



The Question Formulation Technique & Primary Sources

*Educators with no foundational training in teaching inquiry with primary sources from the Library of Congress may wish to **begin with the Inquiry with Primary Sources TPS** micro-credential prior to completing this one.*

Competency

Educator uses the Question Formulation Technique (QFT) to engage learners in content by generating and analyzing questions about a primary source.

Key Method

Educators create or revise a lesson using the QFT with a primary source, directly connecting students' questions to the next steps of their learning.

Method Components

Question Formulation Technique

The Question Formulation Technique (QFT), created by the Right Question Institute, is a protocol designed to teach students how to formulate and use questions as active participants in their learning. The QFT can be used at any point during a unit of study, but is typically most easily implemented at the beginning of a unit to spark student curiosity. It gives the educator insight into students'



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background knowledge and thoughts about the Question Focus (QFocus), a prompt used to start the question generating process.

The QFT, on one slide...

1) Question Focus

2) Produce Your Questions

- ✓ Follow the rules
- ✓ Number your questions

1. Ask as many questions as you can
2. Do not stop to discuss, judge or answer
3. Record *exactly* as stated
4. Change statements into questions

3) Improve Your Questions

- ✓ Categorize questions as Closed or Open-ended
- ✓ Change questions from one type to another

4) Strategize

- ✓ Prioritize your questions
- ✓ Action plan or discuss next steps
- ✓ Share

Closed-Ended:
Answered with "yes,"
"no" or one word

Open-Ended: Require
longer explanation

5) Reflect

RQI

Source: The Right Question Institute

rightquestion.org

The educator, as facilitator of the QFT, must follow four guidelines:

1. Monitor student adherence to the process,
2. Do not give examples,
3. Do not get pulled into group discussion, and
4. Acknowledge all contributions equally.

Primary Sources & the QFT

The [Library of Congress](#) describes primary sources as “the raw materials of history — original documents and objects that were created at the time under study.”

Primary sources promote curiosity on multiple levels, pertaining to the primary source itself, its creator, and its context. Using a primary source as the QFocus invites students to interact with history directly and on a human level. The primary source bridges the present with the past, giving students a new perspective through which they can engage with and examine a topic.

Supporting Rationale and Research



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Question Formulation Technique

Rothstein, D., and Santana, L. *Make just one change: Teach students to ask their own questions*, Harvard Education Press, 2017.

Minigan, Andrew P., et. al. Stimulating and Sustaining Inquiry with Students' Questions, *Social Education*, Vol. 81, No. 5, 2017, pp. 269-272.

<https://rightquestion.org/downloads/1143/>

Primary Sources

Beyond Typescript and Photographs: Using Primary Sources in Different Formats, *Teaching with Primary Sources Quarterly* , Vol. 4, No. 2, Fall 2011, pp. 2-4.

https://www.loc.gov/static/programs/teachers/about-this-program/teaching-with-primary-sources-partner-program/documents/ps_formats.pdf

Resources

Question Formulation Technique

[Assessing Facilitation of the QFT - Right Question Institute](#) (free registration required to access)

[Experiencing the QFT - Right Question Institute](#) (free registration required to access)

[QFT Timing Guide, Right Question Institute](#) (free registration required to access)

[Steps of the QFT & Video Guide - Right Question Institute](#) (free website registration required to access)

[Tips for Making the QFT Work Well for All Students - Right Question Institute](#) (free website registration required to access)

Primary Sources

[Free to Use and Reuse Sets | Library of Congress](#)

[Library of Congress Primary Source Sets](#)



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[Theme-based Resources - Citizen U Primary Source Nexus](#)

Primary Sources & the QFT


 [The QFT for Primary Source Learning in a Los Angeles Classroom](#) (14:47 minutes)

[Teaching Now: QFT with a Primary Source](#)

 [Teaching Students to Ask Their Own Primary Source Questions](#) (4:15 minutes)

[Teaching With Primary Sources Lesson Snapshots - Right Question Institute](#)

(requires free registration to access)

 [Webinar: Introduction to the Question Formulation Technique \(QFT\) for Prima...](#) (27:10 minutes)

[Using the Question Formulation Technique to Guide Primary Source Learning](#)

Submission Guidelines & Evaluation Criteria

To earn this micro-credential, you must receive a passing score in Parts 1 and 3, and receive proficiency for all components in Part 2.

Part 1. Overview

(250-500 words)

Please copy and paste the following contextual prompts and questions into a document. Respond to them without including any identifying information.

