

THE LEARNER'S TOOLKIT
The Critical Thinker's Toolkit
Level 2

Critical Thinking Through Film



CAPSTONE
The Wizard of Oz • Wicked • Wicked: For Good
Blair Lee, M.S.

The Critical Thinker's Toolkit

Level 2

Critical Thinking Through Film: Capstone

The Wizard of Oz • Wicked • Wicked: For Good



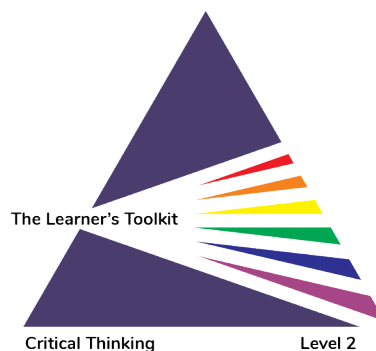
Teaching Guide

Accompanies the Student Guide – Not Sold Separately

Written by Blair H. Lee, M.S.

SEA Publishing

www.SEAPublishing.com



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ISBN: 978-1-947473-14-0

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The Learner's Toolkit Series

The Learner's Toolkit is a series of evidence-based curricula built on Hochman Method principles of explicit, scaffolded instruction. Each toolkit provides systematic teaching that respects both child development and parent/teacher capabilities.

The Critical Thinker's Toolkit Level 2 teaches students to evaluate evidence, identify assumptions, trace causal reasoning, recognize bias, and revise conclusions when evidence warrants.

Published by SEA Publishing

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The Stargazer's Notebook



How to Use This Guide

Overview

This Teaching Guide and the accompanying Student Workbook form the capstone of The Critical Thinker's Toolkit Level 2. They are designed to work together as a complete learning experience that demonstrates how all eleven lessons connect and build on each other.

This course also functions as a standalone critical thinking unit study for learners who have not completed the full toolkit. Both paths lead to the same destination, a learner who can evaluate evidence, question assumptions, and think independently.

The Three Films: *The Wizard of Oz* (1939), *Wicked* (2024), and *Wicked: For Good* (2025) tell the same story from different perspectives. Together, they create a unique opportunity to practice critical thinking in action.

As the Capstone of the Critical Thinker's Toolkit – Level 2

If your learner has completed Lessons 1–11, this capstone serves as Lesson 12—a culminating experience where all eleven skills come together in authentic practice.

Your learner arrives with a complete toolkit: metacognition (Lesson 1), distinguishing knowledge from belief (Lesson 2), identifying assumptions (Lesson 3), separating fact from interpretation (Lesson 4), the Testing Cycle (Lesson 5), recognizing stories in their head (Lesson 6), evaluating causal claims (Lesson 7), media literacy using SIFT and recognizing persuasive techniques (Lesson 8), evaluating evidence quality (Lesson 9), building and stress-testing reasoning chains (Lesson 10), and mapping perspective and bias (Lesson 11).

Because your learner already has the tools, you can move more quickly through worked examples and focus your time on discussion and application. Expect to complete each section in 2–3 sessions beyond viewing time.

As a Standalone Course

If your learner has not completed The Critical Thinker's Toolkit Level 2, this course provides a complete introduction to critical thinking through film analysis.

Each task in the Student Workbook includes a full worked example that teaches the skill from the ground up. Your learner does not need prior exposure to the toolkit; the examples provides the specific knowledge needed to answer the question. When your learner encounters a tool for the first time, work through the example together before attempting the film-based task.

If your learner enjoys this course and wants to deepen their skills, The Critical Thinker's Toolkit Level 2 provides systematic instruction in each tool.

The Three-Film Arc as a Testing Cycle

The three films mirror the Testing Cycle your learner practiced in Lesson 5:

***The Wizard of Oz* = OBSERVE and INFER**

Your learner watches the classic film and forms initial hypotheses about who is good, who is wicked, and why. The film gives one perspective and invites conclusions. The culminating task asks them to construct a hypothesis using the Reasoning Chain structure. This is a position they will return to and test.

***Wicked* = TEST and REVISE**

New observations challenge original conclusions. Your learner learns the backstory, sees different perspectives, and must decide: Does this new information support or contradict my hypothesis? The guide explicitly asks them to compare their original hypothesis to the new evidence and update their position.

***Wicked: For Good* = SYNTHESIZE and DEMONSTRATE**

Your learner reaches final conclusions based on all available evidence. More importantly, they demonstrate that they can use critical thinking tools independently. The culminating task requires constructing a complete argument with evidence from all three films, counter-evidence, assumption identification, bias checking, and uncertainty acknowledgment.

But they also face a meta-question: Have I actually thought critically, or have I just swapped one story for another?

This structure makes the Testing Cycle visible. Your learner's understanding should evolve across the three films, and they should be able to trace how and why it changed.

