

Project Packet- Research Projects

The Research Project is just one assignment students will do collaboratively with their book groups. Below, I have summarized the entire unit in order to give context for this project component.

Overview of Book Groups:

- In groups of 3-5 students, students will choose to read a book about someone not living in the United States. This will be a mix of novels and memoir--whatever I can find enough copies of in our school's bookroom and the library. I will have around 100 students, over four classes, so this will require a lot of books, but since I've done something similarly in the past--and have collected books with intention since--I'm confident that I have enough books.
- I have a Book Interview activity where the books (and some biographical or summary info) are set up around the class and students have a few minutes to interview the book. At the end, they turn in a list where they rate their top 3-5 choices, identify students they like working with (and any they don't), and I create the book groups from there.
- As a Book Group, students create their own reading schedules and group work norms. I use the strategies from the book [Whole Novels for the Whole Class](#), where students use post-it note annotations to guide their reading, but everything is self-directed. We will study shorter, thematically relevant texts together as a class, and students will write independently and as a group to connect their books to these texts. Since reading is most of their work, I will only give them 2-3 weeks to finish reading. Some of this reading time will happen over Fall Break and Intersession.
- Once they finish reading, students will write a Group Essay. I will give them materials to help support their writing, and a couple of strategies they can choose to divide the work, but this is meant to be an assignment that isn't just a summative about their books, but an evaluation of their group dynamics. Our cycle theme is Productive Collaboration, so this is how we will approach the assignment.

And this leads us to our Research Projects!

NOTE: The initial intention was that book groups would stay together and finish this project, but now that I've written out all the work that they've already done, I've decided to mix it up. I will summarize the project first, then create student-ready instructions and rubrics.

Research Project Overview

This assignment is adapted from [the AP Seminar Performance Task 1](#), where a group of students create a research question, divide the research according to lenses, and then collaborate on a presentation that argues a certain hypothesis, understanding, or solution. Some students may have taken AP Seminar, but most of my students have not.

We will begin with Research Questions. After teaching a lesson on how to write effective research questions, students will create research questions informed by the books that they

read. (I find it helpful to give them some parameters. Not only will I avoid a bunch of projects about cannabis, students will come to the research process with context.) Here is where I will deviate from my initial intention. Students will write their best research question on a strip of paper; they will write their name on the back. As a class we will organize these questions into categories, such as “Politics” or “Relationships.” I will create these categories ahead of time, based on the types of questions I see students writing, but I will also leave blank slips so students can also write categories. The category slips will be a different color. While I could facilitate this activity, what I might do is leave this on the board during class, and have students visit the board during their work time. At the end of class, we will review the questions together and make any last minute adjustments. Students will also have an option to write their name and reasoning on a sticky note and put it on a research question that isn’t their own. I will use this activity to create groups of 3-5 students.

Once in their assigned groups, students will decide on their research question. This can be one of the questions they already created, or they can choose to develop a question together--the point is that everyone is on board with whatever the question is. Of course, the research process may require adjustments along the way.

After a lesson on Lenses (here is a [slideshow](#) I’ve used in the past), each student will choose their research focus. For example, if the group’s research question is “How can refugee camps help children process trauma?” Then Student A might research child psychology, while Student B will focus on the logistics of helping refugees, while Student C might research first hand accounts of people who were refugees as children. Each student is responsible for researching their focus and writing a 1-2 page Research Report that the other group members will read.

After they have shared their research, the group will create a slideshow and plan a presentation. Slideshows should include background information explaining how the group came up with this question (connection to at least one of the books would be helpful), an overview of the problem or issue, research, and a conclusion or solution that the group will draw. Of course, students aren’t expected to create plans that will solve the world’s biggest problems, but they need to at least tell us next steps, or identify a solution that already exists. In addition to the content of their slides, students will be evaluated on their presentation, including slide design, and practiced delivery.

Students will be evaluated individually on their Research Reports, but the group will receive the same evaluation for their presentation.

What follows is the assignment, rubrics, and sample oral defense questions that I will give to students.

Research Projects

Overview

For our last unit of study, you read a book about characters not from the United States. You worked collaboratively with your group not just to analyze the text, but to manage your time and keep each other accountable. During your Group Essay, your group identified universal themes, and supported your evaluation using evidence from the text.

Using your book as a starting point, your new task is to develop a research question, work with a new group to approach the research from a variety of perspectives, and then to argue a solution or conclusion in a team presentation, where you will be assessed on your design, audience engagement, and ability to reflect on your process and topic in an oral defense.

During your Research Project, we will practice a variety of skills, including:

- Develop an effective Research question
- Analyzing a topic through multiple lenses and perspectives
- Conducting research, including utilizing databases to access a variety of sources
- Evaluating sources for credibility and bias
- Selecting relevant evidence
- Using summarizing, paraphrasing, and quoting to integrate evidence into writing
- Citing sources to avoid plagiarism
- Synthesizing evidence in order to draw conclusions or develop solutions
- Collaborate with your group to create a presentation to share your work with the class
- Design slideshows to help guide your audience through your presentation
- Engage an audience with a practiced presentation and dynamic delivery
- Reflect on your process and topic by answering oral defense questions

Schedule

Work Plan 3.1 (October 25- November 5)

How can we serve the greater good without sacrificing what makes us unique?

Research Question

Individual Research Focus

Work Plan 3.2 (November 8-19)

How can we acknowledge and analyze bias?

