

# GOOD RESEARCH QUESTIONS

How to focus on an area of study in the  
Extended Essay

THIS PRESENTATION WAS FOUND  
DURING THE PROCESS OF  
RESEARCHING ON RQ.

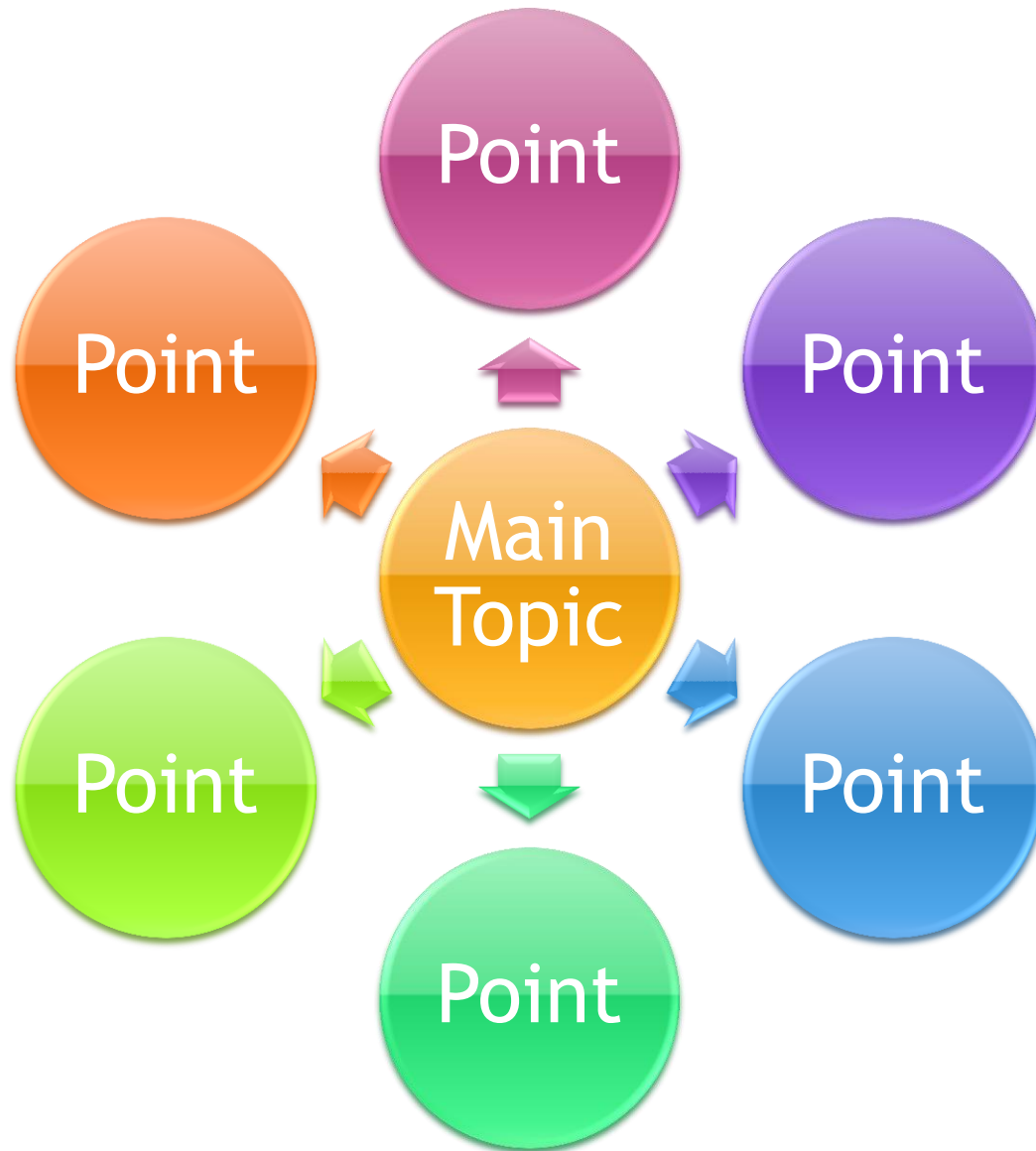
UNFORTUNATELY, THERE IS NO  
BIBLIOGRAPHY OR INFORMATION ON  
THE SOURCE, EXCEPT A MENTION OF  
Ancaster High School.