What This Guide Contains

For each film, this Teaching Guide provides:

Discussion Guide

Questions to discuss after watching, organized by key scenes and moments. These treat critical thinking skills as lenses for seeing what is happening in the film. Priority sections are marked with stars (★) for when time is limited.

Student Workbook Tasks

The separate Student Workbook contains hands-on activities that require your learner to USE their critical thinking tools, not just talk about conclusions. Each task includes a worked example to remind them how the tool works.

Answer Keys

Sample responses for workbook tasks appear at the back of this guide. Use these to check thinking, not to replace it. Your learner's responses may differ and still be excellent. Look for evidence of critical thinking, not exact matches.

How Discussion and Workbook Tasks Work Together

The Teaching Guide and Student Workbook are designed as a unit. Discussion comes first; application follows.

Discussion identifies the moments. When you work through the discussion questions in this guide, you help your learner notice where critical thinking skills apply. "Did you see how Glinda established that pretty equals good?" "What evidence do we actually have that the Witch is wicked?" These conversations surface the critical thinking problems embedded in the films.

The workbook requires application. Noticing is not the same as doing. The workbook tasks ask your learner to actually use the tools—to evaluate evidence using the five-criteria framework, to X-ray a statement for hidden assumptions, to build a reasoning chain and stress-test it. This is where skills become abilities.

The sequence matters. Discussion without application builds awareness but not skill. Application without discussion means your learner may not recognize where to apply the tools. Work through at least some discussion questions before moving to workbook tasks. The discussion shows them what to look for; the workbook makes them do the looking.

The Role of Worked Examples

Every workbook task begins with a worked example. These examples serve two different purposes depending on your learner's background:

For learners who completed Lessons 1–11: The worked examples are refreshers. Your learner has already learned each skill systematically. The example reminds them how the tool works before they apply it to the film. If the skill is fresh, they can skim the example and move to the task.

For learners using this as a standalone course: The worked examples are the instruction. Each example teaches the complete skill from scratch—the same core content taught in the full toolkit, condensed into a single demonstration. Your learner should study the example carefully, understand each step, and use it as a model for the film-based task.

Either way, the worked examples ensure that every learner has what they need to complete each task successfully. They make the workbook usable whether your learner arrives with eleven lessons of preparation or none at all.

Pacing and Selection

You do not need to complete every section or every task. Here is guidance for different situations:

Short on time? Each discussion guide marks priority sections with stars (★). Focus on these for the essential critical thinking moments.

For discussion sections: Choose the sections most relevant to what your learner noticed during viewing. You do not need to cover everything.

For application tasks:

- Section 1 (*The Wizard of Oz*): 3–4 tasks recommended
- Section 2 (*Wicked*): 4–5 tasks recommended
- Section 3 (*Wicked: For Good*): 5–7 tasks plus culminating task

Choose based on your learner's engagement and available time. The lessons each task relates to are listed, so you can focus on specific skills that need more practice.

Across the three films: The guides build on each other. Completing Section 1 before watching *Wicked* creates a baseline for revision. Skipping directly to Section 3 will miss the power of watching conclusions evolve.

Skills Coverage

Every lesson from The Critical Thinker's Toolkit appears in this capstone:

Lesson	Skill	How It Appears
L1	Metacognition	Embedded throughout; noticing your own thinking as it shifts
L2	Know vs. Believe	What do characters (and viewers) actually know versus accept without evidence?
L3	Assumptions	Hidden beliefs planted by the films; Assumption X-Ray tasks
L4	Fact vs. Interpretation	Separating what we observe from labels and judgments
L5	Testing Cycle	The three-film arc structure; revision tasks
L6	Story in My Head	Two-Column Organizer tasks; characters' self-narratives
L7	Causal Reasoning	Mechanism questions; analyzing blame patterns
L8	SIFT / Persuasive Techniques	Analyzing propaganda; recognizing manipulation in all three films
L9	Evidence Quality	Evaluating the case against characters; five-criteria framework
L10	Reasoning Chains	Building arguments; Stress Test; culminating tasks
L11	Perspective / Bias	Whose perspective is missing? How does position shape what characters see?

Note on Metacognition (L1): Every section assumes and extends Lesson 1, even when L1 is not explicitly labeled. Noticing your own thinking – tracking how beliefs shift, catching yourself being manipulated, recognizing when you *want* to believe something – is the foundation that makes all other skills possible.

The Meta-Layer: A Critical Warning

TEACHING NOTE: ESSENTIAL — NOT OPTIONAL

Both *Wicked* films include a meta-awareness section that asks: Is this film also manipulating you? This content is essential to the capstone's purpose.

The danger of watching *Wicked* after *The Wizard of Oz* is simple: your learner might just swap one story for another. They might replace "the Witch is evil" with "Elphaba is innocent" without ever questioning whether they are thinking critically or just believing a more emotionally compelling narrative.

