

## Unit 11 - RESEARCH QUESTIONS

A successful research project requires more than just locating as much information as you can. Developing good research questions can help you narrow your topic and keep it focused.

Good research questions will allow you to examine the 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 and actions affect future choices? What has changed? Remember: research questions go beyond the basic who, what, where, when, how questions.

### From Topic to Research Question<sup>1</sup>

After choosing a topic and gathering background information, add focus with research questions.

#### Explore questions.

- Ask open-ended “how” and “why” questions about your general topic.
- Consider the “so what” of your topic. Why does this topic matter to you? Why should it matter to others? Why does it matter today?
- Reflect on the questions you have considered. Identify one or two questions you find engaging, and which could be explored further through research.

#### Determine and evaluate your research question.

- What aspect of the more general topic will you explore?
- Is your research question clear?
- Is your research question focused?
- Is your research question complex?

(Questions shouldn't have a simple yes/no answer and should require research and analysis.)

**Theorize.** After you've come up with a question, consider the path your answer might take as it works through the theme - You will be making an argument. You will have a point. So what will you say?

- Why does your argument matter?
- Have you considered other perspectives?
- What kind of sources will you need to support your argument?

---

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from Indiana University Libraries, “Narrowing a Topic and Developing Research Questions”. Accessed 29 June 2021 at

[https://libraries.indiana.edu/sites/default/files/Develop\\_a\\_Research\\_Question.pdf](https://libraries.indiana.edu/sites/default/files/Develop_a_Research_Question.pdf)

# WORKSHEET: WRITING RESEARCH QUESTIONS

PART OF PROJECT	SAMPLE: ROSA PARKS	YOUR TOPIC
<p><b>Long Before</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· What outside people, ideas, or events were going on to influence your topic?</li> <li>· What other information does your viewer need to know to understand the background of your topic?</li> </ul>	<p>What was going on in the Civil Rights Movement at the time? How were African Americans treated? What were the key points of debate in America over the Civil Rights Movement?</p>	
<p><b>Right Before</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Who are the main players and what are they doing to prepare for the main events of the topic?</li> <li>· What are the events leading up to the main event?</li> </ul>	<p>Who was Rosa Parks? Why didn't Rosa Parks give up her bus seat? What were leaders in Montgomery doing to prepare for this event?</p>	
<p><b>Main Event</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· What happened?</li> </ul>	<p>What happened after Rosa Parks refused to give up her bus seat?</p>	
<p><b>Right After</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· What are some of the reactions to the main event? Include both positive and negative</li> <li>· Did anything change right away?</li> </ul>	<p>What changed right away in Montgomery because of the boycott? Did everyone agree on the boycott? How did people across the country hear about and react to it? Did debate intensify?</p>	
<p><b>Long After</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· How are things different because of the topic?</li> <li>· Did this topic influence other historical events?</li> <li>· Why is this topic important in history?</li> </ul>	<p>How did the Montgomery Bus Boycott turn debate into action in both the city and the Civil Rights Movement? How did King become a national leader after this event?</p>	

# 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 'key' terms will help you to search for information.

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

**2. What types of secondary sources exist about your topic?** Circle the types of sources you could find about your topic

- |                               |                          |                     |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|
| <b>Book</b>                   | <b>Media Documentary</b> | <b>Encyclopedia</b> |
| <b>History Textbook</b>       | <b>Biography</b>         | <b>Website</b>      |
| <b>Interview with Scholar</b> | <b>Journal article</b>   |                     |

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

- |                       |                       |                     |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| Diary                 | Manuscript collection | Government Records  |
| Oral History          | Autobiography         | Newspaper from time |
| Original film footage | Music of the period   | Photographs         |
| Historic object       | 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 you plan to visit.

School media center  
Historical center

Public library  
Archive

College Library  
Internet

c. **What other places can you go?** \_\_\_\_\_

d. Is there a **Research Roundup** event/session you can attend? If so write the date and location below.

\_\_\_\_\_