

Using the QFT for History Fair

Historical wondering is an important part of the History Fair process and students should have ample opportunities to develop their curiosity through questioning. The Right Question Institute developed the Question Formulation Technique (QFT) to help students produce and improve upon their questions as well as strategize next steps for using their questions. The QFT can be used both before and during the History Fair process. Visit the [Right Question Institute's website](#) to learn more.

The QFT Explained:

Question Formulation Technique

Produce Your Questions

Four essential rules for producing your own questions:

- Ask as many questions as you can.
- Do not stop to discuss, judge, or answer the questions.
- Write down every question exactly as it is stated.
- Change any statement into a question.

Improve Your Questions

- Categorize the questions as closed- or open-ended.
- Name the advantages and disadvantages of each type of question.
- Change questions from one type to another.

Prioritize the Questions

- Choose your three most important questions.
- Why did you choose these three as the most important?

Next Steps

- How are you going to use your questions?

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Possible ways to use the QFT for History Fair:



1. **Introduce a unit or the NHD theme:** Have students brainstorm questions about the unit or the theme and then work together as a class to choose revise and prioritize essential questions to explore.
2. **Analyze a source:** Instead of asking for observations, encourage students to ask questions of photos, quotes and other sources. This approach sparks curiosity. It also helps them identify the closed questions they will need to find out and well as the open "how and why and 'so what'" questions.
3. **Narrow History Fair topics:** Students can ask questions about their own topics which can lead to deeper reading in order to find their narrowed topic and the story they want to tell.
4. **Peer review:** Students can use the QFT as they read and assess each other's work.

FOR EXAMPLE:



Chicago Fire (a topic we discouraged unless it is very narrow, so it can be used as a classroom exercise). *Potential questions that could arise:*

- *How much of the city was destroyed?*
- How many people became homeless?*
- What happened to the people who were made homeless by the fire? How many were made homeless?*
- How were the needs of the homeless addressed and by whom?*
- Was there a difference in how the rich and the workers/poor were helped?*
- Why?*
- What were the consequences and longer impact of the housing crisis caused by the fire?*
- How does it make sense with the theme? For example: What can be considered a Triumph or Tragedy...or both? --How so?*

(Many NHD themes can be applied, for example, "Where do we see the Conflicts and Compromises?" Can the housing crisis actions be viewed as "Reaction, Reform, and/or a Revolution?")

--*What is the relevance of disaster relief today? Were lessons learned?*

---*How can I get involved in relief efforts today?* (To encourage civic action after the History Fair project is completed.)