



How to Develop a Research Topic

INQUIRY AND SYNTHESIS THROUGH RESEARCH

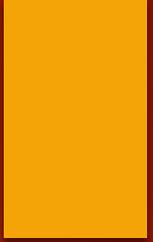
Brainstorm/Freewriting Exercise

Take about three minutes and scan the research topics. Choose any topic on the list that you want to write about. Then, in your Interactive Notebook, turn on some music, and as it plays, brainstorm or freewrite about the topic you chose.

You are not writing about the song you're hearing, the music is simply there to encourage focus, enhance your mood and promote inspiration. Do not ask whether or not you're doing this right. There is no right or wrong way. Just write.

Brainstorm non-stop for 10 minutes. Even if something you write appears irrelevant, write it and keep going. You'll be surprised at how things connect in the long-run!

Today's Objective



By the end of class, using the brainstorming exercise, we will be able to formulate a research question for your **Extended Essay/Research Paper** and analyze multiple perspectives on a topic of interest with 90% accuracy. (Fig19A-B)

Formulate a Research Question

Use your brainstorm/freewrite to formulate a research question. Follow these steps:

1. Choose a topic.
2. Participate in a brainstorming/freewriting exercise.
3. Identify your main idea or the focus of your research.
4. Formulate a researchable question by asking "How..." "What..." and "Why..." questions.
5. Make sure your research question can lead to a debatable discussion.

Checklist:

- 1) Can you find enough material on the topic?
- 2) Does the topic interest you and your audience?
- 3) Is your topic objective (factual), not subjective (opinions, experiences, family, feelings)?
- 4) Can you develop a new spin on an old idea with your chosen topic?
- 5) Is your topic too broad?
- 6) Is your topic or too narrow?
- 7) Is your topic focused?
- 8) Can it be answered with a yes or no? (It shouldn't!)
- 9) Can it be developed within the given time frame?

Top Model: Choosing a Topic



What are your favorite subjects?

English
History
Political Science
Sciences
Math
Fine Arts

What topics do you like in those subjects?

Dance
Music
Natural Living (yoga, meditation, veganism)
Reading
Writing
Books
Education
Metaphysics
Theater

Top Model: Brainstorming/Free Writing

In 1987 music and dancing was all that mattered. It affected my mood, how I treated people, what I wanted to eat, what movies I wanted to see and definitely how I dressed. In fact, at 9 years old, music and dancing from the musicals “Annie” and “The Wiz” set the stage for how I would live the next 32 years of my life as a professional ballet and modern dancer.

Also, movies like “Roller Boogie” and “Breakin” were the soundtracks for my wardrobe. If you saw me back then, you could guess my age by the leg warmers, bright, colorful tunics and tap shoes that I was wearing daily.

Then, it dawned on me that since the beginning of time, society changes based on the music of its time. For example, throughout the 20s, jazz was accompanied by the snazzy, jazzy sleek looks of flappers and gangsters. In the 70s, R&B/Soul was donned with bell bottoms, clog heels, African print, black leather and Afros. In the 80s, hip hop vibed with tights, workout gear, leg warmers and big, bold colorful tunics for girls, and for boys, kangols, big gold chains and Adidas. You knew the era by the wardrobe.

Music also mirrors the country’s mood based on what’s going on socially, politically, environmentally and economically. From how we shop, dress, eat and think, music is instrumental in shaping or reshaping the trends of America.

My Research Question

Based on my freewriting brainstorm exercise, my research question is:
"How has the history of music reflected social trends in America?"

Wait! Is my question too broad! Narrow? My checklist indicates it's too broad! Here's a more focused question:

"How has music influenced social trends in the U.S. from the 1920s to the 1980s?"

Okay, now it's focused on a certain culture and era of music.

