WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A CITIZEN?

The Question Formulation Technique (QFT) developed by the Right Question Institute (RQI), provides a structure to help teachers guide students towards generating their own questions. Through this process, students are considering the complexity, ambiguity, and embedded meanings within important everyday concepts.

INSTRUCTIONS:
The QFT begins with a question focus. To begin, teachers should choose a prompt as the focus. Teachers may choose to focus on one of the prompts or pair it with others.

Sample prompts:
• Citizenship
• What is citizenship?
• "I have no country to fight for: my country is the earth, and I am a citizen of the world" – Eugene V. Debs
• “Citizenship consists in the service of the country” – Jawaharlal Nehru
• “I am a citizen of the world and my nationality is goodwill” – Socrates

Once students are given their focus, they move through three steps in the QFT progression.
• Step One: Produce your own questions.
• Step Two: Categorize your questions.
• Step Three: Prioritize your questions.

STEP ONE:
Students are placed in small groups. Using the question focus, they produce as many questions as they can without stopping to judge or answer the questions.
• One student should be the designated recorder, writing down every question exactly as stated.
• If someone makes a statement, it must be changed into a question.

STEP TWO:
Students work together to categorize those questions by labeling them as “closed” or “open”.
• Close-ended questions can be answered with a yes or no and open-ended questions require a longer explanation.
• Students mark the questions with a C or an O.

STEP THREE:
Students prioritize the questions they have generated, choosing the three most important questions and providing explanations for why they chose those three.

CLOSING:
Students should share their questions with the class, looking for connections.

The goal is for teachers to not only provide students time to practice asking questions, but to have those questions focus on understanding the different components within citizenship. Notably, teachers should help students consider how citizenship reflects an assumed identity, individual rights, and social responsibilities.

At this stage of the QFT, teachers may also want to consider how to use students’ questions as a bridge to the larger civic projects in which they will engage.

This was adapted from the Right Question Institute resources and C3Teachers inquiries on the Aztec Empire and democracy in the Internet age.