

How to Think

* All sentence requirements are minimums. You are free to write more.

Introduction:

1. On a scale of 1-10, how would you rate yourself as an “objective thinker?”
2. Sometimes we make bad decisions. What would you say are the top contributing factors when you make a bad decision? (3 sentences)
3. On pages 16-17, Jacobs talks about different “systems” in thinking. Describe each one.
4. What is “refutation mode” and how can we avoid being caught in the refutation mode trap? (5 sentences)
5. In his section on “consensus and emotion” there are a number of notable concepts! Summarize this section and give an example or two of how we tend to “substitute emotion for thought.” (5 sentences)
6. Define what Jacobs means by the “repugnant cultural other” (RCO). Do you think most people have an RCO? Explain your answer (5 sentences)

Chapter 1 – Beginning to Think

1. Most probably read about about Megan Phelps-Roper and Westboro Baptist Church and thought, “how could anyone think like this?” But given a different upbringing, do you think you also could have been one of the people at Westboro and joining in the picket lines? Why or why not?
2. What do you think of this quote: “To think independently of other human beings is impossible , and if it were possible it would be undesirable.” Write 5-7 sentences on what Jacobs is saying and if you think he’s right.
3. Jacobs uses the story of John Stuart Mill to illustrate the relationship between “thinking and feeling” as he’s working out what it means to be rational. Describe the ‘experiment’ that John Stuart Mill was subjected to by his father and why it ended up in a “collapse.” (Pages 39-44) (5-7 sentences)
4. What was Wilt Chamberlain’s “manly” rationality? Would you have made the same choice? Be honest. :)

Chapter 2 – Attractions

1. On pages 52-53, Jacobs about “breaking someone on the floor.” Describe what he means by this phrase.
2. Though maybe not in a formal debate, have you ever been “broken on the floor” in a discussion?
3. Read these Proverbs and write at least one sentence for each one about how to apply these teachings.
 1. Proverbs 9:8
 2. Proverbs 10:17
 3. Proverbs 11:14
 4. Proverbs 12:1
 5. Proverbs 15:10
 6. Proverbs 15:32
4. In the section Binding, Blinding, and The Inner Ring, Jacobs argues that “intuitions” come before strategic reasoning. What does he mean by this? (3-4 sentences)
5. Give an example from your own life or from a situation you have observed where someone’s intuitions have served to “bind” and “blind.” (Pgs 55-58)

6. Jacobs writes about the importance of “membership.” He writes “But for people of all ages, some form of genuine membership is absolutely necessary for thinking.” (62) Do you think this is true? How do you think “membership” impacts the lives of teens? (4-5 sentences)
7. Summarize the exchange Jacobs describes with his friends about the controversial article, “The Case for Reparations.” (67) Jacobs discusses “solidarity vs critical reflection.” How can you use this paradigm to help think through hard cultural situations?

Chapter 3 – Repulsions

1. In the last chapter, Jacobs talks about attractions. In this chapter he discusses repulsions. Look at the section on “punishing the out group.” Describe what Jacobs means by that phrase. (2-3 sentences)
2. What are some examples you’ve seen of “punishing the out group.” (2-3 sentences)
3. Jacobs shares about Thomas More’s attacks on Martin Luther and Luther’s less than charitable words to the pope and the Catholic Church (81). According to Jacobs, what key piece of technology helped cause the increased rhetoric? What could have helped cool the rhetoric?
4. Jacob’s writes: “To dwell habitually with people is inevitably to adopt their way of approaching the world, which is a matter not just of ideas but practices.” (87) Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not? (2-3 sentences)

Chapter 4 – The Money of Fools

1. What does the title of the chapter, “the money of fools” mean? (Look at first 2 paragraphs of chapter).
2. Read Proverbs 10:19. What does this verse tell us about “many words?”
3. Summarize Jacob’s point of the section, “keywords and group identity.” (1-2 sentences)
4. Can you think of any words that we currently use that we make “do a lot of extra work?” (See quote on 92)
5. Explain what is meant by “double booting” (111). Do you find this to be a useful analogy for understanding arguments from people from different different perspectives?

Chapter 5 – The Age of Lumping

1. Explain the concept of “lumping.” What are the two reasons Jacobs says we do this? (pp 116-117).
2. What’s the relationship between “lumping” and “solidarity” according to Jacobs? How do we see this playing out in politics? (3-4 sentences) (pp 116-118)
3. Jacobs writes that we need to make a distinction between “those who held what we now believe to be a profoundly mistaken view, or tolerated such a view, simply because it was common in their time, and those who were the architects of and advocates for such a view.” (120) Do you agree with this concept? Can you think of any examples from history or modern thought where we should distinguish these categories? (3-5 sentences)
4. Jacobs gives an illustration about “Timothy and the demon baby” at the end of the chapter. What does this story and the explanation following illustrate? What can we learn from this encounter? (3-4 sentences)

Chapter 6 – Open and Shut

1. Write a summary of chapter 6. Your summary should include 4-6 sentences summarizing Jacob’s main points and 2-3 sentences of your own critique. I’m looking for you to demonstrate that you have understood his point and have thought critically about the chapter.

Chapter 7 – A Person, Thinking

1. In this chapter, Jacob's interacts with an essay by David Foster Wallace. Wallace uses a term he calls "SNOOT." What is meant by that term? (2-3 sentences)
2. What is the "democratic spirit" and how can understanding the "DS" help us be better thinkers? (2-4 sentences)
3. Look at the paragraph on the top of page 146. Jacob's discusses the challenges to learning our "opponents' moral dialect." What are the reasons he gives and do you agree? (3-5 sentences)

Conclusion – The Pleasures and Dangers of Thinking

1. Write a summary of the conclusion. (3-5 sentences)
2. Write YOUR summary thoughts of the book. Did you like it? Why or why not? List at least 2 ideas from the book that you think will be helpful for you as you exit the PEP bubble and head out into the wide world. (5-7 sentences)