

Name: _____

Essential Question Worksheet

An ESSENTIAL QUESTION is a big question that includes many smaller, related questions. An essential question clearly presents what you want to discover about your topic. The answer to an essential question requires you to create a plan or course of action, or requires you to make a decision. It is **never** a simple answer, and it is **always** your own unique answer.

The first step is to do lots of background reading! Think of an essential question as a problem to be solved. Your research will help you solve the problem. Here are a few types and examples of essential questions:

WHICH: “Which” questions require collecting information and making informed decisions.

- Which serious disease deserves the most research funding?
- Which 20th century leader did the most to advance the cause of civil rights?

HOW: “How” questions provide solutions to problems.

- How can we reverse the increasing childhood obesity rate?
- How can we balance medical research using animals with the rights of animals?
- How can students make a significant contribution in combating global warming?

WHAT IF: “What if” questions pose a hypothesis and consider possible results.

- What if Mount St. Helens repeated its most violent eruption today?
- What if the Declaration of Independence abolished slavery?
- What if national elections were decided on popular vote alone without an Electoral College?

SHOULD: “Should” questions present evidence to support a moral or practical decision.

- Should ethanol be used as an ingredient in automobile fuel?
- Should advertising aimed at young people be regulated?
- Should creationism be taught in science classrooms?

WHY: “Why” questions show an understanding of relationships or cause and effect.

- Why is the infant mortality rate higher in one country than another?
- Why do people move from one country to another?

To write an essential question appropriate to your topic, you should consider what is especially interesting, unique or thought-provoking. List those things here:

Review the above examples. Write three possible essential questions:

- _____
- _____
- _____