Checklist:

- 1) Can you find enough material on the topic? **Yes**
- 2) Does the topic interest you and your audience? **Yes**
- 3) Is your topic objective (factual), not subjective (opinions, experiences, feelings)? **Yes/No**
- 4) Can you develop a new spin on an old idea with your chosen topic? **Yes**
- 5) Is your topic too broad? **No**
- 6) Is your topic too narrow? **No**
- 7) Is your topic focused? **Yes**
- 8) Can it be answered with a yes or no? **No**
- 9) Can it be developed within the given time frame? **Yes**

Designing a Researchable Question

- ▶ Ask yourself: “When people debate about this topic, what is their argument?” Choose one issue they debate about and use it as your topic. Phrase it as a question to be answered. This is called “**problematizing**” your topic.
- ▶ Seek out **cognitive dissonance**: *Disagreement or contradiction* among various sources. This disagreement becomes the basis for framing the researchable question, and your paper is to provide an answer for it (or at least an analysis for why it exists). This answer will be your thesis.

Example of Research Questions

Broad Topic: Women's Health

Narrowed Topic: Women and Cancer

Focused Topic: Women smokers and breast cancer

Research Question: Is cigarette smoking associated with breast cancer risk?

Broad Topic: Computer games

Narrowed Topic: Computer game violence

Focused Topic: Computer game violence and children

Research Question: How does violence in computer games affect children?

Broad Topic: The 19th Century

Narrowed Topic: Blacks and the 19th Century

Focused Topic: Black Inventions during the 19th Century

Research Question: What was the impact of inventions by Blacks on American society during the 19th Century.

Problem Questions

Too Narrow: Does France have a nationalized health care system?

- ▶ When did D-Day begin during WWII?
- ▶ These questions have a “yes” or “no” answer.

Too Broad: What is the history of baseball?

- ▶ This question can not be covered in the scope of a research paper.

Too Challenging: Does McDonald's or Burger King Make a better burger?

- ▶ This question calls for an opinion, what does better mean and this would be hard to research.

Research Question and Thesis Examples

- ▶ Topic: Technology
- ▶ Focus: Cell Phone Usage and Teen Literacy Rates
- ▶ Research Question: How does cell phone usage cause illiteracy in teenagers?
- ▶ Thesis Statement: The purpose of this research study is to show how the overuse of cell phones by teenagers has led to conflicts between English language and text language, students being unable to draft grammatically correct sentences, and decreased numbers of acceptable performance on standardized tests, which equates to the illiteracy of today's youth.

Research Question and Thesis Statement

- ▶ Topic: Martin Luther King's Dream
- ▶ Focus: The Relationship Between Martin Luther King's Dream, the Hip-hop Culture and Police Brutality
- ▶ Research question: Is there a relationship between Martin Luther King's dream and police brutality on the hip-hop culture?
- ▶ Thesis Statement: This research study will show that there is a connection between the increased number of police brutality incidents and the absence of Martin Luther King's dream among the hip-hop culture.

Research Question and Thesis Statement

- ▶ Topic: Teen Pregnancy
- ▶ Focus: How Low Economic Status in Teens Effects Teen Pregnancy Rates
- ▶ Research Question: Is there a relationship between teens from low income homes and teen pregnancy?
- ▶ Thesis statement: The purpose of this research study is to show the connection between living in low income families and escalating teen pregnancy rates.

Research Question & Thesis Statement

- ▶ Topic: Living with AIDS
- ▶ Focus: New Medication for People Living with AIDS
- ▶ Research Question: How has new medicinal practices among AIDS patients become the cure for AIDS?
- ▶ Thesis Statement: The purpose of this research study is to show how the current AIDS medication on the market is becoming the miracle cure for AIDS.

Recap: Characteristics of a Good Research Question

- Relevant (relate to the topic)
- Interesting
- Focused and specific
- Researchable
- Can not be answered with a "yes" or a "no"

How Do I Go From This...

“How has music influenced social trends in the U.S. from the 1920s to the 1980s?”

Brainstorm

Dictated fashion
Advertised trends
Prompted protest
Redefined cultural norms
Promoted social consciousness
Endorsed black rights
Stirred controversy

Thesis

From the 1920s to the 1980s, R&B music has **dictated fashion, promoted social consciousness** of various cultures and **stirred controversy**.