The meta-layer prevents this. It asks learners to notice:

- What filmmaking techniques is *Wicked* using to shape my sympathies?
- Am I believing this because of evidence or because I want it to be true?
- Is "Elphaba is good" actually supported, or is it just the story I prefer?

Critical thinkers do not just swap stories. They hold multiple perspectives, examine evidence, and form their own conclusions while remaining open to revision.

Before You Begin

A few practical notes:

Watch order matters.

The guides are designed for *The Wizard of Oz* first, then *Wicked*, then *Wicked: For Good*. Watching out of order will reduce the power of the revision experience.

Capture initial beliefs.

Before watching each film, ask your learner what they currently believe about the characters. Write it down. Return to these notes after viewing to see what changed and why.

Conclusion

This capstone represents the culmination of eleven lessons of skill-building. Your learner has the tools. These films provide the opportunity to use them. **The goal is not to reach "correct" conclusions about fictional characters.** It is to practice the kind of thinking that will serve them for the rest of their lives.



Section 1

The Wizard of Oz

The Wizard of Oz is filled with opportunities for critical thinking analysis. The film does many of the things Lessons 1–11 taught your learner to notice: it uses labels instead of evidence, it presents authority figures as trustworthy without earning that trust, it manipulates emotions through filmmaking techniques, and it omits the perspective of the character it wants us to hate.

This guide will help you lead a discussion that surfaces these issues. You do not need to cover everything. Choose the sections most relevant to what your learner noticed, but it is a good idea to read through the analysis so you can easily catch what is happening, even if your learner does not catch it all.

The goal is to notice how stories shape our beliefs, especially when those stories seem innocent.

THE THREE CHARACTERS

This discussion focuses on evaluating three characters: Glinda, the Wizard, and the Witch. The discussion asks: What do we actually KNOW about each versus what we are TOLD? Are they as good or as wicked as the film wants us to believe?

Short on time? Prioritize Sections 1, 2, 6, and 8 (marked with ★). These cover the essential critical thinking moments.

Before Watching

- 1. Say:** You probably already know the story of *The Wizard of Oz* and the witch. The Wicked Witch of the West is one of the most famous villains in American pop culture. When you watch the movie for this activity, you will watch it like a critical thinker. Pay attention to what you actually SEE versus what you are TOLD. Notice who is telling you things and what they might gain. Notice how the movie makes you FEEL, and what techniques it uses to create those feelings.
- 2. Ask:** Before we start, what do you already believe about the Wicked Witch? Where did those beliefs come from?
- 3. Why this matters:** Your learner might have pre-existing beliefs about the Wicked Witch from cultural exposure. These beliefs were formed without evidence. Capturing them now lets you return to them later and ask: "Did the movie give you evidence, or did it just confirm what you already believed?"

Watch the Film

- 1. No pausing needed.** Let your learner experience it. The discussion happens after.
- 2.** If your learner wants to pause and comment, that is fine. Just do not turn the first viewing into constant analysis. The depth comes in the discussion afterward.

After Watching: Discussion Guide

TEACHING NOTE:

The sections labeled WHAT HAPPENS and THE CRITICAL THINKING PROBLEM are for you. You do not need to read them to your learner. The questions are the intended discussion points. Possible responses are labeled PR. Those are to help you, not definitive. If your learner has a different response, that is okay. Follow the conversation where it leads, making sure to tie it to critical thinking skills.

1. The Wicked Witch of the East: Label Without Evidence ★ [CORE]

WHAT HAPPENS

Dorothy's house lands on and kills the Wicked Witch of the East. The Munchkins immediately celebrate. Glinda declares the witch is "really most sincerely dead" and everyone rejoices.

THE CRITICAL THINKING PROBLEM

We are told this witch was "wicked," but we never see her do anything. She is dead before we meet her. Meanwhile, Munchkinland looks prosperous, colorful, and happy. If she was oppressing these people, where is the evidence? The celebration assumes wickedness without proof.

1. Ask: Everyone is thrilled that the Wicked Witch of the East is dead. But did we ever observe her do anything bad?

PR: *No. She was already dead. We only have Glinda's word that she was wicked.*

2. Ask: Look at Munchkinland. Based on appearance, is there evidence that it is a place that was suffering under an evil ruler?

PR: *No. It looks cheerful, colorful, and prosperous. There is no visible evidence of oppression.*

3. Ask: So why do movie watchers believe she was wicked?

PR: *Because Glinda said so. Because she is called a "witch." Because authority figures labeled her.*

4. Ask: Let's apply the Testing Cycle. Viewers observe (a dead witch, celebrating Munchkins) and infer (she must have been wicked). Do they ever test that inference or revise it?

PR: *No. They stop at "infer." No one asks for evidence. No one questions the label. The cycle breaks down.*

IF YOUR LEARNER DOES NOT SEE THIS

Point out that we never meet this witch, never see her actions, never hear her side. The labels "wicked" and "bad" are applied by Glinda, and viewers accept them without evidence. This is exactly what we practiced in Lesson 2 (Know vs. Believe) and Lesson 3 (Assumptions) — accepting a claim without checking it. It is a Testing Cycle failure from Lesson 5. We observe and infer, but never test or revise.

