

Curriculum-Framing Questions

Although the following questions are divided into three general grade levels, many of these questions can be used with almost any grade.

Elementary School Curriculum-Framing Questions
Middle School Curriculum-Framing Questions
High School Curriculum-Framing Questions

Elementary School Curriculum-Framing Questions		
Essential Question	Unit Questions	Content Questions
How can I make a difference?	What can our school do to help save an endangered species?	What makes a species endangered? What are some endangered species?
How do we use our five senses?	Why is sound important? Is sound more important to a bat than to me?	What is sound? How does sound happen?
How have species adapted to their environment?	What is special about frogs that help them survive? How are frogs different from me?	What are the basic structures of the frog? What are the adaptations of animals that allow them to live in specific environments? What is the life cycle of a frog?
Why do we need others?	Which of our community helpers is the most important? Which community helper would you most like to be?	Who are some community helpers? What do they do?
How can we all get along?	Why do we need manners?	What are manners? What manners help us get along on the playground or in the classroom? How are the manners the Pilgrim children were taught different from the ones we are taught?

Elementary School Curriculum-Framing Questions		
Essential Question	Unit Questions	Content Questions
What patterns can be found in the English language?	Why rhyme? Where can rhyme be found?	What is a rhyme? What are some popular nursery rhymes? What is a limerick?
What is the price of life?	Are all animals worth protecting? If you were an African animal, which one would you most like to be and why?	How do animals in Africa adapt to their environment? What do African animals need to survive? What are the characteristics of African animals?
What's your story?	How does the way an author writes (style) make a story more interesting?	What are the elements of a story? What is the 6+1 Trait* Writing process? What traits of writing does the author use?
Does accuracy really matter that much?	How are fractions used on the job, and are they needed to get the job done right? How can understanding fractions make your life easier?	What is a fraction? How do you add, subtract, multiply, and divide fractions? What are numerators and denominators? How do you change a mixed numeral into an improper fraction?
How do I get from here to there?	How do I decide which route to take? What can maps tell us about people, places, and environments?	What symbols and location identifiers are found on a map, and what do they mean? How do you measure using a map?
How can we make a difference?	What can our school do to help save an endangered species? How can humans and endangered species share a region?	What makes an animal an endangered species? What is needed in your species' habitat?

Elementary School Curriculum-Framing Questions		
Essential Question	Unit Questions	Content Questions
Are you prepared?	Can I go outside and play today? How should I prepare for the weather today?	Where does rain come from? What causes the seasons of the year? What are some things people do to prepare for different weather conditions?
Where can we find order and patterns?	Is it time to rhyme? Why rhyme?	What is rhyme? What words sound the same? How can you tell words that rhyme?
Why change?	Could a volcano erupt in my backyard? What type of mountain would make the best building site and why?	What are the layers of Earth? What are three types of volcanoes? How are mountains made? How do we know that a volcano is dormant?
Is there such a thing as happily ever after?	Why is Cinderella a favorite story all over the world? How would the Cinderella fairy tale change if a different character told the story?	What are the elements of a fairy tale? What is point of view? In what ways are all of the Cinderella stories from around the world similar?
What changes do you see?	What can shadows tell us?	What causes a shadow? How do you measure your shadow? What causes your shadow to change?

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Middle School Curriculum-Framing Questions		
Essential Question	Unit Questions	Content Questions
What does it take to change the world?	<p>What impact did early explorers have on the development of America and their home country?</p> <p>How did early explorers change the world?</p>	<p>Who are some of the early explorers?</p> <p>Where did these explorers go?</p> <p>What did they find?</p>
How can we all get along?	<p>Are rainforests worth saving?</p> <p>How do people and animals live in rainforests, and how can they best coexist?</p>	<p>What is a rainforest?</p> <p>What lives in a rainforest?</p> <p>Where are rainforests located?</p>
Where does energy come from?	<p>How can we use natural resources to create energy?</p>	<p>What are natural resources?</p> <p>What are natural resources used for?</p> <p>What are the differences between renewable and nonrenewable resources?</p> <p>What are some examples of each?</p>
Why is water important?	<p>Are the world's ponds healthy?</p> <p>What makes a healthy pond?</p>	<p>What are the components of a pond?</p> <p>What is the optimum pH level of a pond to support aquatic life?</p>
How can I be healthy?	<p>What can I do to reduce health risks?</p> <p>How do the systems of the body work together to keep me healthy?</p>	<p>What are some health risks?</p> <p>Why are they considered health risks?</p>
Why are people always on the move?	<p>Where is the best place to live?</p> <p>Why do immigrants give up everything to go to a strange country?</p>	<p>What is an immigrant?</p> <p>Why did the _____ leave _____?</p> <p>Why is America called a melting pot?</p>