Hook: In his 1976 hit song, “Sir Duke,” musical genius, Stevie Wonder sang, “Music is a world within itself, it’s a language we all understand.” That means that music is the arc that bridges the gap between any and all language, cultural, ethnic, social, or economic barriers. **It is the only “language” that transcends time and sets the tone for how society will behave.**

Topic sentences

(1) For example, in the 1920s, jazz music was important because it not only influenced a style of dance, **it especially dictated fashion trends**. (+2-3 Examples and Commentary)

(2) Next, during the late 60s to early 70s when the US suffocated on discrimination and other social changes like women’s rights and war, **conscious music like Marvin Gaye’s “What’s Going On” and Aretha Franklin’s “Respect” was the periscope that guided society’s awareness of their thoughts, actions and spending habits**. (+2-3 Commentary)

(3) Further, in the 80s, when hip-hop music began to spread like wildfire, **“Us vs. Them” sentiments began to emerge, and songs like N.W.A.’s “F**k tha Police” stirred controversy**. (+2-3 Commentary)

To This...

“How did music influence social trends in the U.S. from the 1920s to the 1980s?”

- I. Introduction (Hook, Commentary, Thesis)
- II. Body Paragraph– Topic
 - A Evidence/Commentary
 - B Evidence/Commentary
 - C Evidence/Commentary
- III. Body Paragraph– Topic
 - A Evidence/Commentary
 - 1. Details/Specificity
 - 2. Details/Specificity
 - B Evidence/Commentary
- IV. Body Paragraph– Topic
 - A Evidence/Commentary
 - 1. Details/Specificity
 - B Evidence/Commentary
- V. Body Paragraph– Topic
 - A Evidence/Commentary
 - B Evidence/Commentary
- VI. Real-world conclusion

Each Roman numeral and letter is a paragraph!

Whew! Without the Mess!

“How did music influence social trends in the U.S. from the 1920s to the 1980s?”

- I. Introduction
- II. Music and fashion trends
 - A. Jazz and fashion trends of the 20s
 - B. Disco and fashion trends of the 70s
 - C. Hip-Hop and fashion trends of the 80s
- III. Music’s Impact on Social Consciousness
 - A. Music and War
 - 1. Marvin Gaye– What’s Going On?
 - B. Music and Women’s Rights
 - 2. Aretha Franklin– Respect
- IV Music Controversy
 - A. Protest Music
 - 1. N.W.A.– F*** the Police
 - B. Music about Treatment of Women
- V **Continue your OUTLINE as needed. .**
- V. Real-world conclusion

Each Roman numeral and letter is a paragraph!

Annotated Bibliography



Instructions: Write the definition of an annotated bibliography in your interactive notebooks while I come around and check your 3x3 and thesis statements.

An **annotated bibliography** is a list of citations to books, articles, and documents. Each citation is followed by a brief (usually about 150 words) descriptive and evaluative paragraph, the annotation, that informs the reader of the relevance, accuracy, and quality of the sources cited.

Ex. #1:

http://www.englishfury.com/uploads/1/3/4/9/13498250/the_annotated_bibliography.pdf

Ex. #2: <http://www.englishfury.com/uploads/1/3/4/9/13498250/annotatedbiblio.pdf>

In-text Parenthetical Citations

We have all heard horror stories about distracted drivers chatting on cell phones. For example, in a letter to the editor, **Anthony Ambrose** describes being passed by another driver “who was holding a Styrofoam cup and a cigarette in one hand, and a cellular telephone in the other, and who had what appeared to be a newspaper balanced on the steering wheel—all at approximately 70 miles per hour” (128). Another driver, **Peter Cohen**, says that **after he was rear-ended, the guilty party emerged from his vehicle still talking on the phone (127)**. Admittedly, some drivers do use their cell phones irresponsibly.

Unfortunately, most states do not keep adequate records on the number of times phones are a factor in accidents. **As of December 2000, only ten states were trying to keep such records (Sundeen, 2)**. In addition, currently there is little scientific evidence comparing the use of cell phones with other driver distractions: fiddling with the radio, smoking, eating, putting on makeup, shaving, and so on.

