

WORKSHEET: RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Successful research involves more than just finding all the information out there about a topic. You will never be able to find—or read—all this information. Having a narrow topic will help you to keep their projects to a manageable size, but you can focus your research and project even more by developing research questions.

Writing Research Questions

Good historical research questions will allow you to investigate issues of cause and effect, change over time, differences in perspective, etc. What were the causes of past events? What were the effects? How did past decisions or actions affect future choices? What has changed?

Research questions are different than information-seeking questions. Information-seeking questions help you to understand the basic facts about your topic. When was the 19th amendment passed? Who was the first president of the United States? How does a bill become a law? You will likely answer these questions just by reading an encyclopedia article about your topic.

TRY IT: WRITING RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Brainstorm a variety of questions about your topic. Try selecting the most interesting two or three questions to guide your research.

Category	Sample: Rosa Parks	Your Topic
Cause and Effect What were the causes of past events? What were the effects?	Why did the city of Montgomery have these policies? Why did Rosa Parks and others decide that it was a good time to take a stand? What impact did the bus boycott have in and beyond Montgomery?	
Through their Eyes How did people in the past view their world?	What motivated Rosa Parks to take a stand against segregation? What were the motivations of city officials in Montgomery for arresting her?	
Change and Continuity What has changed? What has remained the same?	How did the city of Montgomery and government policy change during the course of the Civil Rights Movement?	
Turning Points How did past decisions or actions affect future choices?	How was the Montgomery Bus Boycott a turning point in the Civil Rights Movement? How were things different in Montgomery and the Civil Rights Movement after this event?	

Question categories adapted from "Thinking Like a Historian" by Bobbie Malone and Nikki Mandell, published by the Wisconsin Historical Society.

WORKSHEET: RESEARCH STRATEGY

Plan a strategy for your History Day research, including what to search for and where to look.

Topic: _____

1. What are some important words, dates, or people related to your topic? These words will help you to search for information. Remember to check spelling!

2. What types of secondary sources might exist about your topic? From the list below, circle the types of sources you think you could find about your topic.

- | | | |
|------------------------|-------------------|--------------|
| Book | Media documentary | Encyclopedia |
| History textbook | Biography | Website |
| Interview with scholar | | |

3. What types of primary sources might exist about your topic? From the list below, circle the types of sources you think you could find about your topic.

- | | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------|
| Diary | Manuscript collection | Government records |
| Interview with participant | Autobiography | Newspaper from the time period |
| Original film footage | Music of the period | Photographs |
| Historic objects | Letters | |

4. Where can you go to find this information? Answer the following questions and think about the places you could visit for your research.

A. What is the first place you plan on looking for information? _____

B. Where else can you look? Circle which of the following you plan on using for your research.

- | | | |
|----------------|----------------------|----------|
| School Library | Public/Local Library | Internet |
|----------------|----------------------|----------|

C. What other places can you go? Brainstorm nearby college or university libraries and list below.

D. Is there a History Day Hullabaloo you could attend or a field trip that your school plans on going on? If so, write the date and location below.