# FINDING A TOPIC

- ⦿ Involves “informed” brainstorming
- ⦿ It means researching and learning some things to help narrow the focus.
- ⦿ It means doing a “Literature search” to see what is already known about the topic and to determine who the experts are in the field

# BRAINSTORMING AN EE TOPIC

- ◉ Having chosen your subject, brainstorm ideas for a topic
- ◉ Use your curriculum guides or notes or textbook to identify areas of interest
- ◉ Choose an area of interest to you
- ◉ It can be on the syllabus for the course, but needs to be dealt with differently than was done in class.
- ◉ Search the web or the indexes of books on the topic



# KWL

- Use a graphic organizer to write down what you already know about the topic
- From this identify what you need to know
- Collect keywords
- Identify the type of evidence you need
  - E.g. history...primary sources; book reviews; OPVL
  - Science...scientific journal articles; data
  - English...secondary sources that have been written by credible authors

WHAT YOU KNOW

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNED AND STILL NEED TO LEARN

K	W	L

# DEVELOPING GOOD INQUIRY TOPICS AND QUESTIONS

- ◉ As you brainstorm possible questions, ideas and issues, keep asking: “Am I going to be telling my audience something they didn’t know before?” (commonly called the Who Cares? Test).
- ◉ The following question stems (Owens, Hester & Teale, 2002, p. 618) assist in the development of engaging topics:
  - ◉ How is \_\_\_\_\_ related to \_\_\_\_\_?
  - ◉ What is a new example of \_\_\_\_\_?
  - ◉ What are some possible solutions for the problem of \_\_\_\_\_?
  - ◉ Explain why \_\_\_\_\_.
  - ◉ What do you think would happen if \_\_\_\_\_?
  - ◉ Why is \_\_\_\_\_ important?



# RESEARCH QUESTION CRITERIA

- ◉ Does the question meet the requirements for the subject as described in the EE Guide?
- ◉ [http://xmltwo.ibo.org/publications/DP/Group0/d\\_0\\_eeyy\\_gui\\_1012\\_1/html/production-app3.ibo.org/publication/258/part/1/chapter/1.html](http://xmltwo.ibo.org/publications/DP/Group0/d_0_eeyy_gui_1012_1/html/production-app3.ibo.org/publication/258/part/1/chapter/1.html)
- ◉ Can it be asked and answered (Is there an answer? Can info be found to answer?)
- ◉ Can sources be found in English? (Shouldn't be translated)
- ◉ Will you find experts whose words and work will support this? (It can't be about how you feel or think...it is about what you can prove!)

# CRITERIA FOR A GOOD QUESTION

- ◉ Is it worthwhile to answer? Does it add to the discussion in the field?
- ◉ Is the topic focused? Can it be answered in only 4000 words?
- ◉ Is the topic broad enough to discuss in up to 4000 words? Not trivial or already answered.
- ◉ Can the topic be objectively treated? Not just conjecture or in “pseudo” areas

# CRITERIA FOR QUESTIONS ....

- ⦿ Does the question fit squarely in the area of study
- ⦿ Does the topic avoid hypothetical discussion?  
(No what if ....didn't happen?)
- ⦿ Are all terms in the question clearly defined and understood by all in the field

# EXAMPLES OF QUESTIONS

- ◉ Would Germany have gone to war without Hitler?
- ◉ How does age of *Nepenthes* pitchers affect their ability to digest proteins?
- ◉ How does blood glucose level change during fasting?
- ◉ Heathcliff as a character in *Wuthering Heights*
- ◉ Does the closing of Guantanamo Bay prison camp affect terrorism?

# TERMS YOU NEED TO KNOW!

- Primary vs. Secondary Sources
- Database
- Evidence
- Quality Sources
- Scholarly journals
- Peer-reviewed articles
- Book reviews
- Annotated Bibliographies
- Evaluating Sources
  - Authorship; Bias; Reading Level/Content; Currency
- OPVL (ORIGIN PURPOSE VALUE LIMITATIONS)
- How to find an expert
- How to use a URL to learn about a source

# WHERE DO I GET HELP?

- ◉ EE Guide
- ◉ From DP Coordinator (questions about submission, format etc.)
- ◉ From your Supervisor (questions about topic, sources etc.)
- ◉ From your Librarian (help with finding good sources)

# WHAT COMES NEXT?

- ◉ Do some preliminary research
- ◉ Collect some sources
- ◉ Shortlist several possible topics
- ◉ Meet with Supervisor to discuss topics and narrow down to one.
- ◉ Research to collect sources on topic selected and approved by Supervisor

**The following slides  
focus on subject  
specific information.  
The subjects include  
English, History and  
ITGS**



# ENGLISH

- ◉ The extended essay may relate to work studied in class but one must take care in all cases to demonstrate relevant wider reading and individual study.
- ◉ Appropriate literary works may be chosen from any source including the IB Diploma Programme prescribed list of authors. Most importantly, texts should be of sufficient literary merit to enable the student to develop sustained literary analysis.
- ◉ **Category 1: Studies of a literary work(s) originally written in the language in which the essay is presented**
- ◉ The essay must be based on the literature of countries where the language is spoken (that is, all works discussed will originally have been written in the language of the essay).

