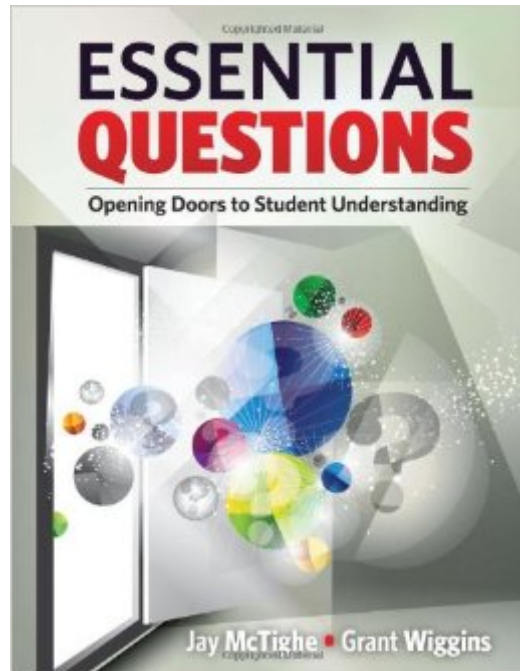


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# Essential Questions: Opening Doors To Student Understanding



## Synopsis

What are essential questions, and how do they differ from other kinds of questions? What's so great about them? Why should you design and use essential questions in your classroom? Essential questions (EQs) help target standards as you organize curriculum content into coherent units that yield focused and thoughtful learning. In the classroom, EQs are used to stimulate students' discussions and promote a deeper understanding of the content. Whether you are an Understanding by Design (UbD) devotee or are searching for ways to address standards local or Common Core State Standards in an engaging way, Jay McTighe and Grant Wiggins provide practical guidance on how to design, initiate, and embed inquiry-based teaching and learning in your classroom. Offering dozens of examples, the authors explore the usefulness of EQs in all K-12 content areas, including skill-based areas such as math, PE, language instruction, and arts education. As an important element of their backward design approach to designing curriculum, instruction, and assessment, the authors

- \*Give a comprehensive explanation of why EQs are so important;
- \*Explore seven defining characteristics of EQs;
- \*Distinguish between topical and overarching questions and their uses;
- \*Outline the rationale for using EQs as the focal point in creating units of study; and
- \*Show how to create effective EQs, working from sources including standards, desired understandings, and student misconceptions.

Using essential questions can be challenging for both teachers and students and this book provides guidance through practical and proven processes, as well as suggested response strategies to encourage student engagement. Finally, you will learn how to create a culture of inquiry so that all members of the educational community—students, teachers, and administrators—benefit from the increased rigor and deepened understanding that emerge when essential questions become a guiding force for learners of all ages.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This text continues the necessary discussion of designing curriculum for higher-order thinking by placing essential questions at the center of UbD. The benefit of this book is that while in their first work *Understanding by Design* they cover the issue of Essential Questions in one chapter, this time around the authors flesh out issues around using EQs in the classroom. Although some of the material in the first three chapters was already covered in the first book, additional charts, and a greater explanation on how teachers can make essential questions based on skills is much more useful. As a language teacher I definitely find these sections very useful. The book is also an answer to schools already applying UbD, and thus, it focuses a lot more on classroom processes than on theoretical foundations. As a result, it gives in-depth discussion as to how to keep alive the EQs throughout the school year, covers how many EQs per lesson are possible, and reinforces the idea that EQs should be at the center of the classroom. In addition to this, W&M make connections between EQs with older ideas, such as Socratic Questioning and The Paideia Proposal. The authors also make sure that this text is teacher-friendly, allowing for reasonable time to adapt new ways of thinking classroom planning as well as discussing potential problems that may arise in the classroom. A caveat is that this book is not about specific strategies or methodologies, or about curriculum philosophies albeit Socrates and Plato are briefly discussed with respect to questioning methods in the classroom. This is a text that is specifically designed as a follow up on how to design and use EQs within the *Understanding by Design* planning templates, and thus can be helpful for the curriculum maps.

Don't let the title fool you.....Jay McTighe also talks about other types of questions, even if only to compare/contrast them with Essential questions. The term, essential questions, is one of those education buzzwords that everybody uses but very few actually know anything about. This book will help the beginner and new-to UbD lesson planning.

In my school district we are required to write essential questions. Sometimes it is difficult coming up

with higher level thinking questions (HOTS). Reading this book has been very helpful because it gives great suggestions for all content areas.

I have seen essential questions and have had people talk about essential questions. Now, I really understand the purpose, format and how to create an essential question

Hi fellow seekers of insight, I think those amongst "us" who used to wonder: Why must we learn in the classroom style chosen by our teacher?....may benefit the most from checking out Essential Questions: Opening Doors to Student Understanding [Kindle Edition] Jay McTighe (Author), Grant Wiggins (Author) You don't have to be a teacher to gain from reading it. It is a short 119 pages, but uses most of them to explain how you can empower your own learning process. Yes, there are also suggestions of why the fact recall method of training doesn't promote transferable understanding, but that's not where the real value of the book lies. You will probably revisit it several times, and may find its suggestions useful for re-framing ideas. After accepting the premise, you may with time also unconsciously find yourself trying to identify provocative verbs that signal that you can re-frame the facts being viewed by you. That's been my experience. My attraction to the content in the book is that it gave me a road-map describing ..(albeit a little roughly).., how I could use language in the form of questions to encourage & discover new, bigger ideas ON MY OWN. Being able to do so is very helpful to CONFIDENCE building if you are taking courses where the pass mark is 75%. (e.g. Customs Broker type Exams) I like this quote " It is rarely the case that we come to understand a new and complex teaching or experience on first blush. That's why it is proper to say that meaning is made and understanding is earned over time." NOTE: I have recently purchased & have been reading this book, finding that it compliments Mr. Puryear's contribution to the ADD community. (i.e. Your Life Can Be Better: using strategies for Adult ADD/ADHD... Douglas A. Puryear MD (Author) Cheers, Simple Guy.

It differentiates between overarching essential questions and topical ones. I found this distinction to be helpful as I try to learn how to use EQ's in my teaching. It gives several suggestions also.

This is a good book which makes a serious contribution to the development of teachers' skills in questioning. But, the book does not give any background on how questions are currently used (or not used). It does make a comment about the difficulty teachers face, too much content to cover and not enough time to cover it thoroughly. That is an important problem but the authors say little about

how to help teachers solve it. Chapter Six, which covers implementation, makes many good suggestions but does not truly show the teacher how to solve the content pressure. In some ways the essential questions are basically those that fall into the top three levels of Bloom's taxonomy (particularly the new Anderson, et.al. version) but McTighe and Wiggins never mention that. The types of questions considered essential do represent the higher levels of learning and thinking, as I explained in my book on teaching critical thinking (available from ).

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