

Fiction Fills Gap in Schools' Critical Thinking Lessons - Author Russ Wallace Uses Historical Fiction Aimed at Tweens to Stimulate Strategic Thinking.

*While researching for his historical fiction book, *Zenobia: Birth of a Legend*, Arizona author, Russ Wallace, discovered that some youths of ancient Europe and Western Asia may have had a more strategic and well-rounded education than modern teens.*

November 22, 2011 (FPRC) -- Throughout the centuries, storytelling and fiction have been popular classroom discussions to present real life situations and problems, and examine resolutions. Instructors encouraged students' dialogue of options and kindled critical thinking.

However, Wallace believes the twentieth century's speedier lifestyles and educational changes in today's classrooms have resulted in rigid and formulaic sessions. Wallace's theory seems to bear out in his conversations with today's educators.

Laurie A. Gray (JD), former high school teacher and founder of Socratic Parenting LLC, agrees, "Critical thinking skills, philosophy and reason are difficult to quantify and value, therefore we can't assess them properly, so we don't teach them." Without it, says Wallace, the expanded flow of thought considered necessary to promote great thinking or even significant survival and success skills, is stifled.

Tutoring, once considered the last-chance help for remedial students and others missing credits, is seeing growth in the recessed economy, largely due to what is perceived as lacking in mainstream education. Part of that is crucial critical thinking skills. "Students are motivated to get scores on tests, not inspired to understand something from within," says Adam Wes, CEO of Adam Wes Academics, who has seen an upsurge in his tutoring business.

Perhaps the difference lies with performance assessment, to which Wallace responds, "There is no evidence that the educators of Zenobia's time were interested in grades to measure the learning of their pupils. The goal of the students themselves was to elevate their thinking abilities. Learning, including learning how to analyze, was its own reward."

From Aristotle to Xenophanes early societies produced many great thinkers. "I cannot teach anybody anything. I can only make people think," is an oft-repeated Socrates maxim. But "'Critical thinking' is not taught," says Jennifer Little, Ph.D. and founder of Parents Teach Kids. "It is presumed to 'happen' as kids become adolescents." However, it's the chicken and the egg dilemma—how can critical thinking 'happen' for children if they're not taught what it is and how to implement it?

Wallace plans critical thinking scenes in all books of the Zenobia series (*Birth of a Legend* is Book 1). He chronicles Zenobia's rise to power, capturing her inquisitive nature in strategy-provoking and critical-thinking sessions aimed at the tween and young adult market; though the books have broader appeal.

Similar discussions for classroom use are offered by Russ Wallace to help today's youth learn how

to apply critical thinking to their lives. Zenobia: Birth of a Legend, Book 1, is available in hard cover and ebook format at Amazon; in most ebook formats at Smashwords, and in the hard cover edition at Geode Press, or through major bookstores.

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Keywords

[education](#)

[zenobia](#)

[historical fiction](#)

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