Skill connection: Know vs. Believe (L2), Assumptions (L3), Testing Cycle (L5), Evidence Quality (L9)

2. Glinda Establishes the Rules: Pretty = Good, Ugly = Bad ★ [CORE]

WHAT HAPPENS

Glinda arrives in a pink bubble, glowing and beautiful. She asks Dorothy, "Are you a good witch or a bad witch?" When Dorothy says she is not a witch at all, Glinda explains that you can identify a bad witch because they are ugly, something Glinda is not.

THE CRITICAL THINKING PROBLEM

Before we ever see the Wicked Witch of the West, Glinda has already told us how to judge witches: by their appearance. Pretty witches are good. Ugly witches are bad. This is not evidence. It is bias based on looks.

When the Wicked Witch of the West appears at 32 minutes in a cloud of red smoke with green skin and a hooked nose, the audience already "knows" she is bad because Glinda primed us.

1. Ask: According to Glinda, how can you know if a witch is good or bad?

PR: *By how they look. Pretty = good. Ugly = bad.*

2. Ask: Is that a reliable way to judge someone? Can you tell if a person is good or bad by their appearance?

PR: *No. That is prejudice. Appearance tells you nothing about character.*

3. Ask: So, when the Wicked Witch of the West shows up later with green skin and a scary appearance, are we judging her based on evidence or based on what Glinda told us?

PR: *Based on what Glinda told us. The movie primed us to see her as bad before she did anything.*

4. Ask: Let's look at the reasoning chain the movie gives us. The position is: "The Witch is evil." The evidence is: "She looks ugly and does threatening things." Does that evidence actually prove she is EVIL, or does it just prove she is not pretty, and that she is angry or frightening?

PR: *It only proves she is angry or frightening. "Evil" requires more than scary appearance and angry behavior. The reasoning chain is weak.*

IF YOUR LEARNER DOES NOT SEE THIS

Remind them of Lesson 3 and Lesson 11. Glinda planted a rule in our heads — pretty = good, ugly = bad — and then the movie confirmed it. Our judgment feels natural, but it was installed. Remind them of Lesson 10. The reasoning chain looks complete, but the evidence does not actually support the conclusion.

Skill connection: Assumptions (L3), Bias (L11), Fact vs. Interpretation (L4), Reasoning Chains (L10)

4. The Milkflowers Story: Stories in Our Heads ★ [CORE]

WHAT HAPPENS

When Elphaba's mother became pregnant again, her father forced her to eat milkflowers every day to prevent another green baby. This caused a premature birth that killed Elphaba's mother and left Nessarose with paralyzed legs.

Elphaba carries the bottle of green elixir as a memento – and carries the belief that she caused her mother's death and her sister's disability.

THE CRITICAL THINKING PROBLEM

Elphaba believes she is responsible for her mother's death and her sister's condition. But examine the facts:

- Her father made the decision about the milkflowers
- The green elixir was drunk before Elphaba was even conceived – she did not choose it
- The complications were caused by the forced milkflower treatment, not by Elphaba's existence

Yet Elphaba has constructed a "story in her head" (L6) where she is to blame. This is a common pattern: people blame themselves for things that were not their fault. Elphaba has absorbed her father's rejection and concluded that she must deserve it.

Later in the film, when Glinda hears this story, she gently challenges it: "You didn't make your mother take those milkflowers." This is the first time anyone has pushed back on Elphaba's self-blame.

1. Ask: Elphaba carries that bottle of green elixir everywhere. What does she believe about herself because of it?

AR: *She believes she is the reason her mother is dead and her sister is disabled. She blames herself.*

2. Ask: Let's examine this. Who decided to make her mother eat milkflowers?

AR: *Her father.*

3. Ask: Who caused Elphaba's green skin?

AR: *The mysterious man with the elixir, and her mother's choice to drink it. Elphaba did not exist yet. She had no say.*

4. Ask: So is Elphaba actually responsible for what happened?

AR: *No. She has taken responsibility for decisions other people made. Her "story in her head" blames herself unfairly.*

5. Ask: Glinda tells Elphaba, "You didn't make your mother take those milkflowers." Why is that moment important?

AR: *It is the first time anyone has challenged Elphaba's self-blame. Glinda sees that Elphaba's story is not accurate.*

6. Ask: Why do you think Elphaba believes this story about herself?

AR: *Because her father blamed her. Because she was rejected from birth. When you are told you are bad your whole life, you start to believe it.*

IF YOUR LEARNER DOES NOT SEE THIS

This connects to Lesson 6. We all carry stories about ourselves. Elphaba's story in her head is that she ruins everything. But when we examine the evidence, her story is not accurate. Critical thinkers question their own stories, not just other people's.