Enforcing laws against negligent and reckless driving can also work. Even groups concerned with safety support this view. For instance, **the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration advises states to enforce their reckless and negligent driving laws and, where necessary, to strengthen those laws; it does not call for restrictions on use of the phones (United States Dept. of Transportation)**.

Works Cited

- ▶ Must include **full** citation
- ▶ Must be in alphabetical order
- ▶ Must be double-spaced w/ hanging indent
- ▶ Best resource: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>
- ▶ You may use: www.citationmachine.net
 - ▶ Note: citation machine has not been adding the URL to the cite. So, you may have to enter it manually.

Sample Works Cited

Ambrose, Anthony. Letter. *New England Journal of Medicine* 337.2 (1997): 128. Print.

Cohen, Peter J. Letter. *New England Journal of Medicine* 337.2 (1997): 127. Print.

Sundeen, Matt. "Cell Phones and Highway Safety: 2000 State Legislative Update." *National Conference of State Legislatures. Natl. Conf. of State Legislatures, Dec. 2000*. Web. 11 Mar. 2001.

United States of Transportation. Natl. Highway Traffic Safety Administration. "An Investigation of the Safety Implications of Wireless Communications in Vehicles." *NHTSA. Natl. Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Nov. 1997*. Web. 12 Mar. 2001.



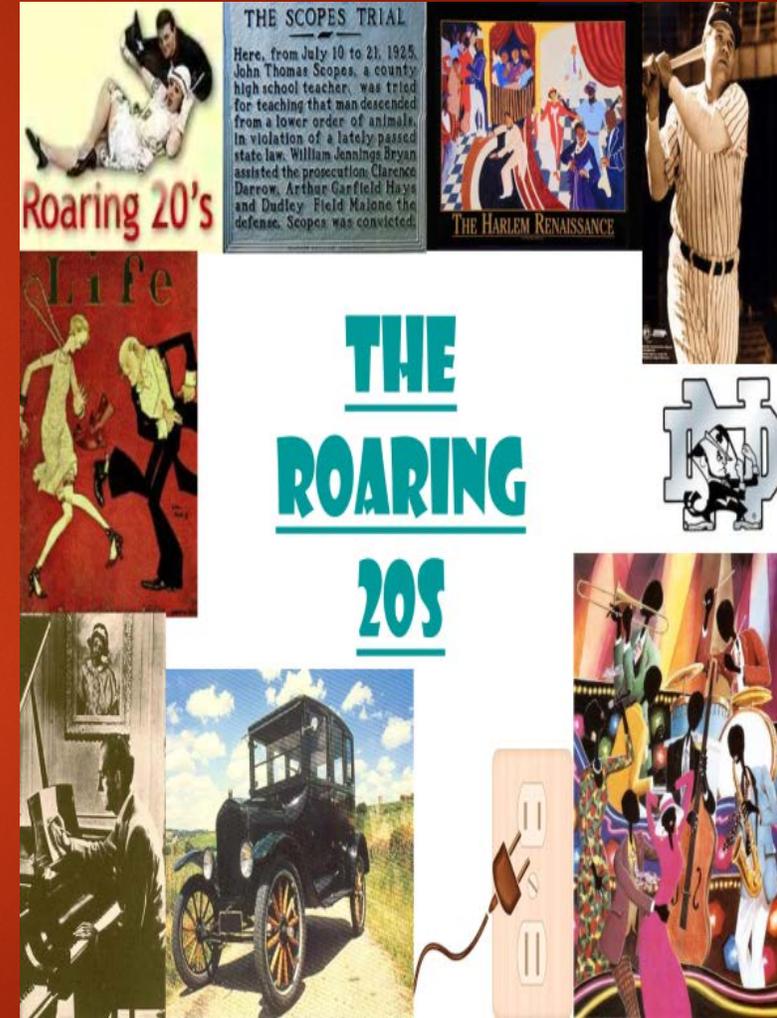
Paraphrasing

INQUIRY AND SYNTHESIS THROUGH RESEARCH: PARAPHRASING

Paraphrasing

Source: The twenties were the years when drinking was against the law, and the law was a bad joke because everyone knew of a local bar where liquor could be had. They were the years when organized crime ruled the cities, and the police seemed powerless to do anything against it.