1. List the grade(s) and subject(s) that you teach, along with general information about class composition. Describe how you and your school use primary sources in classroom learning.
2. Describe your students' current comfort level with asking questions.



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3. Identify the types of questioning techniques you typically use in the classroom. Describe the successes and challenges you have found with their use.
4. What do you understand about the QFT?
5. Why did you choose to pursue the Primary Sources and the Question Formulation Technique micro-credential?

Passing: Responses provide reasonable and accurate information that justifies the reason for choosing this micro-credential to address the specific needs of both educator and students. Responses should also include areas of instruction that could be enhanced through the use of the QFT with a primary source. All questions must be answered fully.

Part 2. Artifacts

*To earn this micro-credential, please submit the following **four artifacts** as evidence of your competency in this area. Please do not include any identifying information for you or your students.*

Artifact 1: Primary Source QFT Lesson Planning Workbook

Download or make a copy of the [Primary Source QFT Lesson Planning Workbook](#). Follow the instructions in it to complete the document.

(See rubric for specific requirements.)

Upload your completed lesson workbook.

Artifact 2: Primary Source QFT Lesson Plan

Download or make a copy of the [Primary Source QFT Lesson Plan template](#) (see [completed example](#)). Follow the instructions in it to complete the document, using your Primary Source QFT Lesson Workbook to help you.

(See rubric for specific requirements.)



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Upload your completed lesson plan template.

Artifact 3: Primary Source QFT Lesson Evidence

Option 1

Implement the Question Focus and QFT Reflection sections of your QFT Lesson Plan with students. In your evidence document, include the following:

1. Either pictures of 10-12 students' questions or a transcription of their questions.
2. Either pictures or transcriptions of a reflection on the process from 5-6 students.

Option 2

If you aren't able to implement the lesson with students, enlist two colleagues who can help by asking questions about your QFocus and reflection on the process. In your evidence document, include the following:

1. Either pictures of 10-12 colleagues' questions or a transcription of their questions.
2. Either pictures or transcriptions of each colleague's reflection on the process.

(See rubric for specific requirements.)

Upload your completed QFT evidence document.

Artifact 4: Primary Source QFT Lesson Analysis

After reviewing student or colleague questions and reflections, download or make a copy of the [Primary Source QFT Analysis template](#) and use it to discuss the efficacy of the QFT for your intended teaching/learning objectives.

(See rubric for specific requirements.)

Upload your completed Primary Source QFT Analysis document.

Part 2. Rubric



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	Proficient	Basic	Developing
Artifact 1: Primary Source QFT Lesson Planning Workbook	<p>Lesson workbook is at least 9-10 pages and each of the prompts in the sections listed below were completed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I. Lesson Context and Purpose (2 prompts) II. Lesson Procedure (3 prompts) III. QFocus Design (7 prompts) IV. Use of Student-generated Questions (2 prompts) V. QFT Tailoring (3 prompts) VI. QFT Facilitation (2 prompts) 	<p>Lesson workbook is at least 9 pages and some of the prompts in the sections listed below were not completed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I. Lesson Context and Purpose (2 prompts) II. Lesson Procedure (3 prompts) III. QFocus Design (7 prompts) IV. Use of Student-generated Questions (2 prompts) V. QFT Tailoring (3 prompts) VI. QFT Facilitation (2 prompts) 	<p>Lesson workbook is less than 9 pages and several of the prompts in the sections listed below were not completed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I. Lesson Context and Purpose (2 prompts) II. Lesson Procedure (3 prompts) III. QFocus Design (7 prompts) IV. Use of Student-generated Questions (2 prompts) V. QFT Tailoring (3 prompts) VI. QFT Facilitation (2 prompts)