Skill connection: Story in My Head (L6), Testing Cycle (L5), Evidence Quality (L9)

5. The Hidden Mural: History Covered Up

WHAT HAPPENS

When Elphaba first arrives at Shiz University, her magical outburst accidentally breaks a stone sculpture on the building's facade. Behind it is a hidden mural showing Animal academics – professors and scholars who once taught at Shiz. The mural was literally covered up by a sculpture of the Wizard.

THE CRITICAL THINKING PROBLEM

This is a clear visual metaphor: Animal history has been literally paved over. The university that once celebrated Animal scholars now hides their existence behind a monument to the Wizard.

This foreshadows what we will later learn about the Wizard's oppression of Animals. It also raises a question: if they covered up this history, what else have they covered up?

1. Ask: When Elphaba's magic breaks the stone, what do we see underneath?

AR: *A mural of Animal academics. Animals who used to teach at Shiz.*

2. Ask: What was covering it up?

AR: *A sculpture of the Wizard.*

3. Ask: Dr. Dillamond mentions that many Animals used to teach at Shiz. Now he is one of the last, and this mural was hidden. What does that tell us about how the Animals disappeared?

AR: *It was deliberate. Someone decided to hide their contributions and erase their presence. This shows the oppression of Animals is not new – it has been happening long enough for the history to be literally buried.*

IF YOUR LEARNER DOES NOT SEE THIS

This is visual storytelling. The film is showing, not telling. The mural exists to help us understand that the oppression of Animals is not new – it has been happening long enough that the history is literally buried.

Skill connection: Evidence Quality (L9), Perspective-Taking (L11)

6. At Shiz: Who Is the Problem? ★ [CORE]

WHAT HAPPENS

From the moment Elphaba arrives at Shiz, she is treated as a problem. The other students stare, whisper, and recoil. Glinda (later Glinda) mocks her. When Glinda's attempts to exclude Elphaba fail, she offers to "help" – but her help assumes Elphaba is broken and needs fixing.

THE CRITICAL THINKING PROBLEM

Notice how the language works. Glinda does not say "I want to change you for my benefit." She says she wants to "help" Elphaba. Madame Morrible takes credit for Elphaba's magical outburst. Is this protection or erasure?

The people who create problems for Elphaba present themselves as her benefactors. This is bias disguised as kindness. Glinda genuinely believes she is being generous. But her "help" assumes that Elphaba's appearance is a problem that needs solving.

The actual problem is other people's prejudice – but no one offers to fix that.

1. Ask: When Elphaba arrives at Shiz, how do the other students treat her?

AR: *They stare, whisper, recoil, mock. They treat her as strange and unwelcome.*

2. Ask: Madame Morrible tells everyone that SHE caused the magical explosion, not Elphaba. Is this helpful or harmful?

AR: *It could be seen as protecting Elphaba from scrutiny. But it also erases Elphaba's power by taking credit for it. Is that protection or erasure?*

3. Ask: Glinda eventually offers to "help" Elphaba by teaching her how to be popular. What assumption is built into that offer?

AR: *That Elphaba needs to change. That the problem is Elphaba, not the people who reject her.*

4. Ask: Elphaba once calls Glinda out: "You said you'd help me – but what you meant was you'd fix me." What is the difference between help and fixing?

AR: *Help works with someone toward THEIR goals. Fixing assumes they are broken and imposes YOUR idea of what is right.*

IF YOUR LEARNER DOES NOT SEE THIS

This is L11 bias in action. Glinda genuinely believes she is being kind. But kindness that assumes the victim is the problem can still reinforce bias – even if it feels generous. Critical thinkers notice when "help" actually reinforces prejudice.

Skill connection: Assumptions (L3), Bias (L11), Fact vs. Interpretation (L4)

7. Madame Morrible Takes Credit: Protection or Erasure?

WHAT HAPPENS

When Elphaba's powers erupt on her first day at Shiz, Madame Morrible intervenes and claims she caused the disturbance, not Elphaba. She then takes Elphaba under her wing, offering private sorcery lessons and a path to meet the Wizard.

THE CRITICAL THINKING PROBLEM

Is Morrible protecting Elphaba from scrutiny, or is she claiming Elphaba's power for herself?

Later events reveal Morrible's true loyalties. She serves the Wizard and uses Elphaba as an unwitting tool. This early scene looks different once you know the ending: What once looked like protection may have been strategic recruitment.

1. Ask: Morrible claims credit for the outburst and immediately offers Elphaba private lessons and a path to the Wizard. Does this feel like generosity or strategy?

