

Critical Sensitivity to Design Questions

A SET OF QUESTIONS FOR STUDENTS AND EDUCATORS THAT SUPPORT
CRITICAL INQUIRY AND AWARENESS WHEN APPROACHING
HUMAN-DESIGNED OBJECTS & SYSTEMS

This set of questions is intended to support young people to develop a critical sensitivity to design—in other words, to reflect critically on the content they encounter and consider power, representation, and justice when doing so.

Perhaps a young person is looking closely at a: poem, portrait, historical monument, event, system of government, news article, online video, housing development system, lecture, school calendar, classroom design, or other content. To consider the ways injustices might be embedded in the design of these objects, systems, and content, ask the following critical questions.*

In regards to the object, system, or content:

- *What is the context? When and where was this designed/made? What else was happening at that place and time?*
- *Who designed/made this? Why might that be important?*
- *Whose perspectives are represented? Whose voices are the loudest? Why?*
- *Whose perspectives are not represented? Whose voices are the quietest—perhaps even silenced? Why?*
- *Whose voices and perspectives appear to be valued?*
- *When considering a system, who makes decisions about how things are run?*
- *Who decides what is considered “valuable?”*
- *Who has the most power? Who has the least? Why?*
- *What kinds of power am I seeing?*
- *Who appears to be invited to participate?*
- *Who appears to be participating without realizing it?*
- *Who appears to be participating without consenting to it?*
- *How am I involved? How do I participate?*
- *How can I participate more, or differently?*
- *How can I participate in ways that contribute to justice in my neighborhood?*
- *How can I participate in ways that contribute to justice in my school?*
- *How can I participate in ways that contribute to justice in the country I live in?*
- *How can I participate in ways that contribute to justice in the world?*

**While JxD intentionally ordered these questions, it is not essential to follow the order. Ask one or several. Most importantly, routinely ask these questions so that eventually, learners naturally do so on their own when engaging with new content or revisiting familiar content.*