

## Identifying Enduring Understandings & Big Ideas

Big ideas inform the whole of your course, they transfer to other contexts, they require “uncoverage” due to their abstraction, and they provide a “conceptual lens” for organizing and prioritizing content.

### Enduring Understandings Filter

If it is:

- an enduring, big idea having lasting value beyond the classroom,
- a big idea and core process at the heart of the discipline,
- an abstract, counterintuitive, and often misunderstood idea, and
- a big idea embedded in facts, skills, and activities?

then it might be an “Enduring Understanding”

### Questions to Illuminate “Big Ideas”

- Why study...? So what?
- What makes the study of... universal?
- If the unit on... is a story, what’s the moral of the story?
- What’s the “big idea” implied in the skill or process of...?
- What larger concept, issue, or problem underlies...?
- What couldn’t we do if we didn’t understand...?
- How is... used and applied in the larger world?
- What is a “real-world” insight about...?
- What is the value of studying...?

### Checklist for “Big Ideas”

- Broad and abstract; universal
- Represented by a few words
- Universal in application
- Timeless – carry through the ages
- Embedded in facts, skills, activities
- Provides a focusing conceptual “lens” for any study
- Points to ideas at heart of expert understanding of subject
- Connects and organizes many facts
- Meaning is counterintuitive or prone to misunderstanding
- Has great transfer value, both across subjects and life
- Often manifest as a helpful: concept, theme, point of view, paradox, theory, assumption, recurring question, principle