Middle School Curriculum-Framing Questions		
Essential Question	Unit Questions	Content Questions
What makes something "alive"?	What is special about a cell? What can cells tell us about the organization of other systems?	What are the features of a cell? What are the stages of cellular respiration in a human cell? What are the differences between an animal and plant cell?
How does the past affect the future?	How is ancient Egypt still with us today?	What was the political structure of ancient Egypt? What were some customs of ancient Egypt?
How can one live beyond one's time?	Which of Leonardo da Vinci's areas of expertise had the most impact on today? How was Leonardo da Vinci an inspiration for the future?	What is Leonardo da Vinci famous for? Who were the patrons of Leonardo da Vinci?
How do systems of government affect the individual?	What impact did the feudal system have on a person's overall quality of life during the Middle Ages? What feudal character would you have liked to have been during the Middle Ages?	What was the feudal system like in the Middle Ages? Who were some of the important people in the feudal system?
How does conflict produce change?	How is our life different today because of _____ conflict?	What were the causes and results of the _____ war?
Where do stories come from?	How much does Greek and Roman mythology influence literature and our everyday life?	Who are some of the gods in Greek and Roman mythology, and what are their attributes?
What makes a community?	How does community history affect today's community values?	When was our community founded and by whom? What are some laws we have in our community? What are some problems in our community?

Middle School Curriculum-Framing Questions		
Essential Question	Unit Questions	Content Questions
How does music reflect history, society, and culture?	How do the times in which a composer works affect his or her music? How do composers from different eras compare?	Who were some famous composers from different time periods and countries? What are some musical styles?
Why explore?	What can we learn from the experiences of the early explorers that is useful in modern times?	What motivated the Spanish and Portuguese explorations? Who and what events were significant in the exploratory voyages of the 14th through 16th centuries?
Have things really changed that much?	Is our life anything like that of the ancient Egyptians?	Why was the river Nile so important to the ancient Egyptian civilization? What religious, cultural, and scientific contributions were established by the ancient Egyptians?
Why is learning from our past important?	Could we live some place other than Earth? How can we conserve and maintain a planet's natural resources?	How does acid rain travel through the water cycle, and what dangers does it pose? What affect does pH have on our water quality and aquatic life? What is ozone? What is causing the destruction of the Earth's ozone?
How do the choices we make now affect us later?	Is disease inevitable? Is prevention really the best medicine? What is the diagnosis? How can you be sure it is correct?	What are the functions and weaknesses of each of the body systems? What is the definition of <i>disease</i> ? What benefits do we get from exercise?
How can math help me understand my world?	Why use the metric system?	How do you use the metric system to measure things?

Middle School Curriculum-Framing Questions		
Essential Question	Unit Questions	Content Questions
		What are the different metric measurements?
What changes do you see?	Why are rocks and minerals important to us? Why look further than your own backyard?	What are igneous, sedimentary, and metamorphic rocks? How are different rocks formed? What is the rock cycle?

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High School Curriculum-Framing Questions		
Essential Question	Unit Questions	Content Questions
What can we learn from music?	<p>What does the music of today tell about us?</p> <p>How does a composer's life influence his or her music?</p> <p>What does the music from the 60s say about its time period and culture?</p>	<p>Who were some composers of the 60s?</p> <p>Who were some famous composers of the past and present?</p>
What does it take to change the world?	<p>How did the policies or actions of Abraham Lincoln affect America in the 1860s?</p> <p>How do the policies and actions of Abraham Lincoln affect your life today?</p>	<p>What were some of the policies or actions of Abraham Lincoln that were important in his lifetime?</p>
How can we respond to human suffering in ways that promote dignity? **	<p>Does society have a responsibility to treat diseases? What are our individual roles in their prevention, containment, and treatment? **</p>	<p>What are some common diseases in the world today?</p> <p>How are diseases treated?</p>
How can I use logic to find new properties and relationships?	<p>How can geometry help me understand the world around me?</p>	<p>How do you calculate the square footage of a given room in order to buy the right amount of carpet?</p> <p>When playing golf, how can knowing the angles of incidence and reflection help you to make a hole in one?</p> <p>How does a GPS unit locate coordinates?</p>
Am I my brother's keeper?	<p>What can we do to help those in need?</p> <p>Can famine be prevented?</p>	<p>What are some of the causes of famine in _____?</p> <p>What kind of relief efforts are currently underway in _____?</p>
Can one person make a difference?	<p>How have individuals impacted our history?</p> <p>Who is the greatest American president?</p>	<p>What are the accomplishments of _____?</p>
How can we harness the	<p>Where else can we get</p>	<p>What is electricity?</p>

