Essential Questions

Content & Theme Related Essential Questions
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Reading/Writing

1. Why should we read?
2. What is the most important thing to think about when we read?
3. How does what we think about help us comprehend?
4. Which connections help most to increase understanding of a text?
5. Why is writing important?
6. Is revising a piece of writing as essential as the initial effort?

Social Studies

1. What is the most important function of government?
2. What is the most important role of a citizen in democracy?
3. What is worth fighting for?
4. Can an individual make a difference in history?
5. How does evaluation of the past events help us make future decisions?
6. What are the benefits and challenges of a diverse society?

Science

1. Why should we understand how organisms, places, and ideas have changed over time?
2. Why should we recognize and analyze multiple points of view?
3. Why is visual data important for understanding organisms, places, and events that shape our world?
4. Why should we be able to recognize and analyze spatial relationships?
5. What does it mean to be living?
Content & Theme Related Essential Questions

Trade Books: Theme Related Essential Questions

Lexile to – 400
“Picture books can receive an AD or "Adult Directed" code. They're usually read to a child, rather than a child reading them independently. Although seemingly easy reading, some picture books actually have pretty high Lexile measures, and could present a challenging independent reading experience to an age-appropriate reader. Initially, an adult may want to read the book along with a child.” Meta-Metrics

Bark, George by Jules Feiffer
1. What is the most important emotion?
2. What is the best way to deal with your emotions?

Cat in the Hat by Dr. Seuss
1. What can characters and stories teach us about the real-world?
2. How are stories about different characters also about me?

Goodnight Moon by Margaret Wise Brown, illustrated by Clement Hurd
1. How do routines help students learn better?
2. Why do people need routines?

Harriet the Spy by Louise Fitzhugh
1. What can I learn about friends and friendships from the novels we read in school?
2. How is being totally honest good or bad?

Knuffle Bunny by Mo Willems
1. How does family play a role in shaping our values and beliefs? (Taking responsibilities for our actions)
2. How do beliefs, or values influence different people's behavior?

Very Hungry Caterpillar by Eric Carle
1. How does counting help me?
2. Why is it important to count in different ways?
3. What is the most efficient way to count?

Lexile 400 – 800
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All-Star Fever by Matt Christopher
1. What makes choice necessary?
2. How can circumstances affect our choices?
3. What are the keys to making intelligent choices?
4. What are the consequences of the choices we make?

Amber Brown Is Not a Crayon by Paula Danziger
1. How might it feel to live through a change that disrupts your way of life?
2. How are people altered through their relationships with others?
3. In the face of difficulty, what causes some individuals to overcome while others fail?

Anna Hibiscus by Atinuke
1. What factors shape our values and beliefs?
2. What are universal characteristic belief systems that are common across people and time?
3. To what extent do belief systems shape and/or reflect culture and society?

Bone Series by Jeff Smith (Graphic Novels)
1. Do the attributes of a hero remain the same over time?
2. When does a positive personality trait become a tragic flaw?
3. What is the role of a hero or "sheroe" (coined by Maya Angelou) in a culture?
4. How do various cultures reward / recognize their heroes and sheroes?
5. Does a hero have a special responsibility because of their "hero" status?

Big Surprise in the Bug Tank by Ruth Horowitz
1. What problem-solving strategies can individuals use to manage situations?
2. How does an investigative spirit help to solve problems?
3. What are the benefits and consequences of working through a process?

Bread and Jam for Frances by Russell Hoban
1. When is there a problem with always getting what you want?
2. Why is there too much of a good thing?
3. What impact does family have during different stages of our lives?

Charlotte's Web by E.B. White
1. What does it mean to be a good friend?
2. What can I learn about friends and friendships from the novels we read in school?
3. How can I be a better friend?

Chicka Chicka Boom Boom by Bill Martin Jr., illustrated by Lois Ehlert
1. How do letters help people?
2. Why would one letter be more important than another?

Coraline by Neil Gaiman
Content & Theme Related Essential Questions

1. What are different aspects of courage?
2. What are catalysts for courage?
3. How can a courageous act affect an individual's circumstances?
4. How does courage define my character?

**Cricket in Times Square by George Selden**
1. What does it mean to be a good friend?
2. What can I learn about friends and friendships from the novels we read in school?
3. How can I be a better friend?

**Day Jimmey's Boa Ate the Wash by Trinka Hakes Noble**
1. How can I identify cause and effect in a story?
2. What are the positive and negative aspects of both chaos and order?
3. What role does chaos play in the creative process?

**Doctor De Soto by William Steig**
1. Why would a character agree to help another at the risk of being hurt?
2. What is community and what are the individual’s responsibility to the community as well as the community’s responsibility to the individual?
3. When should an individual take a stand in opposition to an individual or larger group?

**Holes by Louis Sachar**
1. How does our sense of self affect our relationships?
2. How much control do we really have?
3. When is there a time that our character determines our fate?

**Horrible Harry and the Green Slime by Suzy Kline**
1. What does it mean to be a good friend?
2. What problem-solving strategies can individuals use to manage conflict?
3. How are people transformed through their relationships with others?

**Horrible Harry and the Dragon War by Suzy Kline**
1. What does it mean to be a good friend?
2. What can I learn about friends and friendships from the novels we read in school?
3. How can I be a better friend?

**Henry and Mudge in the Green Time by Cynthia Rylant**
1. Where does help come from?
2. When something hurts where do you seek help?

**Henry and Mudge and the Happy Cat by Cynthia Rylant**
1. How does conflict influence an individual’s decisions and actions?
2. How does a person’s view point influence their actions?
3. How are people transformed by letting something go?
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Julian, Secret Agent by Ann Cameron
1. What makes choice necessary?
2. How can circumstances affect our choices?
3. What are the keys to making intelligent choices?
4. What are the consequences of the choices we make?

