

Research Guide – Civilizations of the World

Step One: Choosing a topic

The most important thing is to choose a topic that is interesting to you, that you want to learn more about. Whether you are fascinated by political leaders, giant building projects, science, religion, or music, arts and culture, you can turn your area of interest into a great research topic. Also, choose a culture that you want to learn about. Many Bancroft students have used their Civilizations projects to learn something about their own cultures. Look for examples from the “Possible Research Topics” chart, or scan your history book for a theme that draws your attention.

Step Two: Brainstorming

Who-what-where-when-why-how spiderwebs, k-w-l charts, “What do I need to know” charts. The result of a brainstorm is to develop a great list of “key words and phrases.” These key words and phrases then guide your research. They are the words you use when you are searching through tables of contents, indexes, and search bars in on-line databases. The better your key words, the easier it will be to find useful information about your topic.

Step Three: Finding sources

Bancroft students have access to a database which is perfect for studying the Middle Ages. The school library and the public library is also an outstanding source for you. A librarian is an expert at finding information that can help you with your topic. If you ask respectfully, she or he is likely to give you some great ideas for learning about your topic.

Step Four: Cite your sources

A critical part of a research paper is the creation of a Bibliography / Works Cited page. This is how you prove that you did research. Every source that you use, book, website, magazine or encyclopedia, has to be listed. As soon as you find a source that works, fill out the source chart and number each source. Then, when you record information from a source you’re using, make sure to use the source number for each piece of information.

Step Five: Taking Notes

Use your Research Notebook to record all of the useful information that you find. Make sure that you label each set of notes with the subtopic. When you find new information on the same topic, you should use the same subtopic heading. Don’t forget to write the Source Number in your composition book for each new piece of information you write down. Follow the “Note Taking Guidelines” to prevent plagiarism.

When to use a quote

Most (almost all) of what you write should be in your own words. However, there are a few times when a good quote is perfect:

1. Is it a voice from the past (and not a voice from the present telling you what the past was like)? Using primary sources brings the past to life.
2. Can you name or describe the speaker / writer? Knowing who said it is an important part of knowing why it was said.
3. Does the quote describe something surprising or shocking? Does it show a strong emotion?

If your quote doesn't fit one or more of these categories, DON'T USE IT!

Possible sources

- books
- encyclopedias
- reliable websites
- video documentaries
- pictures, charts, illustrations, cartoons

Primary Sources vs. Secondary Sources

Primary sources are documents, paintings, illustrations, photographs and journals created by someone who was there as a witness, or who was directly impacted by the events.

Secondary sources are books, articles, website entries, paintings, illustrations and commentaries created by people who were not witness to the events, or who did not directly feel the impact of the events.

A word about Plagiarism

You've heard the phrase, "Give credit where credit is due." This is an important requirement of research. Any information or opinion that came from another source **MUST BE CITED**. When you fail to credit your source, that is plagiarism.

Plagiarism is the crime of presenting someone else's ideas as your own original thoughts. It might include copying words from one source, and not citing your source.

Plagiarism is against the law. It is the academic equivalent of fraud, or theft. It is the same as stealing and lying. People lose their jobs and pay penalties because of plagiarism.

For this project, plagiarism will result in a **ZERO** on your project.

Note Taking Guidelines

• **REMEMBER... Keep, Delete, Substitute, Summarize.**

• Record key ideas, people, dates, places, events – and describe who / what they are in your own words.

• Use **BULLETS** to keep facts separate from each other.

• Write brief facts and ideas.

• Use your own words, **DON'T COPY**.

• For each entry, label a **SUBTOPIC**.

• Make sure to record the **BOOK TITLE** and **PAGE NUMBER** for every set of notes you take. If you can't cite the source, you can't use the information.