

CREATING GOOD QUESTIONS—QUESTIONING CIRCLES:

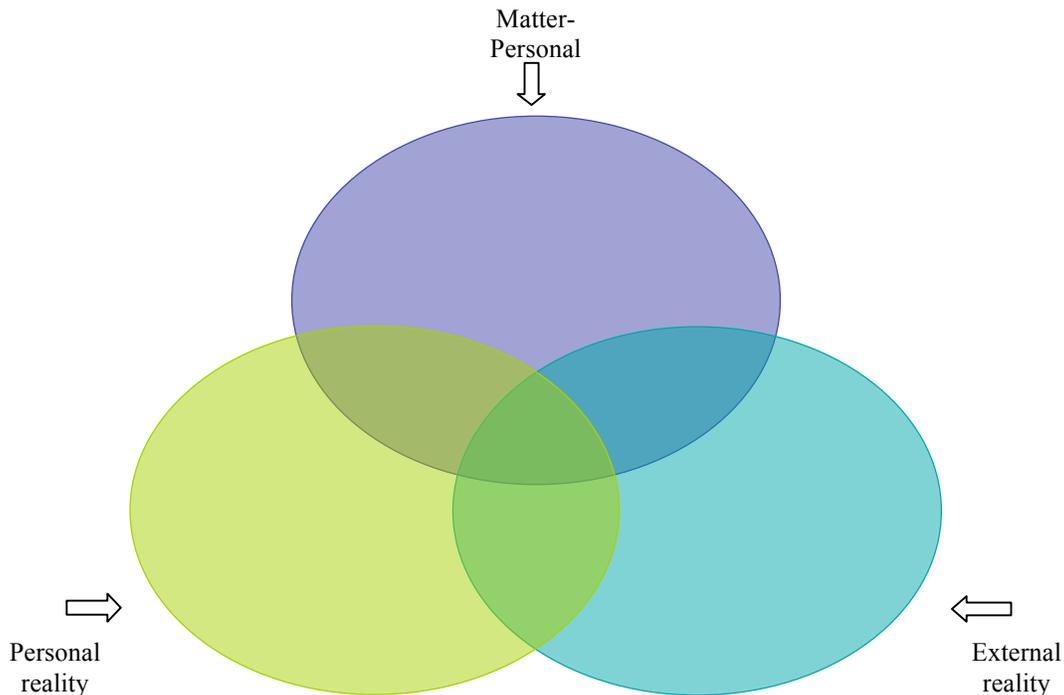
Learn to create complex questions so the answers to them can be turned into possible thesis statements.

The Three Circles:

- 1) **Matter-Text:** represents the subject and/or text(s) under discussion or questioning
- 2) **Personal reality:** represents the individual's experiences, values and ideas
- 3) **External reality:** represents the "world": the experience, history, and concepts of larger society and of other peoples and cultures

The Questioning Process:

While each circle represents a different domain of cognition, the circles overlap—as does knowledge—and are not ordered. Further, in one area where all three circles intersect lies the union of the subject being explored, the individual's response and experience, and the experience of others. The intersection of the three circles, the area we term "Dense," contains the most significant (higher-order) questions.



White question: Non-Integrated question from one category only (no overlap of circles)

Shaded question: Integrated questions using two of the categories (overlap of 2 circles)

Dense question: Integrated questions using all three of the categories (overlap of all 3 circles)

To arrive at a good topic and a strong thesis try this process:

- *Brainstorm* all the issues, ideas, and themes raised in the reading
- Create complex *questions* using the journalist questions about the ideas raised in the brainstorm.
- *Answer* several of your best questions about the reading with your opinion.
- Deepen your answer by answering “*so what?*” So what is the significance? So what can be learned?

QUESTIONING CIRCLES EXAMPLES:

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn

White Questions

Matter-Text: What does Huck say when he decides not to turn Jim into the authorities?

Personal reality: When would you support a friend when everyone else thought s/he was wrong?

External reality: What was the responsibility of people who found runaway slaves?

Shaded Questions

Matter-Text/ Personal reality: Would you, like Huck, break the law for a friend?

Personal reality/External reality: Given the social and political circumstances, to what extent would you have done what Huck did?

Matter-Text /External reality: What were the issues during that time which caused both Huck’s and Jim’s action to be viewed as wrong?

Dense Question

Matter-Text/Personal reality/External reality:

When is it right to go against the social and/or political structures of the time as Huck did when he refused to turn Jim in to the authorities?