

Topic Explorations Prospectus

Guidelines:

Brief Introduction:

Introduce your topic. Provide essential historical context, enough for the reader to “grasp” a notion of, or begin to conceptualize your topic.

Example from past student work. Please do not reference.

Scholarly discussions on the Texas Rebellion of 1835 and the Mexican-American War of 1846 to 1848 have paid inordinate attention to the affairs and discourses of Mexican and North American politicians (citations). Other scholarship has stressed the victimization of Mexicans at the hands of Anglo colonists and the U.S. military in what has been framed as an unpopular and unjust war fueled by racism and Manifest Destiny (citations). Few scholarly works have analyzed how the wars, and the resulting shifting borders of what became the American Southwest, affected indigenous people. By analyzing the Comanche people, this work will advance the scant scholarly attention on the topic by revealing how these conflicts affected Native American autonomy in Texas. By studying the Comanche I ask the following: “

?”

Open-ended Research Question:

(An open-ended question is a level-3 question. This type of question is porous and essentially arguable. In other words, the question itself should invite debate and multiple interpretations.)

Examples from past student work. Please do not reference.

How did the policies of Andrew Jackson as president initiate the process of United States westward expansion?

Despite his apprehension to the growth of government power, what national economic motives compelled President Thomas Jefferson to expand U.S. naval power?

Why did the political maneuverings of President Venustiano Carranza motivate Pancho Villa to attack Columbus New Mexico in 1916?

How did Emperor Moctezuma I create the political and economic policies that ultimately weakened the Aztecs to the point of their collapse?

Every question above, though still in unrefined form, invites speculation, but more importantly they are designed to raise debate. *Please note: Research questions are open-ended and therefore polemical. Level-3 questions are debatable. I invite you to assess your question's permeability.

Thesis statement (Main argument):

Examples from past student work. Please do not reference.

Anglo narratives of the Gold Rush in California show that Chilean and Mexican miners possessed much experience and greater knowledge of mining techniques, which led to envy and racial violence, contradicting the long-held view that only enterprising Anglos thrived from the 1849 Gold Rush.

Unlike standard narratives on gender during the colonial eighteenth-century, this essay will advance that mestiza women upheld and disseminated Spanish mores thereby strengthening and perpetuating colonial authority in the larger realm of central New Spain.

Despite the many historical works and biographies portraying Abraham Lincoln as the nation's great emancipator, the president had for long adhered to policies and projects designed to separate whites and blacks.

Lacking political legitimacy, the Mexica-Aztecs had to invent a glorious past for themselves and therefore adopted a Toltec identity, allowing them to cement their rule.

As you may tell, the thesis statements showcased above are products of both solid research and depth of thought. A good, effective thesis statement is the beginning of a good paper. Make sure that you interrogate sources carefully and that you use ample evidence to support your thesis statement.

Using sources as evidence:

Use information from sources as evidence to support your main argument. Be sure to synthesize and analyze and avoid over quoting.

Discussion on what lies ahead:

Write two paragraphs on how you see your project unfolding. Let me know where you envision encountering difficulties.

Your Topic Explorations Prospectus, therefore, should include:

1. Brief introduction.
1. Research question.
1. Thesis statement.
1. Using sources as evidence.
1. Discussion on what lies ahead.