

Essential Questions Reflect the Enduring Understandings

<p style="text-align: center;">Enduring Understandings (EU)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Essential Questions (EQ)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Labyrinth Unit</p> <p>EU: There is unexplained evil in the world.</p> <p>EQ: <i>Why are we sometimes confronted with unexplained evil?</i></p> <p>EQ: <i>Why does evil exist in the world?</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Language Arts</p> <p>EU: Truth can change with perspective. EQ: <i>What is truth?</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">.....</p> <p>EU: Power vacuums are always filled. EQ: <i>How has the desire for power affected societies throughout history?</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Science</p> <p>EU: Systems are interconnected. EQ: <i>How are earth's systems connected?</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">.....</p> <p>EU: Evidence supports or refutes a claim. EQ: <i>Why is evidence crucial to supporting a science claim?</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Social Studies</p> <p>EU: It is important to understand history and to have a historical perspective. EQ: <i>How can an understanding of history help us to not repeat it?</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">.....</p> <p>EU: The world is becoming more globally connected. EQ: <i>Why is it important to understand the global society we live in?</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Math</p> <p>EU: Number relationships provide us with a means to understand our world. EQ: <i>What numerical relationships help make the world understandable?</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">.....</p> <p>EU: Mathematics contains patterns. EQ: <i>How can 'seeing' patterns support our understanding of the world around us?</i></p>

Figure 8: Use the enduring understandings to develop essential questions for the unit.

Constructing Curriculum Units Using Backward Design

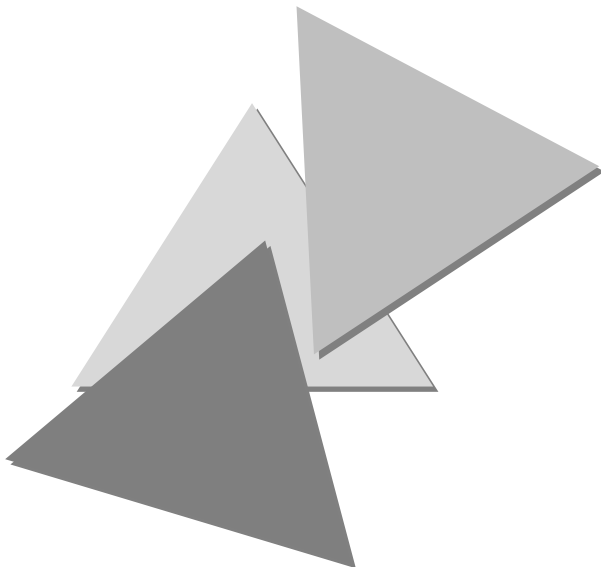
After looking at Figure 8, the teacher must think about the standards that need to be addressed and the enduring understandings that have been created, and ask: “*What are the persistent questions related to the topic that show themselves again and again in life or in the field of study?*”

A question that is often asked at this time by teachers designing units is, “*How many questions should there be for a unit?*” There is no specific number of essential questions for a unit. The unit itself dictates the number of questions. Heidi Hayes Jacobs in Mapping the Big Picture (1997) supports the idea that each essential question be tied directly to one or more learning experiences. Some teachers find this procedure helpful, while others do not. Therefore, this decision is left to the teacher or the school district if they have determined a unit writing procedure.

Once these very important guiding questions are complete, teachers can now turn their attention to the ‘unit’ questions. Unit questions are different from essential questions in that they address the more concrete needs of the discipline.

An example is included in the *Labyrinth* unit for language arts. Unit questions for the *Labyrinth* unit include questions about plot, characters, and character development, or those parts of a discipline often required by language arts state standards. These questions also guide the unit and the aspects of the discipline that are important. Although both types of questions will guide student learning, the unit questions will guide the needs of the discipline while the essential questions will expose students to the deeper understandings that have stood the test of time.

Let’s see where we are now in terms of the *Labyrinth* unit with the additions of essential questions and unit questions:



Teacher-Tested Design Template

UNIT TITLE: LABYRINTH

OVERARCHING OR UNIFYING CONCEPT: GOOD AND EVIL

SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT:

Student groups build a labyrinth game that includes clues in the form of riddles that can only be answered by those who have studied The House of Dies Drear. The labyrinth must also include a final destination, five tetraominoes, rules, and game cards. Student-created riddles need to include people, situations, and circumstances that address the overarching theme of the book.

Choice:

1. Style of labyrinth
2. Riddles
3. Rules
4. Format of the game
5. Student-created final rubric

RUBRIC (PAGE 50)

STATE STANDARDS:

The state standards for the *Labyrinth* unit would include those from language arts, math, and social studies.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:

*Why are we sometimes confronted with unexplained evil?
Why does evil exist in the world?*

UNIT QUESTIONS:

*What is the plot, and how does it unfold?
What are the characters, and how are they developed by the author?
How does the time period affect the story?
What are polyominoes, and how can they be used?
How is a riddle constructed, and why are these used?*

Figure 9: The *Labyrinth* Unit with title, unifying concept, and summative assessment that is tied to standards and learning through a meaningful rubric with essential and unit questions