AR: *Both, perhaps. But later we learn Morrible serves the Wizard. She may have been identifying useful talent from the beginning.*

2. Ask: After watching the whole film, how do you now interpret Morrible's early "kindness"?

AR: *It looks more like recruitment than generosity. She saw Elphaba's power and wanted to use it.*

Skill connection: Source Reliability (L8), Story in My Head (L6), Testing Cycle (L5)

8. Dr. Dillamond and "Something Bad": The Animals' Plight

WHAT HAPPENS

Dr. Dillamond is a Goat professor at Shiz — one of the last Animal teachers. He tells Elphaba about troubling changes in Oz: Animals are losing their ability to speak, being stripped of their rights, disappearing from public life. The chalkboard is vandalized with "ANIMALS SHOULD BE SEEN AND NOT HEARD."

The film shows Dr. Dillamond meeting secretly with other Animals who are fleeing Oz or losing their voices.

THE CRITICAL THINKING PROBLEM

The film is showing systematic oppression. This is not random prejudice — it is organized. Animals are being removed from positions of authority, their history is being erased (remember the mural), and their very ability to speak is being taken.

This parallels how many real-world regimes strip rights from minority groups: first their jobs, then their history, then their voice, then their freedom.

When Dr. Dillamond is finally arrested and removed from the classroom, he is replaced immediately by a human professor who presents a caged lion cub as an example of how "progress" is made by preventing Animals from learning to speak. The regime is no longer hiding its goals.

1. Ask: What is happening to Animals in Oz, according to Dr. Dillamond?

AR: *They are losing the ability to speak. They are being removed from jobs. They are disappearing.*

2. Ask: The chalkboard reads "Animals should be seen and not heard." What does that slogan mean?

AR: *Animals should not have a voice in society. They should be visible as servants but not participants.*

3. Ask: When Dr. Dillamond is arrested and removed, who replaces him?

AR: *Professor Nikidik, a human — who brings in a caged lion cub to show how Animals can be kept from developing speech.*

4. Ask: How does this sequence of events — Animals losing jobs, then voice, then freedom — resemble things that have happened in real history?

AR: *This is how oppression works: first exclude a group, then erase their contributions, then silence them, then control them physically.*

5. Ask: Glinda and the other students watch Dr. Dillamond be dragged away. What do they do?

AR: *Nothing. They are silent. They do not protest. They go along with it.*

IF YOUR LEARNER DOES NOT SEE THIS

This is the film making a political point about complicity. Most people who allow oppression are not actively evil – they just stay silent when it would cost them to speak up.

Skill connection: Evidence Quality (L9), Perspective-Taking (L11)

2. The Yellow Brick Road: Who Built Oz?

WHAT HAPPENS

We see Animals doing hard labor, building the yellow brick road. They are mistreated, forced to do difficult work. Elphaba frees them.

THE CRITICAL THINKING PROBLEM

The yellow brick road, the symbol of Oz, the path Dorothy follows, was built by Animals being coerced and mistreated. This is the regime's infrastructure, constructed through oppression.

This fact will never be known by citizens who walk that road. They'll see gold and magic. They will not see the labor.

1. Ask: Who is building the yellow brick road?

AR: *Animals. They are being forced to do hard labor.*

2. Ask: When Dorothy skips down the yellow brick road in *The Wizard of Oz*, does she know who built it?

AR: *No. The road just exists as a magical path. The labor is invisible.*

3. Ask: What does this reveal about how societies can have beautiful things built on hidden suffering?

AR: *The suffering gets erased. The product remains. People enjoy the road without knowing who was harmed to create it.*

Skill connection: Perspective-Taking (L11), Evidence Quality (L9)

4. The Wizard's Confession: Truth Is What They Want to Believe ★ [CORE]

WHAT HAPPENS

In "Wonderful," the Wizard explains his philosophy: "The truth is not fact or reason — just what they want to believe in." He argues that Elphaba's way hasn't worked, that people don't want the truth.

THE CRITICAL THINKING PROBLEM

The Wizard says the quiet part out loud. This is not a villain cackling about evil — this is a ruler calmly explaining how power works.

And terrifyingly: he's right. Not morally right but accurately describing how Oz functions. The propaganda works. The labels stick. Citizens don't want to question because questioning is uncomfortable.

This is the thesis statement of the entire trilogy, delivered by its architect.

1. Ask: The Wizard says, "The truth is not fact or reason — just what they want to believe in." What does he mean?

AR: *People don't believe things because they're true. They believe things because believing feels good, safe, or comfortable.*

2. Ask: Is the Wizard wrong about how Oz works?

AR: *No. He's accurately describing what we've seen. The propaganda works. He's morally wrong but factually accurate.*

3. Ask: Why is this line so important for understanding all three films?

AR: *It explains why evidence doesn't matter in Oz. Why labels stick. Why no one questions. The Wizard built a system where people want to believe, and wanting is enough.*

4. Ask: (L7) The Wizard implies that wanting to believe creates belief. What's the mechanism?

AR: *Confirmation bias. When you want something to be true, you notice supporting evidence and dismiss contradictions. Your wanting shapes what you see.*

YOU CAN MODEL THIS THINKING FOR YOUR LEARNER

You might say: When I heard this line, I felt uncomfortable. The Wizard is the villain, but he is describing something real about how persuasion works everywhere. People believe what they want to believe. That is not just Oz. That is our world today.

