

# Topic Generator

## Intent:

This activity is designed to help students generate a topic for their research paper. Since many of my students are freshmen, they don't have clearly defined research interests. As such, many of them need some guidance in developing a topic.

## Assignment given to students:

Create an interest inventory to help you think through possible topics.

Make a List:

- Places
- Trends
- Things
- Technologies
- People
- Controversies
- History
- Jobs
- Habits
- Hobbies

Brainstorm different words or phrases that come to mind when you think about the different categories. Then, write your ideas under each column.

Finally, ask yourself:

- Is this something that raises questions that research can help answer?
- Are they potentially interesting questions?
- Does this item get at something I've always wondered about?

## Guide provided by teacher:

After the students have spent 10-15 minutes working through their lists, prompt their focus with these directions.

First, have them go through their list and underline all of the topics that they find the most interesting/generative. Give the students about 3-5 minutes.

Then, have the students go through their underlined list and develop as many research questions for those topics as they can. Prompt them to think about all of the different perspectives or angles that they could look at that topic. Give the students about 5-10 minutes.

Next, prompt the students to go through their new research questions and highlight the ones that they find the most interesting. Give them about 2 minutes.

Then have the students take those research questions and refine them as needed. Give them about 2-4 minutes. Once they've finished, have them pick one or two questions that they find the most interesting. Next, have them consider how they might approach that research topic by generating key words to search and databases to search. After students complete this, allow them some time to search through the library's databases for sources related to those topics.