

# Bring Primary Sources to Life with Students' Questions

## A Collaboration Between Right Question Institute and Library of Congress Teaching with Primary Sources

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### What is the Question Formulation Technique?

The Question Formulation (QFT) is a step-by-step process through which students ask and work with their own questions to drive primary source learning.

### 5 Essential Elements of the QFT

- Question Focus
- Produce Questions
  - Follow the 4 rules
  - Number the Questions
- Improve Questions
  - Label questions closed or open-ended
  - Change one open to closed and one closed to open
- Strategize
  - Prioritize questions
  - Action plan or discuss next steps
- Reflect

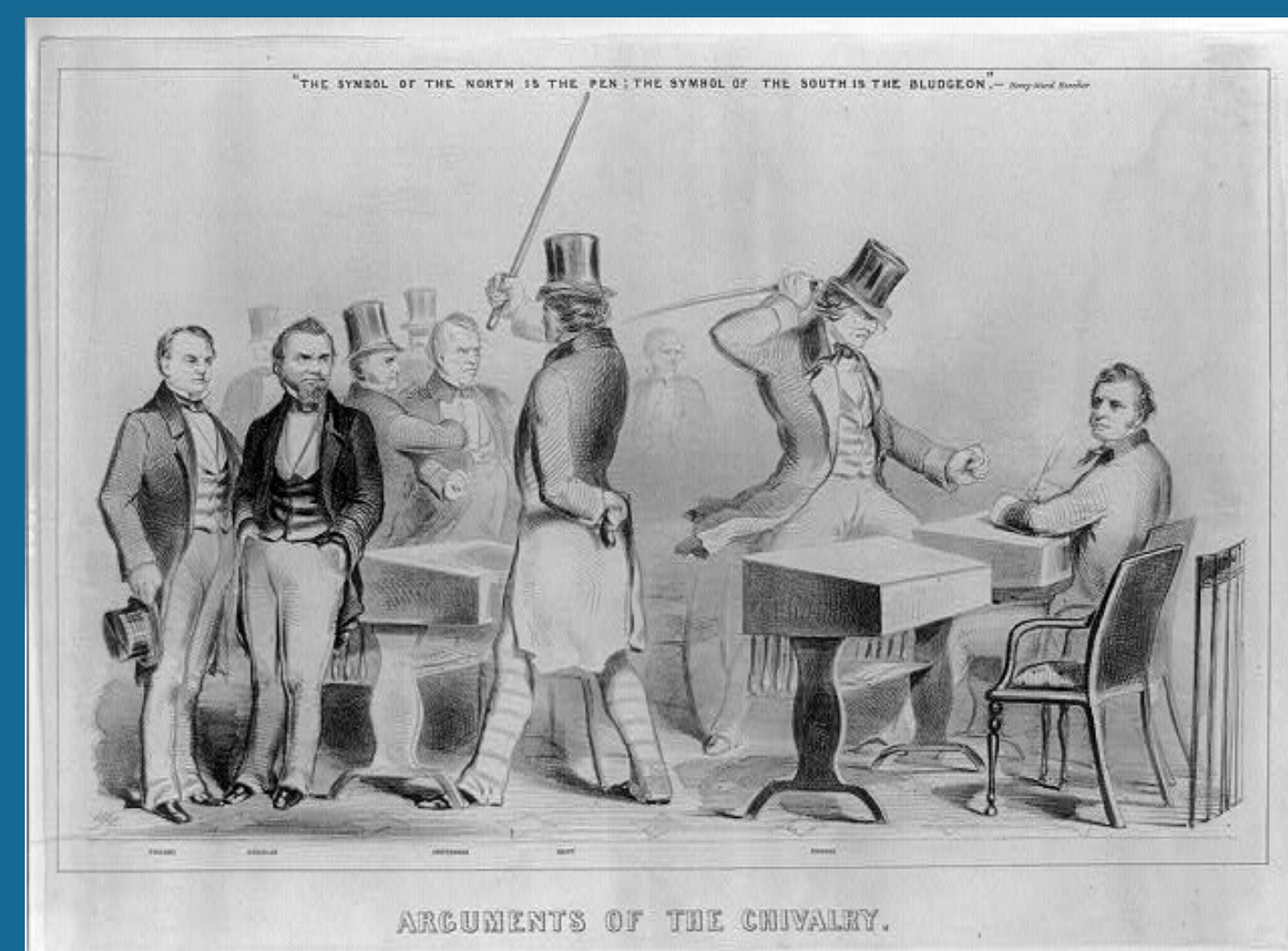
- Ask as many questions as you can
- Do not stop to judge, discuss, or answer questions
- Record questions exactly as stated
- Change statements into questions

- Closed-ended can be answered with a yes, no, or with one word
- Open-ended cannot be answered with a yes, no, or with one word and require more of an explanation

"There can be no thinking without questioning—no purposeful study of the past, nor any serious planning for the future."