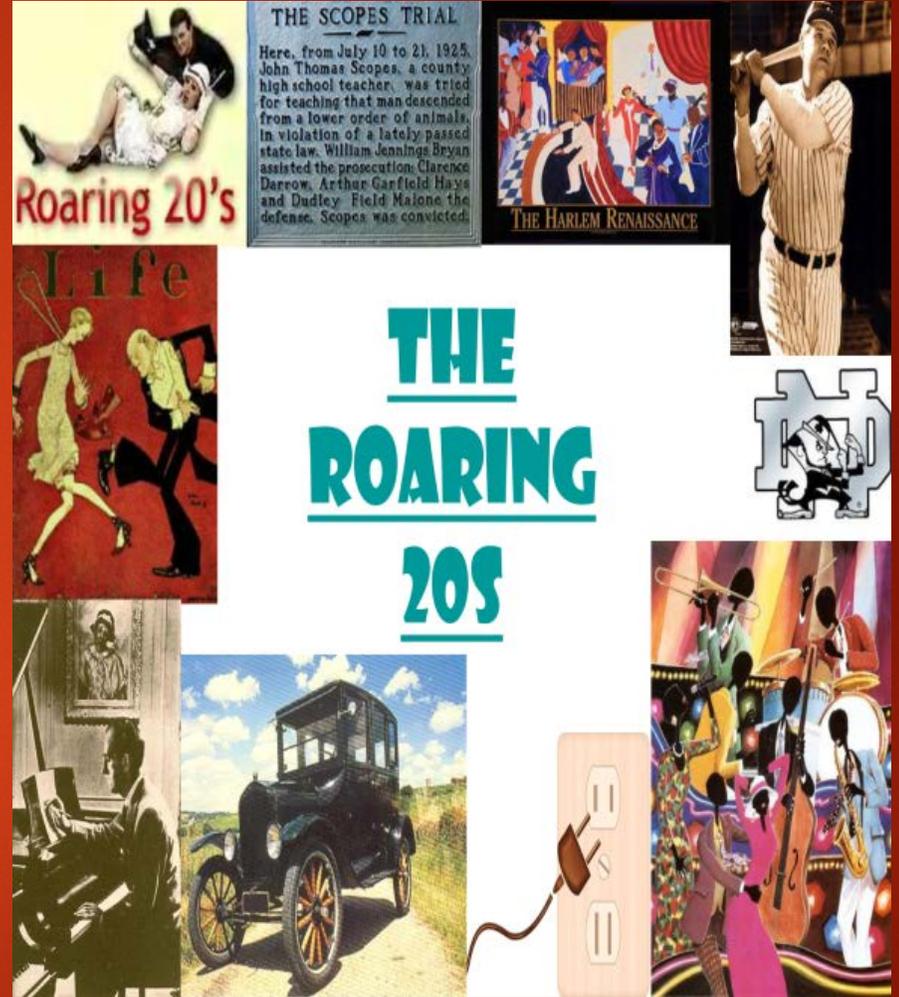
Classical music was forgotten while jazz spread throughout the land, and men like Bix Beiderbecke, Louis Armstrong, and Count Basie became the heroes of the young. The flapper was born in the twenties, and with her bobbed hair and short skirts, she symbolized, perhaps more than anyone or anything else, America's break with the past.



Paraphrasing

Paraphrased: The early nineteenth century was the time where unruliness ruled America, policemen didn't know how to enforce the law, people drank even though it was illegal, jazz became hugely popular and great musicians, such as Bix Beiderbecke and Count Basie, became the idols of the kids in America.

More than anything, women began wearing short hair and revealing skirts, the biggest sign that America was changing its traditional way of life.