Skill connection: Know vs. Believe (L2), Confirmation Bias (L11), Persuasive Techniques (L8), Causal Reasoning (L7)

5. The Blame Pattern: Everyone Blames Elphaba ★ [CORE]

WHAT HAPPENS

The Lion blames Elphaba for taking him from "the only home he ever knew" when she freed him from the cage at Shiz. Later, Boq (the Tin Man) blames Elphaba for his transformation, even though Nessarose enslaved him and Elphaba saved his life.

THE CRITICAL THINKING PROBLEM

This is the pattern made visible. Everyone blames Elphaba — including victims of other people's harm.

The Lion was caged by the Wizard's regime, traumatized by experiments, freed by Elphaba. He blames Elphaba.

Boq was enslaved by Nessarose, nearly killed by her spell, saved by Elphaba's magic. He blames Elphaba.

Once someone is labeled "wicked," they become a bucket for all harm. The designated villain absorbs the blame.

1. Ask: The Lion blames Elphaba for taking him from "the only home he ever knew." What was that home?

AR: *A cage. He was imprisoned, being experimented on, prevented from learning to speak.*

2. Ask: So why does he blame her?

AR: *Because blaming her is easier than understanding what really happened. The "wicked" label does his thinking for him.*

3. Ask: Boq blames Elphaba for turning him into the Tin Man. Who actually enslaved him? Who endangered him? Who saved him?

AR: *Nessarose enslaved him. Nessarose cast the spell. Elphaba saved him. He blames the person who saved him, not the person who harmed him.*

4. Ask: What does this pattern tell us about how "wicked" labels work?

AR: *Once labeled wicked, they absorb all blame — even for things they didn't do. The label does the thinking for people.*

5. Ask: The Lion and Boq were both there. They have firsthand evidence. Why isn't that enough?

AR: *Because evidence isn't enough when propaganda is strong enough. They see their suffering through the frame they were given.*

IF YOUR LEARNER DOES NOT SEE THIS

Make a simple chart: Harm | Actually Responsible | Blamed. The Lion traumatized: Wizard's regime → Elphaba. Boq enslaved: Nessarose → Elphaba. The designated villain absorbs blame for everything.

Skill connection: Assumptions (L3), Evidence Quality (L9), Bias (L11), Causal Reasoning (L7)

13. Across All Three Films: The Ultimate Questions ★ [CORE]

WHAT HAPPENS

You have now watched three films that tell the same story from different angles.

THE CRITICAL THINKING PROBLEM

Each film used persuasion techniques to shape how you feel. Each protected certain characters and blamed others. Each had a perspective it wanted you to adopt.

The ultimate question is not "Which film told the truth?"

The ultimate question is: What would it take for anyone in Oz — or anyone watching — to actually find out what is true, instead of just believing the most recent story?

1. Ask: In *The Wizard of Oz*, who did we trust? Who did we fear?

AR: *We trusted Glinda and the Wizard. We feared the Witch.*

2. Ask: After *Wicked* Parts 1 and 2, who do we trust? Who do we fear?

AR: *We trust Elphaba. We question Glinda and the Wizard.*

3. Ask: Did our opinions change because of evidence, or because we heard a different story?

AR: *Mostly because we heard a different story. *Wicked* gave new information but also used persuasion techniques.*

4. Ask: If you only watched *The Wizard of Oz*, what would you believe? If you only watched *Wicked*?

AR: *The Wizard of Oz: fear the Witch, trust authorities. *Wicked*: love Elphaba, question authorities. Same events, different framing.*

5. Ask: The Wizard said truth is what they want to believe. Did we escape that trap? Or did we just believe the last story?

AR: *This is the hard question. We might have just swapped one story for another. Critical thinking means noticing that *Wicked* is also persuading us.*

6. Ask: What would someone need to do to actually KNOW what happened — not believe, but know?

AR: *Multiple sources, independent evidence, perspectives from different positions, willingness to question appealing narratives.*

YOU CAN MODEL THIS THINKING FOR YOUR LEARNER

You might say: I notice I now believe Elphaba was good and Glinda was complicit. But I need to ask myself, is that because of evidence, or because *Wicked* was more emotionally compelling? I liked Elphaba. I wanted her to be the hero. That wanting might be shaping what I believe.

Skill connection: Know vs. Believe (L2), Evidence Quality (L9), Source Reliability (L8), Confirmation Bias (L11), Perspective-Taking (L11)

14. But Wait: Is *Wicked: For Good* Also Manipulating You?

WHAT HAPPENS

Throughout *Wicked: For Good*, the film uses music, lighting, pacing, and staging to shape your emotions.

