

## Powerful Pairings QFT Lesson Plan: Virginia Hall



**Title of Lesson:** Who was the mysterious Virginia Hall?

**Purpose of Lesson:**

To have students improve their skills in formulating questions, analyzing those questions and determining the next steps in answering prioritized questions.

**Powerful Pairings TPS Strategy:**

Question Formulation Technique (QFT): add summary

**Paired Narrative Nonfiction Book:**

Friddell, Claudia. 2024. The Mysterious Virginia Hall: World War II's Most Dangerous Spy. Calkins Creek.

**Objectives: What do I want students to be able to do by the end of class?**

Students will be able to...

1. Ask, sort, prioritize and improve questions by analyzing a Q-Focus source.
2. Use clues from primary and secondary sources to develop and improve claims related to inquiry questions.
3. Investigate closely and identify key details within images in order to find relevant evidence.
4. Find evidence in a narrative nonfiction text to further explore primary sources and develop relevant historical claims to inquiry questions.

**Inquiry Questions:**

**Content Questions:** (1) How did Virginia Hall contribute to American intervention in World War II? (2) Was Virginia Hall's intervention in World War II selfish or selfless?

**Secondary Historical Skill:** (3) How do historians uncover history that is supposed to stay secret?

**Assessment: How will I know they can do it?**

- Students will accurately connect primary sources to relevant inquiry questions.
- Students will accurately connect the nonfiction text excerpts with relevant visual sources (primary and secondary).
- Students will use the primary sources and narrative nonfiction text to develop a claim for one of several inquiry questions.

**Materials:**

Slideshow

[Q-Focus printed for student groups](#)

Paper, pen/pencil for writing down questions

8.5X11 blank paper to write down key questions (to post on board)

[Virginia Hall Timeline images](#)

[Primary sources with small blank boxes \(to post on board\)](#)

[Primary source analysis tool graphic organizer](#)

Excerpts from "The Mysterious Virginia Hall"

[Exit ticket graphic organizer](#)

**Context: Who was Virginia Hall?**

Begin with the backmatter in the book "The Mysterious Virginia Hall". Review the provided materials and investigate the suggested resources.

Read this [brief summary from the Maryland Commission on Women](#) to gain more understand of the life of Virginia Hall so you will be able to help students uncover the details

**Lesson Sequence:**

**Step 1 Q-Focus:** Teacher explains the purpose of historians asking questions while projecting the Inquiry Cycle. Teacher reminds/explains to students that asking questions is an important role for historians to uncover historical topics. It's incredibly important for uncovering untold or hidden histories (like Virginia Hall). Teacher explains that without people asking questions, things that are meant to remain secret will remain secret!

**Step 2 Produce Questions:** Project the Q-Focus and give students a copy of the image (painting or photograph of suitcase radio- "piano"). Instruct students to ask as many questions as they can. Discuss processes for generating questions. What types of questions could we ask in five minutes. Direct them to think about the actual image and then also the context. Remind them to think about what we have been studying as a method for thinking about the image. Remind them that this will help us answer our inquiry questions- three today!

**Step 3a Improve Questions:** Have students identify closed and open questions on their list. (partner maybe) Ask one student to volunteer their list and begin to code with "C" and "O". Make sure students understand what those categories mean. Then have students label them and then share some examples to make sure students understand the categories correctly. Walk around and verify that students are doing it correctly.

**Step 3b: Improve Questions:** Have students improve their questions– again, take one student's examples and model for them– or use my own. For example: What is she touching with her hand? (Closed) to What is the impact of what she is doing on the war? (Open). Talk about how some changes might be very clear and others might be more difficult. Some questions could be both open and closed.

**Step 4 Prioritize:** Post the three inquiry questions on the board in large text on an 8 ½ X 11 paper. Have students review their lists and identify which question their questions would help to investigate. Have students pick from their list or generate one question for each inquiry question. What questions would help us answer these three inquiry questions. Post them on the board. (also create one for the back board so students who cannot be recorded can also participate.

**Step 5a Next Steps:** Share the larger Unit Inquiry Questions

Content Questions: (1) How did Virginia Hall contribute to American intervention in World War II?

(2) Was Virginia Hall's intervention in World War II selfish or selfless?

Secondary Historical Skill: (3)How do historians uncover history that is supposed to stay secret?

**Step 5b:Next Steps:** Continue inquiry: Have students pick three of the additional primary sources and investigate them. Use graphic organizer to investigate the primary (or secondary) sources. After analyzing, have students pick which question the source would best support and why. They will post the image under the questions on the board with a brief explanation of how it connects to the inquiry question they chose.

**Step 6 Reflect:** Ask students in pairs or individually to think about what they learned and how they learned it?

### Sources:

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Virginia Hall, Postcard Home, 1939. Courtesy of Claudia Friddell, research, 2025.

[https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1OiQHk\\_6zE5cKZq6iDFRnZK\\_rHHrUcZ2XvjN9sAAExRw/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1OiQHk_6zE5cKZq6iDFRnZK_rHHrUcZ2XvjN9sAAExRw/edit?usp=sharing)

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Virginia Hall, Suitcase Radio, OSS, 1944. Located at the International Spy Museum, Washington D.C. Accessed 8/2025.

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