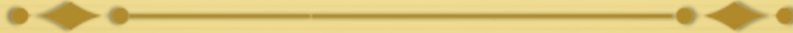


How to make a topic into an essential research question



✦ What is your subject?

For example: Civil War, Renaissance art, Chemical reactions, food

FOOD

5 interesting aspects of the topic



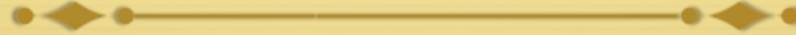
- ✦ 1. Spices
- ✦ 2. Holiday favorites
- ✦ 3. Food animals
- ✦ 4. Cheese
- ✦ 5. Dessert

Of the five things you listed, which one is most interesting to you?



Spices

List five things about your topic that you find interesting. You can write this list in question form to make this step easier. Consider: ethics, environment, economics, culture, and health in relation to your topic.



- ✦ 1. In what ways did different spices spread over the world?
- ✦ 2. What causes some peppers to be hot and others mild?
- ✦ 3. Historically, which spices have been considered most valuable and why?
- ✦ 4. Has there ever been a black market in spices?
- ✦ 5. Which spices are used as preservatives and how?

Which one of the above list would you choose if you could only study one thing for the rest the year?



Historically, which spices have been considered most valuable and why?

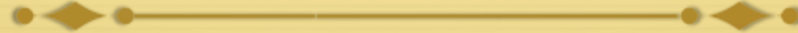
Essential Questions



What are the traits of an essential question?(From: The Question Mark, March 2005. <<http://www.questioning.org/mar05/essential.html>>

- ✦ The question probes a matter of considerable importance.
- ✦ The question requires movement beyond understanding and studying - some kind of action or resolve - pointing toward the settlement of a challenge, the making of a choice or the forming of a decision.
- ✦ The question cannot be answered by a quick and simple “yes” or “no” answer.
- ✦ An answer cannot be found; it must be created by the researcher
- ✦ The question probably endures, shifts and evolves with time and changing conditions - offering a moving target in some respects.
- ✦ The question may be unanswerable in the ultimate sense.
- ✦ The question may frustrate the researcher, may prove arid rather than fertile and may evade the quest for clarity and understanding.

Examples



Not Essential	Essential
Can cow's milk be used as a food or beverage for human consumption?	Should cow's milk be used as a food or beverage for human consumption?
Who invented the bicycle?	How has the invention of the bicycle impacted society?

Essential or Not?



Essential or Not?

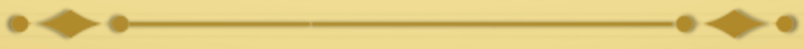
1. Which president since 1950 has had the greatest impact on international affairs?
2. What makes a firefly light up?
3. What was life like for pioneers on the Oregon Trail?
4. Is *To Kill a Mockingbird* a book that everyone should read?
5. How does photosynthesis work?

How to:

- ✦ **Which one?** (Collect information to make an informed choice)
- ✦ **How?** (Understand problems and perspectives, weigh options, propose solutions)
- ✦ **What if?** (Use the knowledge you have to pose a hypothesis and consider options)
- ✦ **Should?** (make a moral or practical decision based on evidence)
- ✦ **Why?** (understand and explain relationships to get to the essence of a complicated issue)

Some examples and one non-example

- ✦ Which one: Through out history, which spice has been the most valuable culturally and economically?
- ✦ How: How is the ancient spice trade reflected in current society?
- ✦ What if: What if scientists found a way to create artificial spices that were convincingly authentic?
- ✦ Should: Should a culture's value be judged by the spiciness of its cuisine?
- ✦ Why: Why are some spices more expensive than others?

- 
- ✦ Now, create an outstanding essential question for the topic you have chosen (if you change your mind later, that is fine, but you need to start from somewhere)