THE CRITICAL THINKING PROBLEM

Consider:

- "For Good" is staged to make you cry, not think.
- The melting is shown in shadows, protecting you from Dorothy's experience.
- Dorothy is invisible so her trauma can be ignored.
- Glinda's betrayal of Fiyero is quickly overshadowed by her loss.
- The Animals' resolution is rushed. Dr. Dillamond is freed and forgotten.
- The ending is emotionally satisfying while ethically unresolved.

Each technique smooths over ethical friction, so the emotional resolution feels clean even when moral resolution is not.

1. Ask: "For Good" is the emotional climax. Did it make you feel moved?

AR: *Probably yes. It's designed to.*

2. Ask: What questions does the emotion make it harder to ask?

AR: *Did Glinda earn this moment? Is farewell the same as accountability? Can you cry your way out of complicity?*

3. Ask: Dorothy is never shown clearly. Why might the film make that choice?

AR: *Because seeing Dorothy clearly would force us to reckon with what Elphaba did to her. Her invisibility protects Elphaba.*

4. Ask: Dr. Dillamond is freed and never seen again. The Animals are welcomed back in one brief scene. Is this resolution or erasure?

AR: *Closer to erasure. The political plot is resolved in moments so emotional plots can take center stage.*

5. Ask: Does *Wicked: For Good* give you the ending you wanted?

AR: *Probably yes — Elphaba survives, love wins, Glinda grows.*

6. Ask: Does the ending being what you wanted make it more or less trustworthy?

AR: *Less, potentially. When a story gives us what we want, we're less likely to question it.*

YOU CAN MODEL THIS THINKING FOR YOUR LEARNER

You might say: I wanted Elphaba to be okay. I wanted the romance to survive. The film gave me all that. That is exactly when I should be most suspicious, not because happy endings are wrong, but because my wanting them makes me less likely to notice what the film skipped.

Skill connection: Persuasive Techniques (L8), Confirmation Bias (L11), Testing Cycle (L5), Know vs. Believe (L2)

Closing

1. **Ask:** What do you now believe about Elphaba? About Glinda? About the Wizard? Have your beliefs changed since *The Wizard of Oz*?
2. **Ask:** To what extent are your current beliefs based on evidence, and to what extent are they shaped by which story was told most compellingly?
3. **Ask:** The Wizard said people believe what they want to believe. After all three films, do you think you escaped that trap, or are you still in it?
4. **Ask:** What would you tell someone who only watched *The Wizard of Oz*? What would you tell someone who only watched *Wicked*?
5. **Say:** Critical thinkers do not just swap one story for another. They hold multiple perspectives, examine evidence, question even the stories they like, and remain open to revision.

Skills Covered in This Discussion

- **Know vs. Believe** – "Truth is what they want to believe." (Lesson 2)
- **Assumptions** – The propaganda assumes guilt; characters assume Elphaba is to blame. (Lesson 3)
- **Fact vs. Interpretation** – "Good" and "Wicked" remain interpretations, not facts. (Lesson 4)
- **Testing Cycle** – The citizens of Oz do not test the claims made by the Wizard. (Lesson 5)
- **Story in My Head** – Elphaba internalizes the villain role. (Lesson 6)
- **Causal Reasoning** – The blame pattern ignores actual causation. (Lesson 7)
- **SIFT, Source Reliability, Persuasive Techniques** – Propaganda, emotional framing, rushed resolutions. (Lesson 8)
- **Evidence Quality** – Firsthand witnesses still blame wrongly. (Lesson 9)
- **Reasoning Chains** – Glinda's redemption is asserted without sufficient premises. (Lesson 10)
- **Bias, Perspective-Taking** – Dorothy's experience erased, blame misdirected. (Lesson 11)

Comparing All Three Films

Question	<i>After The Wizard of Oz</i>	<i>After Wicked</i>	<i>After Wicked: For Good</i>
Is the Witch wicked?	Uncertain – harmful but understandable	Clearer – labeled as punishment	Complex – accepts the label herself
Is Glinda good?	Uncertain – withheld secret	Clearer – chose safety over solidarity	Unresolved – inherited power, never told truth
Who gets blamed?	The Witch	The Wizard, systemic oppression	Elphaba still – even by those she saved
Who gets credit?	Glinda, Dorothy	Elphaba (in our eyes)	Glinda – inherits power, becomes hero

TEACHING NOTE

This discussion guide completes the capstone arc. Your learner has now:

- Examined how labels are created and maintained
- Traced how blame gets misdirected to designated villains
- Observed how propaganda overrides evidence
- Seen how "good" and "wicked" function as political tools
- Practiced noticing when films use emotion to bypass critical thinking
- Held complexity: understanding why characters act as they do without excusing harm

The goal was never to decide who's "really" good or wicked. The goal was to notice how stories shape what we believe, and to carry that awareness into every story they encounter from now on.