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<p>Artifact 2: Primary Source QFT Lesson Plan</p>	<p>Lesson plan (1-2 pages) includes all of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lesson Title • Grade(s) • Subject • Context & Purpose: presents the lesson content/topic and teaching/ learning objectives • Tailoring Instructions: presents any adaptations or tailoring to the standard QFT process or to the categorization, prioritization, or reflection instructions • Question Focus: lists one primary source from the Library of Congress digital collections, Chronicling America: Historic Newspapers pages, or the 	<p>Lesson plan (1-2 pages) includes most of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lesson Title • Grade(s) • Subject • Context & Purpose: presents the lesson content/topic and teaching/ learning objectives • Tailoring Instructions: presents any adaptations or tailoring to the standard QFT process or to the categorization, prioritization, or reflection instructions • Question Focus: lists one primary source from the Library of Congress digital collections, Chronicling America: 	<p>Lesson plan is less than 1 page and includes some of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lesson Title • Grade(s) • Subject • Context & Purpose: presents the lesson content/topic and teaching/ learning objectives • Tailoring Instructions: presents any adaptations or tailoring to the standard QFT process or to the categorization, prioritization, or reflection instructions • Question Focus: lists one primary source from the Library of Congress digital collections, Chronicling America: Historic American
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	<p>American Archive of Public Broadcasting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • QFocus Choice: provides a brief description of the reason for choosing the identified primary source • QFT Reflection: lists the 2 reflection questions to ask QFT participants • Lesson Procedure: presents the sequence of learning activities before, during, and after the QFT • Next Steps: describes how student questions will be used after the QFT to drive subsequent learning 	<p>Historic American Newspapers pages, or the American Archive of Public Broadcasting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • QFocus Choice: provides a brief description of the reason for choosing the identified primary source • QFT Reflection: lists the 2 reflection questions to ask QFT participants • Lesson Procedure: presents the sequence of learning activities before, during, and after the QFT • Next Steps: describes how student questions will be used after the QFT to drive 	<p>Newspapers pages, or the American Archive of Public Broadcasting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • QFocus Choice: provides a brief description of the reason for choosing the identified primary source • QFT Reflection: lists the 2 reflection questions to ask QFT participants • Lesson Procedure: presents the sequence of learning activities before, during, and after the QFT • Next Steps: describes how student questions will be used after the QFT to drive subsequent learning
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		subsequent learning	
Artifact 3: Primary Source QFT Lesson Evidence	Lesson evidence includes all of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pictures or transcriptions of 10-12 or fewer participant (students or colleagues) questions • pictures or transcriptions of a reflection on the process from 5-6 students or 2 colleagues 	Lesson evidence includes 1 of the following 2 options: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pictures or transcriptions of 7-8 participant (students or colleagues) questions • pictures or transcriptions of a reflection on the process from 4-5 students or 1 colleague 	Lesson evidence includes 1 of the following 2 options: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pictures or transcriptions of 6 or fewer participant (students or colleagues) questions • pictures or transcriptions of a reflection on the process from 3-4 students or 1 colleague



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<p>Artifact 4: Primary Source QFT Analysis</p>	<p>Lesson analysis (300-600 words) includes all of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • presents 3 questions that stood out and describe why • describes an aspect of participant response to the QFocus that was surprising or intriguing • describes methods to improve the design and presentation of a primary source QFocus • describes themes in participant reflections and insights they provide about the lesson content • describes how participant reflections on the QFT lesson process differ from 	<p>Lesson analysis (300-600 words) includes most of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • presents 2 questions that stood out and describe why • describes an aspect of participant response to the QFocus that was surprising or intriguing • describes methods to improve the design and presentation of a primary source QFocus • describes themes in participant reflections and insights they provide about the lesson • describes how participant reflections on the QFT lesson process differ 	<p>Lesson analysis (300-600 words) includes the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • presents 2 questions that stood out but don't provide a description • describes an aspect of participant response to the QFocus that was surprising or intriguing • describes methods to improve the design and presentation of a primary source QFocus • describes themes in participant reflections and insights they provide about the lesson • describes how participant reflections on the QFT lesson process differ
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	typical responses to other lessons	from typical responses to other lessons	from typical responses to other lessons
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Part 3. Reflection

(200-500 words)

Use the word count as a guide to write a personal reflection about your work on this micro-credential. For tips on writing a good reflection review the following resource:

[How Do I Write a Good Personal Reflection?](#)

Please copy and paste the following reflective prompts and questions into a document and respond to them without including any identifying information.

1. What did you learn about the importance of questioning through this process?
2. How could you use this strategy with another topic or subject?
3. Create an outline you could use to present to your colleagues about using the QFT with primary sources from the Library of Congress. Be sure to include information on the benefits of using student questions to tailor learning resources, activities, and/or learning artifacts within a lesson or unit.

Passing: Reflection provides evidence that this micro-credential has had a positive impact on both educator practice and student success. It also provides, specific actionable steps that show how the educator will continue to build on this competency; and steps to advocate for the efficacy and value of inquiry learning with primary sources using the Question Formulation Technique.



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Credits

This micro-credential was developed with content and expertise from TPS Consortium member Right Question Institute in collaboration with Citizen U as part of the Barat Education Foundation Library of Congress TPS program grant.



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