High School Curriculum-Framing Questions		
Essential Question	Unit Questions	Content Questions
Earth's power?	electricity?	How does electricity work?
How can I get what I want?	When you decide to buy a house, how do you choose the right home for you? How can you plan for the future to ensure you will be able to afford the home and lifestyle of your dreams?	How does financing affect the actual price paid for a home? What factors determine how much home one can afford? How do regional factors affect home prices? How do loans work?
Why is the universe the way it is?	What is the physics behind the stars? What can we learn about ourselves by studying the galaxy?	What makes up the galaxies? What are stars? How can we know how far a star is from Earth?
Where do stories come from?	How much does history influence literature?	Where did _____ get his or her stories? What was the political and social environment during the time of the metaphysical poets?
Just because we <i>can</i> , should we?	Can science, discovery, and invention go too far? Should we put limitations on science?	What are some important scientific discoveries of the past 20 years?
Why do laws change? When should laws change?	Are 200-year old laws still relevant today? What laws, national or local, may be challenged sometime in the future?	What were the laws our country was founded on?
How does conflict produce change?	Why do humans often react to conflict with violence?	In <i>Lord of the Flies</i> , how do the characters respond to conflict? What is the climax of the conflict and the story?
Does personal freedom exist?	Does our Constitution really protect our rights?	How has the Constitution of the United States changed from its inception to the present?

High School Curriculum-Framing Questions		
Essential Question	Unit Questions	Content Questions
How does art reflect or change culture?	How does impressionist art represent life in the late 1800s? How did impressionist art change society in the late 1800s? How does your own art reflect your life?	Who were the famous artists of the impressionist movement?
How can history predict our future?	How do wars start, and can they—and should they—be prevented? Who benefits from war?	What countries were involved in WWII? Which countries were aligned together? What are some significant events of WWII? What were the major provisions of the Treaty of Versailles?
Does democracy result in effective, representative, and humane governance? **	Should the public vote on complex policy issues? What connections are there between wealth and political power? **	What are the essential differences between a democracy and a monarchy? What was the attitude of most delegates to the United States Constitutional Convention in 1787 toward the development of political parties?
What is the difference between genius and madness?	What makes good music, art, or poetry?	Why was the artwork of Vincent van Gogh and Wassily Kandinsky considered controversial or “bad” during their lives by the public, the art critics, and their contemporaries? How has public opinion about the art of Vincent van Gogh changed over time?
Why are you the way you are?	Environment or DNA, what influences our individuality?	What does <i>DNA</i> stand for? What are the four chemical bases that make up DNA? Why do no two people look exactly alike?

High School Curriculum-Framing Questions		
Essential Question	Unit Questions	Content Questions
Why have stories always been important throughout history?	<p>Why do we still read Shakespeare?</p> <p>How do Shakespeare's poems and plays impact and accurately reflect modern life?</p> <p>How is Shakespeare's work relevant to my life?</p>	<p>How does the author reveal the character of Hamlet to the audience?</p> <p>What are Hamlet's external and internal conflicts?</p> <p>Why does Hamlet feign madness?</p>
Do politics affect science?	What <i>really</i> is happening to our environment?	What are some of the environmental problems that are occurring in our country today?
Are there scientific discoveries that should not be pursued?***	What is the big deal about cloning?	<p>What is cloning?</p> <p>How does cloning work?</p>
How does your opinion matter?	<p>What can polls tell us?</p> <p>Why can polls be interpreted in many ways?</p>	<p>What are <i>demographics</i>, and how do candidates use them to target voters?</p> <p>What are the steps in creating and conducting a poll?</p>
Is a picture worth a thousand words?	<p>How can photographs help us interpret the past?</p> <p>How does photojournalism impact public opinion?</p>	What is one rule of composition, and how is it applied to photography?
What makes a leader great?	<p>What was the impact of conquest on the ancient world?</p> <p>What effect did empires have on daily life in the ancient world?</p>	What were the accomplishments of your historical figure?
How can we harness the Earth's power?	<p>Why is electricity important?</p> <p>How is electricity used on the job?</p>	<p>What is electricity?</p> <p>What are the parts of an electric circuit?</p> <p>What is Ohm's Law?</p>

***Some questions are from Katherine G. Simon's article, "The Blue Blood Is Bad, Right?"

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