Individual Research Report

Work Plan 3.3 (November 29-December 10)

How can we work together to solve problems?

Slideshow

Presentation

Oral Defense/Reflection

Rubrics

The following rubrics will be used to assess the different parts of your project.

Research Question Checklist

- ☐ Requires a judgment or evaluation to be made (not just description)
- ☐ Researchable (it is possible to find relevant and credible sources)
- ☐ Involves genuine points of ongoing debate
- ☐ Invites engagement with alternative perspectives
- ☐ Is simple (does not contain multiple, nested questions)

Individual Research Report

	That's what I'm talking about!	Working on it...	Whoa.
Understand and Analyze Context	The report situates your investigation of the complexities of a problem or issue in research that draws upon a wide variety of appropriate sources. It makes clear the significance to a larger context.	The report identifies an adequately focused area of investigation in the research and shows some variety in source selection. It makes some reference to the overall problem or issue.	The report identifies an overly broad or simplistic area of investigation and/or shows little evidence of research. A simplistic connection or no connection is made to the overall problem or issue.
Evaluate Sources and Evidence	The report demonstrates evaluation of credibility of the sources and selection of relevant evidence from the sources. Both can be evidenced by direct explanation or through purposeful use.	The report in places offers some effective explanation of the chosen sources and evidence in terms of their credibility and relevance to the inquiry (but does so inconsistently).	The report identifies evidence from chosen sources. It makes very simplistic, illogical, or no reference to the credibility of sources and evidence, and their relevance to the inquiry.
Understand and Analyze Perspectives	The report discusses a range of perspectives and draws explicit and relevant connections among those perspectives	The report identifies multiple perspectives from sources, making some general connections among those perspectives.	The report identifies few and/or oversimplified perspectives from sources.
Cite Sources	The report attributes and accurately cites the sources used. The bibliography accurately references sources using a consistent style.	The report attributes or cites sources used but not always accurately. The bibliography references sources using a consistent style.	The report includes many errors in attribution and citation OR the bibliography is inconsistent in style and format and/or incomplete.
Apply Conventions	The report communicates clearly to the reader (although may not be free of errors in grammar and style). The written style is consistently appropriate for an academic audience.	The report is generally clear but contains some flaws in grammar that occasionally interfere with communication to the reader. The written style is inconsistent and not always appropriate for an academic audience.	The report contains many flaws in grammar that often interfere with communication to the reader. The written style is not appropriate for an academic audience.

Slideshow and Presentation

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Establish Argument	The presentation conveys the convincing argument for the team's solution or resolution through strategic selection of supporting evidence.	The presentation conveys the argument for the team's solution or resolution using evidence that is not well selected for the situation.	The presentation describes the existence of a problem or reports on a problem, but does not argue for a team solution or resolution.
Understand and Analyze Context (Evaluate Solutions)	The presentation explains the pros and/or cons of potential options and situates the team's proposed solution in conversation with them. AND The presentation evaluates the solution proposed by the team by thoroughly explaining its limitations or implications.	The presentation describes pros and/or cons of potential options related to the topic. OR The presentation describes limitations or implications of the solution proposed by the team, but in an inconsistent, illogical, overly broad, or otherwise unconvincing manner.	The presentation does not identify or only minimally identifies solutions, either the team's or others' (e.g., a list of solutions with brief annotations).
Engage Audience (Performance)	All presenters effectively engage the audience through strategic intentional use of performance techniques most of the time.	At times, some presenters (i.e. more than one) effectively engage the audience. As a team the presenters demonstrate uneven delivery or performance techniques.	All or all but one of the presenters make little or no use of techniques to engage the audience.
Engage Audience (Design)	Overall, the design clearly guides viewers through the presentation and demonstrates strategic selection of media and design elements that help clarify the argument for the team's solution.	The presentation's design demonstrates an understanding of media and design elements but does not enhance the team's message, or does so inconsistently.	No design or minimal design with significant errors.
Collaborate and Reflect	All responses in the oral defense articulate detailed answers to the question asked and support those answers with relevant evidence specific to collaboration on this project. AND The answers in the oral defense taken together with the presentation demonstrate roughly equal participation from all team members.	Two or more of the responses in the oral defense support their answers with some relevant evidence specific to the team's project.	All or all but one member of the team offer generic responses that could apply to any collaborative project. Or the answers by all or all but one of the team may be unacceptably brief. 0

Example Oral Defense Questions

1. Describe how the content of the team presentation was changed as a result of group discussion.
2. Student A, how did the group decide to include Student B's perspective/lens/conclusions into the overall presentation?
3. Student A, give one specific way that your thinking changed as a result of learning about Student B's findings.
4. In the future, what change would you make to your group norms, and how would you expect that to improve the team presentation,
5. Reflecting on your colleagues' work, which one had the greatest impact on your overall understanding of the problem your group identified?
6. In what way did you improve your ability to work with a group as a result of this project?
7. What is an example of a compelling argument from one of your peer's individual reports that you decided to exclude from your team presentation and why?
8. What is a way in which your team's resolution makes you think differently about your own individual research?
9. What was the strongest counter argument to the solution or conclusion that made you think differently about your team's solution or conclusion?
10. Having finished your project, what if anything do you consider to be a gap in your team's research that, if addressed, would make you feel more confident about your conclusion?