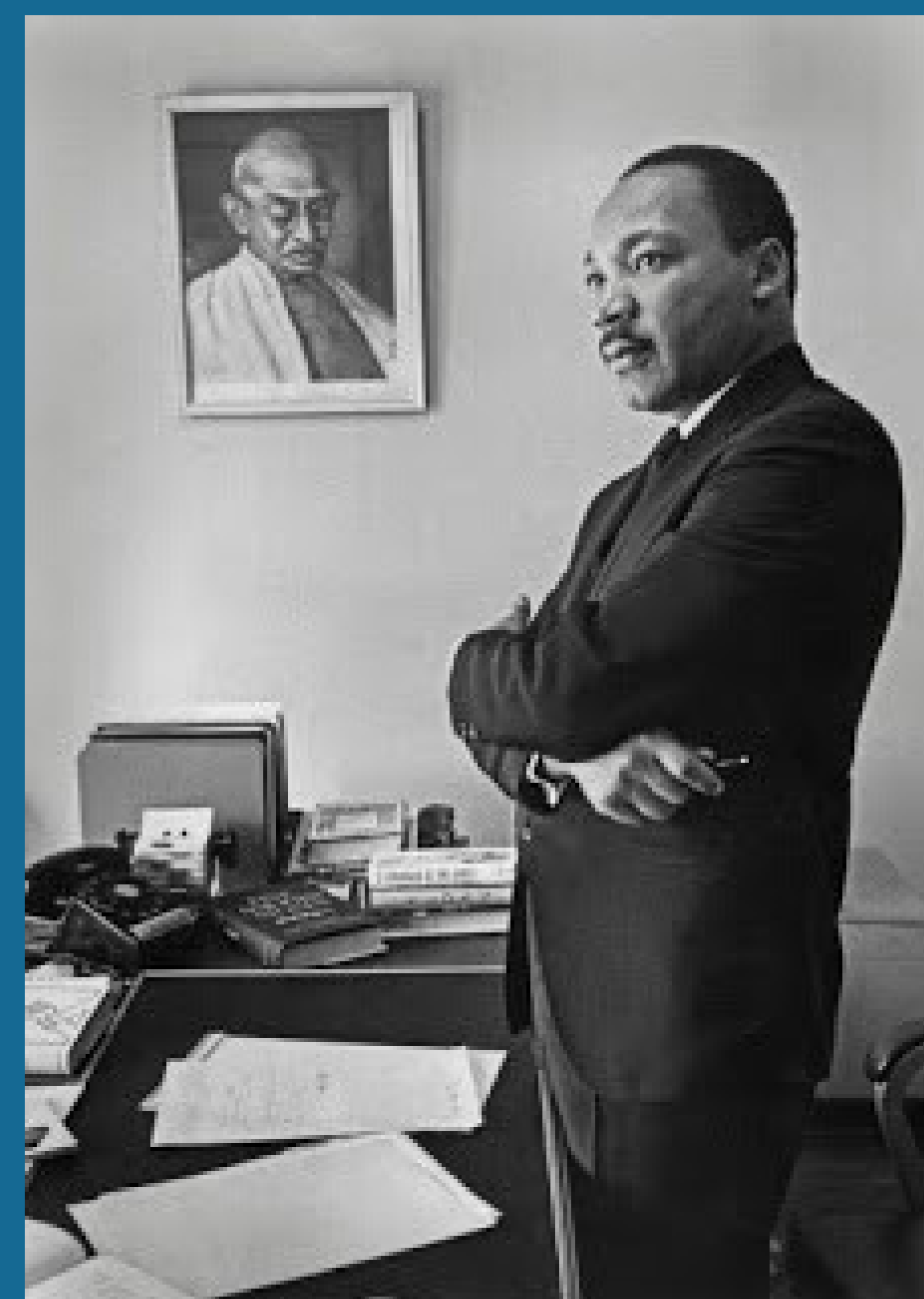
– David Hackett Fischer, *Historians' Fallacies*

Imagine starting your next project with one of these questions:



