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| Essential Questions | G:\LMC\LMC Research Unit Archive\bd05869_.gif |

**What are the differences between the following questions?**

What were the causes of the Vietnam War?

**vs.**

To what extent did the fear of Communism play in the road leading to the Vietnam War?

**OR**

What role does the media play in fueling political dissent? How does news coverage affect political opinion during times of war?

**What is an Essential Question?**

**An essential question:**

* Has no right or wrong answer
* May start with how, why or which
Is open ended and cannot be answered with a "yes" or "no"
Leads us to ask other questions
* Requires us to analyze information and make our own
judgments, conclusions or decisions
* Deals with issues of great importance to us as human beings, citizens, and/or individuals
* Challenges us to make connections between what we learn in various subjects and larger world issues
* The answer to the question cannot be found. It must be invented.

**What is a subsidiary question?**(These are also called supporting, follow-up, focus, or sub-questions)

Subsidiary questions support and **help answer** Essential Questions.

Subsidiary questions uncover the **who**, **what**, **where**, **when, why, which**, and **how** of Essential Questions.

**The Process of Developing an Essential Question**

**Step 1**

Consider what you know and what you need to know about the topic.

Ask and answer the **who**, **what**, **where**, **when**, **why**, and **how** questions about your topic.

You must know a lot about your topic before you begin to formulate your essential question.

**As you research, ask yourself the following questions:**

* Does this topic arouse my natural curiosity?
* If so, what does it make me wonder about?
* Why is this topic an important one to explore?
* What connections can I make between the topic and my life?

**Practical Considerations**

* Can this question be adequately answered in the amount of time allotted?
* Can I access published information that will help me answer this question?
* Where do I begin to look for information?
* Has this research been done before? If so, how can I investigate it from a different angle and make it my own?

**Step 2**

**Narrow your focus.**

**Example 1**

Civil Rights > Civil Rights Leaders > Malcolm X > Extremism

**Example 2**Westward Expansion > Mexican American War > Manifest Destiny as justification

**Step 3**

**Create an essential question.**

**Example 1**

Civil Rights > Civil Rights Leaders > Malcolm X > Extremism

**Preliminary question:**
Was Malcolm X's militant approach justified?

**Essential Question:**To what extent was Malcolm X's militant approach harmful or helpful in achieving the goal of the Civil Rights Movement?

**Example 2**

Westward Expansion > Mexican American War > Manifest Destiny as justification

**Sequence of preliminary questions:**

Are Americans morally superior?

To what extent has our foreign policy in Latin America been driven by our belief in our moral superiority?

**Essential Question:**To what extent did our foreign policy in the Mexican American War and our intervention in Haiti reflect our belief in our moral superiority?

**Step 4**

Continue creating focused questions (i.e., subsidiary questions) that will guide you through your research and help you develop an answer to your Essential Question.

\*Note: These questions should be more focused and directly related to your EQ.

**Example Essential Question:**To what extent did Malcolm X's militant approach achieve the goals of the civil rights movement?

**Example Subsidiary Questions:**

How did Malcolm X's childhood experiences shape him?
What methods did Malcolm X use to promote the civil rights of African Americans?

What were the positive and negative outcomes of his words or actions?

How did various African Americans react or respond to Malcolm X? How did his actions affect African-Americans?

What was the relationship like between Malcolm X (and the nation of Islam) and the US government?

How did the media perceive Malcolm X? How was he portrayed? Was it a realistic portrayal?

Did he cause more harm than good?

\* Note: You will find that more questions arise as you answer your subsidiary questions.

**Step 5**

Formulate an answer to your Essential Question based upon your research.

**Examples of Essential Questions**

What impact did news coverage have on America's support of the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ war?

What impact does geography have on \_\_\_\_\_\_ culture?

To what extent has diversity of perspective shaped the American identity?

How has the Supreme Court's interpretation of the Constitution affected legislation regarding a citizen's right to\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_?

How did the presidencies of President \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_ differ with respect to foreign policy?

How have (or haven't) the rights of American citizens been compromised since the passage of the Patriot Act?

What impact might the Patriot Act have had on preventing the terrorist acts of 9/11?