Lilly's Purple Plastic Purse by Kevin Henkes
1. What makes choice necessary?
2. How can circumstances affect our choices?
3. What are the keys to making intelligent choices?
4. What are the consequences of the choices we make?

Madeline by Ludwig Bemelmans
1. What is courage?
2. How do people gather courage and overcome unforeseen challenges?

Man Out at First by Matt Christopher
1. How are people transformed through their experiences in life?
2. How does reading about the struggles and triumphs of others impact us?
3. How does an individual’s point of view affect the way they deal with different situations?

Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters by John Steptoe
1. What personal qualities help or hinder the formation of relationships?
2. How is conflict an inevitable part of relationships?
3. What is the best sort of life to live?

Number the Stars by Lois Lowry
1. How are people transformed through their experiences in life?
2. How does reading about the struggles and triumphs of others impact us?
3. How does an individual’s point of view affect the way they deal with different situations?

Polar Bear, Polar Bear, What Do You Hear? by Eric Carle
1. What do living things need to survive?
2. How are humans causing extinctions?

Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes by Eleanor Coerr
1. How are people transformed through their experiences in life?
2. How does reading about the struggles and triumphs of others impact us?
3. What is courage?

Snowy Day by Ezra Jack Keats
1. What is the meaning of happiness?
2. What qualities help you to deal with change?
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**So You Want to Be President?**
1. What are the characteristics of authentic leadership?
2. How can an individual make a difference?
3. What does society expect from its leaders?

**Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing by Judy Blume**
1. What problem-solving strategies can individuals use to manage conflict?
2. How are people transformed through their relationships with others?
3. What causes sibling rivalry?

**Trumpet of the Swan by E. B. White**
1. What qualities does a character need to have overcome obstacles in their life?
2. What experiences help characters grow and learn important truths about themselves?

**Where the Wild Things Are by Maurice Sendak**
1. How do humans change during their childhood?
2. Why is being punished in the name of love still considered to be punishment?
3. Why does your imagination take you to different places?

**Wrinkle in Time by Madeleine L'Engle**
1. When have the forces of good and evil changed over time?
2. Who determines good and evil?
3. How do different societies determine good vs. evil?

**Lexile 800 and above**

**Charlie and the Chocolate Factory by Roald Dahl**
1. What does it mean to be an insider or an outsider?
2. How does what we know about the world shape the way we view ourselves?
3. How are people transformed through their relationships with others?

**Esperanza Rising by Pam Muñoz Ryan**
1. How can we relate the themes of tragedy, hope, family, and persistence to our own lives?
2. Do you believe that things are fated no matter what, or do you believe your actions can change the course of your life?
3. Why is it important for people and cultures to construct narratives about their experience?

**From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler by E.L. Konigsburg**
1. Outside of marriage when is family about who you choose to be with?
2. How can someone be family if they are not actually related to you?
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**Golden Compass by Philip Pullman**
1. Is humankind inherently good or evil?
2. Do good people do evil things/Do evil people do good things?
3. What is absolute powers connection to good and evil?

**Hatchet by Gary Paulsen**
1. What turning points determine our individual pathways to adulthood?
2. How do we form and shape our identities?

**Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone by J.K. Rowling**
1. Why is finding courage and humility so much harder than finding anger?
2. What are the attributes of a humble person and why is it important to be humble?

**Hobbit by J.R.R. Tolkien**
1. Do the attributes of a hero remain the same over time?
2. What is the role of a hero or "sheroe" (coined by Maya Angelou) in a culture?
3. Does a hero have a special responsibility because of their "hero" status?

**Invention of Hugo Cabret by Brian Selznick**
1. If you never give up on your dreams will you eventually succeed?
2. Is anything truly possible with will and determination?

**James and the Giant Peach by Roald Dahl**
1. Is humankind inherently good or evil?
2. To what extent does power or the lack of power affect individuals?
3. What does power have to do with fairness and justice?

**Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe by C.S. Lewis**
1. What does it mean to live in balance?
2. Have the forces of good and evil changed over time?
3. Who determines good and evil?

**Maniac Magee by Jerry Spinelli**
1. How do values and beliefs change over time?
2. How can racism be caused by fear?
3. When should an individual take a stand in opposition to an individual or larger group?

**Matilda by Roald Dahl**
1. How can knowledge be found in the least likely of places?
2. When will bad things be revenged and when will good things be rewarded?
3. When is it both fun and scary to be a kid?
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**Moonshot: The Flight of Apollo 11 by Brian Floca**
1. What impact has people and events had on our current understanding of the universe?
2. Why explore space? What are the benefits?
3. How does inquiry lead to the acquisition of new scientific knowledge?

**Paper Bag Princess by Robert Munsch**
1. Why are there traditional gender roles in our society? How can they be reversed?
2. How do you know if a relationship is healthy or hurtful?

**Phantom Tollbooth by Norton Juster**
1. Does knowledge grow exponentially?
2. How does knowledge improve thinking?
3. Does knowledge help to circumvent thinking?

**Ramona the Pest by Beverly Cleary**
1. Why is it essential to remain a child at heart?
2. How can children teach adults valuable lessons?

**Secret Garden by Frances Hodgson Burnett**
1. When is a person not responsible for their flaws?
2. Are the two main characters responsible for their flaws?

**Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963 by Christopher Paul Curtis**
1. What impact does family have during different stages of our lives?
2. What can we learn from different generations?
3. How do you know if a relationship is healthy or hurtful?