# ENGLISH

- ◉ **Category 2: Studies of a literary work(s) originally written in the language of the essay compared with a literary work(s) originally written in another language**
- ◉ The essay must be a comparison of at least one literary work originally written in the language of the essay with a literary work or works originally written in a different language to that of the essay.

# ENGLISH

- ◉ **Category 3: Studies in language**
- ◉ Where appropriate, students may compare and contrast different languages and cultures. However, the main focus of category 3 extended essays should be on the language and culture(s) of the language in which the extended essay is written.
- ◉ Category 3 extended essays emphasize the production and reception of texts in cultural contexts, and essays of a general cultural nature are not appropriate. They must involve close textual analysis. It is emphasized that texts are constructed and understood in specific cultural and historical contexts; meaning may be contested.

# ENGLISH RQ

- **Criterion A: research question**

- For all three categories of group 1 essays, although the research question can best be expressed in the form of a question, it may also be presented as a statement or proposition for discussion.

The research question must:

- be specific and sharply focused
- be stated clearly in the introduction of the essay or on the title page
- be related to the target literature/language.

The research question must not:

- be too narrow or too obvious.

# ENGLISH RQ

- If you have chosen English as the subject area for your extended essay you will be writing a detailed literary analysis on a topic related to one or two major works of literature.
- Your extended essay must be text specific. Lapsing into a discussion of social issues arising from the text(s) is unacceptable. An analysis of Shakespeare's treatment of anti-Semitism in *The Merchant of Venice* would be an acceptable topic but a discussion of the treatment of Jews in England in the 16th century using the play as an example would not.

# HISTORY

- ◉ The topic chosen must focus on the human past, be worthy of study, and lend itself to systematic investigation in line with the published assessment criteria. Essays that focus on events of the last 10 years are not acceptable, as these are regarded as current affairs, not history.
- ◉ It is not a requirement for the topic to be chosen from the Diploma Programme history course, but it must be acceptable to the supervisor. It should provide an opportunity for critical analysis of source material, and not depend on summarizing general secondary sources (such as textbooks and encyclopaedias), as this approach is likely to lead to an essay that is essentially narrative or descriptive. The topic chosen must be suitable for effective treatment within the 4,000-word limit, so those that cover many aspects of history, and/or a long time period, are unlikely to produce successful essays. Narrowing the scope of the essay will help to ensure a clear focus, and will also allow students to demonstrate detailed and specific historical knowledge, understanding and critical analysis.

# ITGS

- ◉ The choice of topic may result from a news story, issues brought up in class discussion or a personal interest.
- ◉ The topic must be firmly focused on an issue that has IT at its core. A topic that concentrates on another discipline but which has an IT angle is not suitable for the development of an ITGS extended essay.
- ◉ an ITGS extended essay must demonstrate an in-depth knowledge of some aspect of IT. It is expected that IT terminology is used accurately in order to describe the system or systems under investigation, and that a level of expertise is shown that goes well beyond general knowledge.
- ◉ IT provides a rich field for the choice of an extended essay because of its extremely rapid development. We are living through an information revolution that is so far-reaching that unprecedented moral and ethical issues are emerging. This gives the ITGS extended essay student much opportunity to be original and innovative in approach—qualities that can enhance and enrich an extended essay in ways that few other subject areas can match.
- ◉ Much of the evidence quoted will inevitably be obtained from internet sources, but essays should also include other sources, such as books, newspapers and magazines, as well as primary evidence collected by the student. Students should be aware of the pitfalls in relying on unsubstantiated material, from whatever source, when undertaking their research. The essay should, therefore, include some critical analysis of the evidence.
- ◉ students are strongly advised to concentrate on developing a research question, carrying out relevant research, and applying IT theory, tools and techniques. It is important that the research question is sufficiently focused to allow adequate treatment within the word limit. Topics that depend entirely on summarizing general secondary data should be avoided, as they are likely to lead to an essay that is essentially narrative or descriptive in nature. However, the effective use of relevant secondary data to support primary data in answering the research question will be fully rewarded by the examiner.
- ◉ Students are encouraged to research a current issue. A successful essay will concentrate on one issue, but the issue should be significant enough to provide a wide variety of suitable evidence.

# ITGS RQ

- ◉ **Criterion A: research question**
- ◉ The research question must be clearly and concisely stated in the introduction and the abstract. It can be defined in the form of a question or as a statement or a proposition for discussion. The IT system chosen as the focus of the essay should be sufficiently limited so that specific results of research can be demonstrated and linked to the social consequences. It is important to avoid vague generalizations and sweeping statements.