

## Introduction

In order to satisfy the requirements of the tutorial component of the History 30 course, students will need to design legitimate knowledge questions. Knowledge questions are general, open-ended questions about knowledge itself. Students will make use of the ladder of abstraction technique in order to design their questions. The ladder of abstraction has five steps:

**RLS (Real Life Situation):** Identify a RLS through a simple statement

**ISSUE:** Provide a slightly more detailed description of the situation, subject, topic or problem

**Step 1:** Design a *narrow* or *specific* question which “sort of” talks about a knowledge claim

**Step 2:** Modify the question from Step 1 to become a more open-ended question directly about knowledge itself

**Step 3:** Modify the question from the previous step in to a general question specifically about knowledge

**For example, consider the following scenario, e.g. the atomic bomb.**

**RLS:** President Truman’s decision to use the bomb during World War II

**ISSUE:** The morality of military strategy.

**Step 1:** Was using the atom bomb a morally permissible option?

**Step 2:** How can we determine if wartime decisions were morally right?

**Step 3:** How, if at all, can ethical judgements in history be established?

## Small Group Assignment

The class will be divided in to six or seven even-sized groups. Each group will be given a scenario to evaluate by the teacher. From the scenario each group will fully complete a ladder of abstraction activity. Each group will be given a certain amount of time to complete their task after which the class will reconvene to share results. Below you’ll find the activity’s scenarios.

**Group A:** Ann’s mother is a doctor in the hospital. Sang’s father is a homeopath. They are arguing about whether homeopathy is effective or not.

**Group B:** Jin Tao is making an artwork by cutting up pictures of famous paintings and pasting them on a board. Miguel says that the art work isn’t original, as it is made up of other artists’ work.

**Group C:** Aleksandr and Indira have been studying Shakespeare's Richard II in English A1, and the class has been discussing whether Shakespeare's portrayal of Richard is historically accurate.

**Group D:** Sabine is asked in mathematics to prove Pythagoras' Theorem, so she starts drawing lots of different right angled triangles, and measuring their sides carefully.

**Group E:** Megawati's mother brought home some pens from work, and offered them to her to use in school. Megawati is wondering whether this is stealing.

**Group F:** Halisi's economics textbook claims that people are rational agents who always seek to maximize outcomes for themselves.

**Group G:** Seretse's father tells him that the fruit on their trees is ripening earlier and earlier in the year, and that this must be due to global warming.

---

**RLS:**

**ISSUE:**

**STEP 1:**

**STEP 2:**

**STEP 3:**