blue and white with a huge ram head in the middle. The pictures that were on my wall before were gone, and there were pictures of people playing basketball and baseball everywhere. The pictures were all from Carolina. There was a Carolina newspaper from where they had won the championship hanging on the wall, too. There were Carolina basketball and baseball jerseys hanging from the ceiling. My walls used to be white, and now they were sparkling blue. My ceiling fan was snow white. The ceiling fan in my room was now a rams head, and the blades were his antlers. On one side of my room was the whole Carolina basketball court with basketballs and everything. There was also a game table that was all Carolina colors and players on it. I thought I was dreaming. I went to the bathroom to splash water on my face, and my bathroom was even turned to Carolina everything. The shower curtain was blue and had UNC all over it. My rugs my rugs. toothbrush and even my toilet was blue. It thought that if this is what my house looked like, what did it look like outside? I went to the door and immediately saw my mom's van. It was also a beautiful blue color. This was so cool. I was so happy.

I was so disappointed when Connor and I opened gifts. I had given him a Wii, and all he gave me was a stuffed animal. I had learned that not everything is the way it looks. I thought that the stuffed animal was just a bunch of stuffing and couldn't compare to a Wii. I really had thought I wanted a Wii too, but I had actually got the best gift ever. I had gotten my whole house turned into a Carolina wonderland. I thanked Connor over and over again. He was just as happy as I was because he was my best friend and he is always at my house. We were so happy. We could play basketball on my new big court, or we would play with Connor's Wii whenever we wanted. We can't wait until Christmas next year.

Shane Garrison, Bunn Elementary

Emotions of Life

by Aloni Williams, Sixth Grade, Bunn
Middle School

ANGER

Anger is something you control.
Just because something happens
doesn't mean take it out on everyone
else

Show it sometimes.
Be cool, not cruel.

FRIENDS

Are friends really your friends?
Do your friends care about you?
If they don't forget them,
you need someone that has your
back.

You're my friend.
That's a strong sentence.
If you don't mean it, don't say it.

LIFE AND NATURE

The dogs cry
The sea yells, "that's life!"
The trees whistle
The grass sways; that's nature.
If you don't know what nature is
Look out the door
And see where it is.
Life is what you have
So make the best of it now

DEATH AND PAIN

One in fire
Two in blood
Three in storm
Four in flood
Five in anger
Six in hate
Seven in fear
Evil eight
Nine in sorrow
Ten in pain
Eleven in death
Twelve live again
Thirteen steps to the Dark Man's Door
I won't be turning back no more.