Mr. Bazilewich

**Personal Enrichment / Independent Inquiry Project:**

*Essential Questions*

**What is an “essential question”?**

An essential question, in any field of academic study

* Is *open-ended*: it typically will not have a single, final, and correct answer.
* Is *thought-provoking* and *intellectually engaging*, capable of sparking and engaging discussion
* Calls for *higher-order thinking*, such as analysis, inference, evaluation, prediction. (It cannot be effectively answered by recall alone.)
* Points toward *important, transferable ideas* within (and sometimes across) disciplines.
* Raises *additional questions* and sparks further inquiry.
* Requires *support* and *justification*, not just a single answer.
* *Recurs* over time: the question can (and should) be revisited again and again.

**Non-Essential Questions Essential Questions**

Who is the protagonist? What makes a person sympathetic?

What kind of character is the narrator? How and why do people change over time, and as a result of their experiences?

What is a theme in the novel? How do experiences affect the ways in which people make meaning?

What is the central conflict between In what ways can individuals—consciously or unconsciously—reinforce and/or

the male and female characters? challenge gender role stereotypes?

**What does an essential question look like?**

We refer to more general essential questions as *overarching*, and specific essential questions as *topical*. Here are some paired examples of these two types of essential questions:

**Overarching Topical**

Whose “story” is this? How did Germany see itself in the years

following WWII?

In what ways does art reflect culture? What do totem poles reveal about the Haida Gwaii?

What causes the rise and fall of powerful How/why did the Roman Empire collapse?

nations?

What is the role of symbolism in literature? How does William Golding use symbolism to illustrate the central themes of *Lord of the Flies*?

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As you read your personal enrichment personal inquiry book, begin formulating some “essential questions”. These do not necessarily have to be the *only* things about your book you can explore, but they will make your analysis, discussions and—most importantly—your inquiry project more focused and manageable.