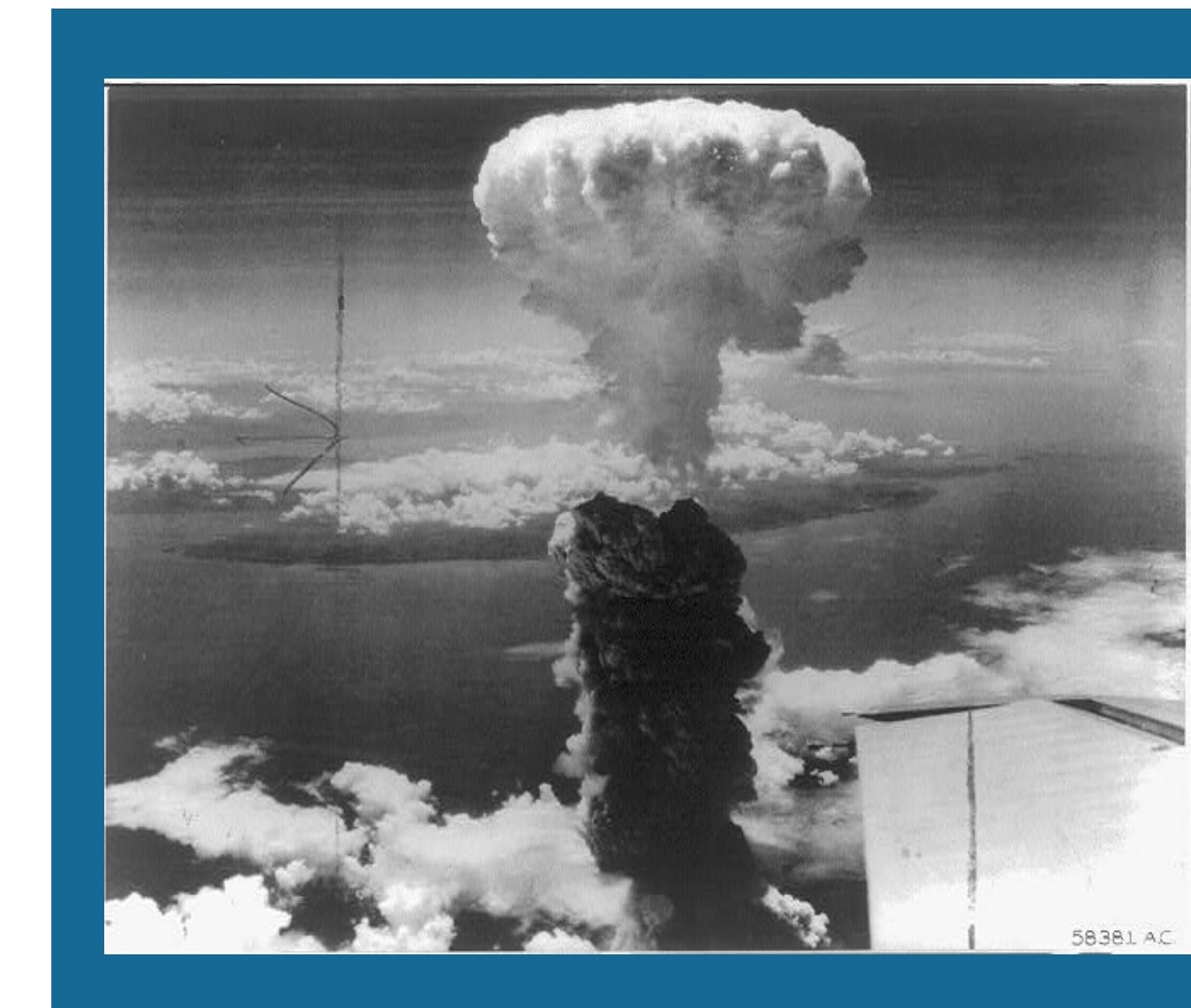
<https://www.loc.gov/resource/cph.3a39197/>

- Why are they fighting?
- Are they fighting?
- Are they part of the government?
- Where were they?
- Who are they?
- Were they signing anything?
- Was this related to slavery?



Bob Fitch photography archive, © Stanford University Libraries

- Are they related?
- How are they related?
- Are they both black?
- Is the picture edited or is it actually there?
- What does it represent?
- Is it what Gandhi did in his country that inspired what MLK did in his country?
- What does MLK think about the photo?



<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/98506956/>

- What were the environmental & economic implications of dropping the bomb?
- Had people been given warning?
- Who was responsible for dropping the bomb?
- What led to this event?
- How many lives were lost as a result?

### Coming Soon!

An online learning experience that guides participants through designing a QFT lesson to engage learners more deeply with primary sources from the Library of Congress. Explore examples from every subject area and hear from experienced educators in California, Georgia, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Ohio, Oklahoma, Texas, Virginia, and beyond.