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## Questioning as we learn: An introduction to critical thinking

### Material for Higher Education students in Sierra Leone by INASP, UK



Provided by the Critical Thinking Taskforce (CTTF)  
within the project AQHEd-SL

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#### *Unit 6 - Snippet 128*



#### **Energizer**

Before you jump into your first text analysis and evaluation, you can test your thinking skills with the following problem that had been given to a creative engineering class at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (M.I.T.):

"The instructor had placed two ping-pong balls at the bottom of an otherwise empty metal cylinder, which was bolted to the floor of the science lab. The cylinder was about seven inches [= 18 cm] wide and about five feet high [= 1.50 metres or as high as a not so tall adult]. The students had one full hour to remove the ping-pong balls from the cylinder. They could not leave the room but were free to use anything in the room. The professor encouraged them to work together, reminding them that if they found a solution, they would all pass the final exam and if they did not, they would all fail."

They all failed.

Had you been in that room, how would you have solved the problem? Think for a couple of minutes. If you have found a good solution – wow, you seem to be cleverer as all the students in the M.I.T. class.