Paraphrasing

From *Romance Report* By Julie Fishman
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Source: While Valentine greetings have been exchanged since the Middle Ages in Europe, the tradition didn't reach the United States until the 19th century. According to the Greeting Card Association, the person credited with starting it in the U.S. is Esther Howland, an American printer and artist, who published and sold the first cards on Valentine's Day in 1850.

While the average consumer plans to spend \$134 on Valentine's Day gifts, meals and entertainment, men will dole out double what women typically pay this year, offering up about \$108, compared to women's \$49. The top gifts? Nearly half (48.7 percent) of people will purchase candy, a third (37 percent) will give flowers and another 19 percent will choose jewelry.



Paraphrasing

From *Romance Report* By Julie Fishman
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Source: At the turn of the century, a lover's holiday called Valentine's Day was started by "Esther Howland, an American printer and artist, who published and sold the first cards on Valentine's Day in 1850" (Fishman).

Since its inception, it has become tradition for holiday participants to spend more than \$130 on "gifts, meals and entertainment," for the people they adore (Fishman). Unfortunately, on average, men spend double what women—typically \$100 vs \$50 on candy, flowers and jewelry.



Paraphrasing

Source: The Sears Tower is arguably the greatest achievement in skyscraper engineering so far, its unlikely that architects and engineers have abandoned the quest for the world's tallest building. The question is: Just how high can a building go?

Structural engineer William LeMessurier has designed a skyscraper nearly one-half mile high, twice as tall as the Sears Tower. And architect Robert Sobel claims that existing technology could produce a 500-story building.



Paraphrasing

Paraphrased: Though the Sears Tower is known as one of the best-designed skyscrapers that has yet to be built, architects are still trying to make bigger buildings. Yet people wonder how tall it is possible to build a building.

Architect, Robert Sobel, insists that it could be possible to build a skyscraper a couple of hundred of stories tall, and engineer William LeMessurier has already designed a building two times as tall as the Sears Tower.



Remember! Don't Plagiarize!!

1. Write your Argument. The government should regulate school lunches to monitor the health, dietary needs, satisfaction and nutritional value of cafeteria foods.
2. Know your audience and anticipate **Counter-argument**: On the other hand, regulations on school lunches would mean yet another aspect of people's lives that is being controlled by the government.
3. **Refute** the counter-argument: Albeit, if the government were to improve the nutritional quality of school lunches, the academic performance of students would increase, and it would lower students' weight and blood pressure (Agatston, 2008). ← **What's that?! Let's check it out!**

A Few Things....

- ▶ **Is it okay to use contractions in my research paper?**

NO!!! Never!! Contractions are not used in formal writing.

- ▶ **How should my paper be formatted?**

- ▶ MLA-style

- ▶ 12 point Times New Roman

- ▶ 1 inch margins all around

- ▶ Double-spaced

- ▶ Nothing fancy!!

- ▶ **How do I submit my paper?**

- ▶ TurnItIn.com, the night BEFORE the final deadline.

Common Mistakes

- ▶ No Works Cited page
- ▶ No parenthetical citations
- ▶ MLA Citation format and style errors
- ▶ Forgetting the main idea (thesis)
- ▶ Incorrect punctuation
 - Comma splices
 - Periods before the parenthetical citation
- ▶ Sentence Fragments
 - ▶ Make sure your sentences are complete (subject and predicate). Fragments often happen when you try to introduce examples or elaborations without linking the idea to the previous sentence.
 - ▶ **Example (fragment):**
 - ▶ Many works of literature have heroic journeys. For example, the Harry Potter series.
 - ▶ **Correction: (full sentence)** Many works of literature, like the Harry Potter series, have heroic journeys.

Q&A

Is it okay to use first person point of view?

No. In formal research papers, avoid using the pronouns “I, we, you, your, me, my” as in:

- ▶ “You would think that”
- ▶ “In my opinion”
- ▶ “I didn’t realize that”
- ▶ “I feel that”
- ▶ “You might be surprised to know that”



*#EnglishFury—where we accept
everything but failures, excuses
and defeat!*