two ways to show critical thinking in an essay

1) make CONNECTIONS by using transitional words
transitional words show similarities, differences, and relate points to us/life (hence show critical thinking).

Similar to Rodriguez, Mike Rose is inspired by a teacher.
Like many of us, Mike Rose is inspired by a teacher.
The man in Dickenson's poem is, as Elmore, apparently inspired by his beliefs, his religion.
Malcolm X talks about becoming "mentally awake" and Dickinson's character is said to have a "loosened spirit" as well.
Rodriguez, much like Malcolm X, got the idea to write in a notebook. For Rodriguez, the words he wrote were themes of books; for Malcolm X they were all the words from a dictionary.
Malcolm X, as others born into poverty, had a limited education.

2) make CONNECTIONS by grouping main points
groupings of points show similarities and differences (hence critical thinking). to create a grouping, follow these four steps:
• list the points in any order
• come up with criteria for/aspects of the list
• re-group the list using the criteria
• write main point that sets up the groupings

here's an example:
step 1 make a list of the PROBLEMS:
Malcolm X = can't read or write in prison
Rodriquez = at home not encouraged to read; in school confused/lonely
Raymond = dyslexia; low self-esteem; no friends
Rose = mixed up test, put in horrible vocational classes; loses interest in learning
Elmore = feels illiterate (doesn't know anything about general subjects)
man in poem = poor; old/sick

step 2 figure out possible criteria/aspects of the PROBLEMS:
AGE at time of problem
DEGREE of problem
CAUSE of problem

step 3 re-group the list based on criteria:
AGE: childhood: RR, MR, DR   adult: MX, LE, man
DEGREE: severe: MX, DR, man   less severe: RR, MR, LE
CAUSE: societal/external: MX, MR   personal: RR, man, DR, LE

step 4 write a main point to set up the grouping
Some literacy problems are very severe... Others are much less serious.
Literacy obstacles can start in childhood... Literacy problems also occur to adults.