

# Enduring Understandings and Essential Questions: OOTLE16

## Pentateuch:

### Enduring Understandings:

Reading the Bible is always a cross-cultural experience.

The Bible is a library of composite texts that are substantively diverse in their understandings of God and of the world.

The "world behind the text" differs substantively from the "world in the text."

### Essential Questions:

What makes a cross-cultural experience "authentic" (or does not)?

What makes a narrative or a claim "true"? Can conflicting narratives or claims both be "true"?

Can fictional narratives have authority for people? Can you think of examples (outside the Bible)?

## Former Prophets:

### Enduring Understandings:

Histories use the same tools as other storytelling: characterization, plot, point-of-view, analepsis and prolepsis, rhetorical strategies, etc.

The past might not change, but histories change.

## Essential Questions:

Is every history a narrative fiction?

What should a written history accomplish in its own time?

To what is a written history accountable, if anything?

## Latter Prophets:

### Enduring Understandings:

The Prophets hardly ever “predict” things, and when they do, it’s usually the specific immediate future (after the manner of a physician making a prognosis), or the general distant future (e.g., eventual restoration of Israel after yet-impending troubles).

The Prophets are not all saying the same things: they have different interests, different concerns, and want different things to be happening.

The Prophets aren’t talking to you: rather, they speak to their time and place, in order to make specific things happen in that time and place.

### Essential Questions:

What is “prophecy”? What do people normally mean when we describe somebody’s speech today as “prophetic”?

How much does context mean for understanding? What should one know (e.g.) about slavery, Jim Crow, segregation, and the Civil Rights movement for Martin Luther King’s speeches or James Baldwin’s novels to “speak to” one?

Why and how do we appropriate ancient words for our own purposes and interests? What does it mean for a text to “speak to” someone it’s not meant for?

## Writings:

### Enduring Understandings:

Biblical texts will disagree with one another about God, about God’s ways with the world, about what God wants from people.

The Writings don’t represent doctrine, but experience...and experience varies.

The Writings, and the Hebrew Bible elsewhere, are entirely comfortable charging God with wrongdoing, and holding God accountable for the experience of pain.

## Essential Questions:

Can competing claims about God both be true? What makes it “true”?

Why do people suffer undeservedly or needlessly? Why do evildoers prosper?

What are some ways that a powerless people can say to a powerful deity, “What do you think you are doing?”