The Guided Inquiry Research Process: EXPLORE, GATHER, CREATE!

**STEP 1—IMMERSE, EXPLORE, IDENTIFY A TOPIC**

**A) IMMERSE** students in background information and overarching ideas of content area
- Students share an immersion experience (e.g. video, reading, slides) and discuss in small groups.
- Think about/discuss: “What was interesting about the topic?” “What are some major themes/concepts/ideas that inspired/disturbed/surprised/caught attention?” “What would I like to investigate further?”
- Each group may share a few key ideas with the inquiry community.

**B) EXPLORE** Interesting Ideas, Look Around, Dip In!
- Browse and scan a variety of sources—browse for information but also raise new questions.
- Build factual knowledge, asking lower order questions: who, what, where, and when.
- Record **Key Words** in a research journal.
- Keep an open mind as you explore and reflect on new information.
- It’s common to feel overwhelmed or confused by all the information and ideas. Don’t worry—things **WILL** become clearer as you become more familiar with the topic.

**C) IDENTIFY** a focus for your Inquiry
- The criteria used in forming a focus include:
  - **Personal interest**: What do I find interesting and important? What matters to me?
  - **Assignment requirements**: What are the requirements of the assignment?
  - **Information available**: what information is available to address my question?
  - **Time**: How much time do I have?

You can narrow your focus area through one of several methods:
- i) **Encyclopedia Method**: use articles to narrow down to something you’re interested in.
  - e.g. Renaissance Europe > Art > Architecture > Brunelleschi
- ii) **Subtopic Method**: narrow by one or more themes.
  - e.g. chronological, geographical, biographical, an event, or technological
- iii) **Tap your Interests**: narrow by your interests.
  - e.g. for a paper on WWII, if you’re interested in puzzles, you could research **code-breaking**.
- iv) **Question Method**: ask an interpretive or factual question to narrow your topic.
  - e.g. “Why did America feel justified in dropping the atomic bombs?”

- □ Pause to brainstorm inquiry questions in your research journal. Choose questions that cause you to **wonder** and **speculate**. These should be higher order questions of **why** and **how**.

Inquiry Questions may be:
- i) Hypothetical: I **wonder** how things would have been different if…
  - e.g. “What might have happened to the course of World War II if…?”
- ii) Prediction: I **wonder** what it’ll be like in the future, based on the way x is now?
  - e.g. “What will happen to sea levels if global warming continues on the current path?”
- iii) Solution: I **wonder** how we could solve problem x?
  - e.g. “How could global warming be stopped?”
- iv) Comparison or Analogy: I **wonder** how x compares to y?
  - e.g. “What is the difference in performance between a Porsche and a Lamborghini?”
- v) Judgment: Based on the information you find, what is your informed opinion about x?
  - e.g. “What are the major causes of eating disorders?”

- □ Identify a **CENTRAL INQUIRY QUESTION (CIQ)**—this will keep you focused and help in developing a thesis statement later on.
STEP 2—GATHER INFORMATION

Note: keep your CENTRAL INQUIRY QUESTION (CIQ) in mind while you gather information, but allow your research and learning to refine and revise your CIQ.

A) Where can I find good information? First go BROAD—trying various sources. Search using your key words (from Step 1B).

Search for:

i) Books: try your keywords in a library catalog Keyword search <library.tbcs.org>
ii) Articles in Databases: tbcs.org/kindellibrary > Databases Tab.
iii) Websites: Webpath Express <from library.tbcs.org>, sweetsearch.com, Virtual Learning Resources Center <virtuallrc.com>
iv) Online Books: databases, <books.google.com>, through <kcls.org>
v) Other Sources: videos, experts, news magazines, current events.

☐ Evaluate sources for:

i) Authority?
   ☐ Books/Articles: Reputable publisher? Peer reviewed journal?
   ☐ Websites: Authors/editors/contributors identified? Their credentials indicated?
   ☐ Reputable organization? Panel of expert advisors? Peer reviewing of materials?

ii) Accuracy and Verifiability?
   ☐ Does the work have sources cited?
   ☐ Contact information for author/publisher provided?

iii) Currency?
   ☐ Work’s date provided?
   ☐ Current based on assignment type and instructor’s guidelines?

   ☐ Are you aware of authors’ worldview and assumptions?

B) Now go DEEP within your sources and GATHER information relevant to your CIQ.

In your Research Journal, using notecards, or with EasyBib Notebook:

☐ Summarize
☐ Paraphrase
☐ Quote
☐ Interpret …the information you gather.

C) Keep track of SOURCES with one of the following methods:

☐ EasyBib account
☐ Source Cards
☐ Works Cited/Consulted document

D) How much is “enough” information? In your Research Journal, respond to the following prompts:

☐ What have I learned about my inquiry question?
☐ What surprised me that I didn’t expect?
☐ What’s the “big idea” behind the facts I’m gathering?
☐ Do I have enough to tell the “story” of what I learned?

E) ☐ Discuss with your instructor your responses to (D) above and whether you have adequate sources for your CIQ.
**STEP 3— CREATE, SHARE, AND EVALUATE**

A) Before you CREATE you need to INTERPRET MEANING:
- **LOOK** at all the gathered information. Lay it all out so you can look for connections.
- **CHART** or **DIAGRAM** ideas so you can see: patterns, themes, and connections.
- **THINK/IMAGINE** “What is the relevance of these ideas?” “So what?”
- Change your Central Inquiry Question (Step 1C) into a draft **Thesis Statement**
  i.e. a strong statement that you will prove with evidence.
  e.g. “Even though Christians and Muslims were supposedly fighting for religious dominance in medieval times, their motives were strongly affected by a desire for land and economic power.”

B) Organize your ideas:
- Make an outline with your headings and subheadings based on your charting and diagramming.
- Refine your thesis statement as needed.
  *be flexible—your opinion may have changed based on your research.*

B) **CREATE** the body of your paper* (or video, poster, etc.):
- Fill in your outline (Step 3B) from your point form notes (Step 2B) to support thesis statement.
- Paraphrase and summarize points and properly document borrowed ideas.
- Provide support for your opinions and ideas.
  *Follow the template for body paragraphs if one has been provided by your instructor.*

D) **Cite Sources in MLA7 format:**
- Make a Works Consulted/Cited list:
  - Appears at end of project, numbered with other pages
  - **Works Cited** centered at top of page (not underlined)
  - Entire page double spaced
  - Hanging indentation (second line—and all following—of each entry gets indented ½”)
- Parenthetical/In-Text Citations (see: tbcs.org/kindellibrary > Citation Help tab)

E) **Build a strong Introduction and Conclusion:**
  i) **Introduction:**
    - It’s the first thing people hear, see or experience about your project—make a statement!
    - Explain what’s at stake.
    - Include a general introduction to the topic and your thesis statement.
  ii) **Conclusion:**
    - This is the culmination of all your investigating—the “so what?” of the project.
    - Sum up your main points, re-consider the stakes from the introduction, explain how the problem was solved or the issue dealt with.

F) **Create Title Page**
- Follow instructor’s guidelines.
- Include: Name, School, Date, Project Title, Class Title, Class Section, Teacher’s Name.

G) **REVISE and PROOF READ**
- Check that your thoughts been conveyed completely and clearly.

H) **SHARE** – this is the capstone of the inquiry process
- Share your product to communicate what you’ve learned in an interesting, informative way.

I) **EVALUATE** – meet with group or instructor to discuss and reflect on:
- What you found out about your question.
- Your research process, how you learn, how it went, what worked well, what you would change next time, etc.