

I-SEARCH
Seeking Answers to Big Questions

Presented by

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What is an I-SEARCH paper?

Exploration, discovery, reflection. You will be learning a process during the next 6 weeks in which you will be in command. You will be working on an I-Search paper.

To conduct a successful I-Search, you must allow something to choose you that you want intensely to know or possess. Maybe it is a CD player or a computer game, a motorcycle, a visit to a spot in the U.S. or a foreign country, an occupation, person, or event. Do you need a job this summer? Are you thinking about a vacation? a new pet? taking up a new hobby or sport? Have you ever wondered what the future will hold? Do you want to find out more about your family history? Don't be satisfied with something that seems appropriate for school or what the teacher thinks would be good for you to pursue. Make this experience pay off for you. Brainstorm by yourself, with friends, and with family about your interests, people or subjects which you might like to learn more about. Walk around letting yourself think of what you feel you need to know. At night when you're beginning to slide off into sleep and in the morning when you're coming out of sleep, let your mind receive possible topics. Keep a note pad and pencil with you all the time. Scientists have discovered that these periods are the most productive of good ideas, when one leads to another, and the connections between them are solid and real. Many authors will tell you they come up with ideas at the strangest times. Don't be satisfied with something you can do that seems proper for school. You're in command here, and there must be a payoff for YOU. Think of something that may have life-changing possibilities.

List your brainstorming on paper. Keep a notepad with you at all times to write ideas down. Look over your brainstorming and discuss your ideas with your teacher, friends, and family. Narrow your topic down.

Each week for the next 6 weeks, your assignment will be to record your progress with this search. Your final writing piece will include feelings and thoughts you had throughout the process. Be sure to record this information accurately. Some information you record will be factual, so you must also be sure to appropriately document all your sources.

SOURCE DAY

Come this day with your topic for the I-Search paper clearly in mind. You will tell the class about it and relate briefly how it came to choose you. Members of the class then have the opportunity to share what they know about your topic, what articles or books they've read, and any experts they know in that field. Helping your classmates is crucial during these six weeks.

QUESTIONS

Once you have a topic, write down what you already know. Then, start thinking of questions you would like answered about the topic. Write at least 10 good, FAT questions concerning your topic. These go beyond knowledge and comprehension. An example might be...you want to know how many years someone needs to go to school to become a pediatrician. Your question should be something like, "Does the education involved take time away from having a family? Rather than, "How many years do you have to go to school?" You may have to answer some skinny

questions before you establish your FAT questions. You can include the skinny questions and their answers in your research. For example, you might need to know when Sony Corporation was founded to answer the bigger questions about their competitors or their influence on society. Remember to document your sources as you do your research. (See next page for Documentation and Bibliography notes)

RESEARCH

Find resources on your topic (books, magazines, internet articles). Find an authority in the field to interview. You will need information from at least one book, one internet site, and one expert for your final project.

INTERVIEW

Find an expert in the field and arrange to contact them for an interview. Prepare what you will say before you make the call. Be prepared for many possible outcomes. We will discuss this more during class.

I-SEARCH PAPER

In short, papers, introductions, and summaries are bulky and unnecessary. A good way to organize an I-Search paper is simply to tell the story of what you did in your search, in the order in which everything happened.

You needn't tell everything (that you got a drink at the park fountain or a stomach ache at Jerry's Café on your journey, unless food and drink are your topics). The happenings and facts crucial to your topic are what should appear in your report.

Your paper is divided into four parts:

Part I - What I Knew (and didn't and wanted to know about my topic when I started out). Describe the process you went through in choosing this subject to write about. Where did you get the idea for your topic? How did it choose you? Help us understand what you went through this week and where you came out. Give us a clear picture of your search and the question or questions you'll be answering. Tell this as you would a story.

Part II - Why I'm Writing this Paper. There should be a real need for you to know about the topic and the person you are investigating. This search should make a difference in your life. It should have meaning for you in some way. As you write this part, be sure to be specific when giving the reasons for learning about your topic.

Part III - The Search. This is the story of the hunt. A good way to begin writing is to simply tell the story of what you did in your search, in the order in which everything happened. Begin by describing the process you went through in choosing the topic and person you are writing about. How did you come to your decision? As you write, help us understand what you went through by giving us a clear picture of your search and interview. For the interview, tell:

Whom did you interview?

Why did you choose this person?

How did you get the interview?

Include paraphrasing and dialogue, sometimes using direct quotes. Be sure to indent with each speaker change. Make sure the reader knows who is speaking. It isn't necessary to always identify the speaker if you choose your words carefully to reflect their thinking and feelings.

You don't have to include everything that was said; just use the parts that were pertinent or interesting to your search. Keep it in story form and chronological order.

Part IV - What I Learned (or didn't learn). What did you learn from this experience? How do you feel it might change your life? Do you still have questions? If so, what are those questions? This is the conclusion portion of your research. What were your overall feelings and thoughts on the project? Do not leave your readers hanging; end the story for them.

Your language and style in this piece should belong to you. This is not a report on the topic you chose, but a story of your experience doing an I-Search Paper. Write naturally. Let the paper have your voice.

CONFERENCING and REVISING

We will spend one week conferencing with peers and teacher. Based on conferences, papers will be edited and revised. They will be revised until they are "perfect." As a courtesy to the experts you interview, you will be sending them a copy of your paper. So, you want to make sure you have not overlooked any typographical or grammatical errors.

Remember to include a bibliography with appropriately cited sources.

PRESENTATIONS

The final step in the process is to present your paper to the class. You will also be mailing a letter to you the person you interviewed, thanking them for their time and help.

I-SEARCH

Information for Parents

Next week, we will be starting the I-Search Project in TAG Language Arts Class. To prepare for this topic, the students have been studying literature with heroes and heroines, re-reading journal entries, and thinking about their interests and events in their lives. I have also asked them to brainstorm their interests with you, their friends, and teachers.

I-Search differs from other research projects in that we want to find out information from primary sources by interviewing, as well as using the traditional resources such as books and encyclopedias. Also, the product is not a traditional research report. It is more an organized story of the information search. The paper is organized into four parts:

1. What I Knew and What I Wanted to Know about This Topic.
2. Why I am Writing this Paper (The writer demonstrates that the search may make a difference in his or her life.)
3. The Search (The story of the hunt...This section includes the interview and any personal experiences)
4. What I Learned or Didn't Learn (A search that fails can be as exciting and valuable as one that succeeded.)

In class, we will be reading examples of I-searches. We will study note-taking, interviewing techniques, research skills, and other related skills. Also, the students are encouraged to visit with each other and share tips to find information.

I have included a TENTATIVE schedule for this project. Special programs and other events may cause our timeline to change. As always, please let me know if you have any questions or concerns.

Sheila Mulbry

TIMELINE for I-SEARCH

April 5 - April 9	Discuss I-search topics, review hero and heroine information, read I-search papers (Topic due April 10)
April 10 - April 13	Write 10 questions. What do you really want to know about your topic? (These must be FAT questions. No knowledge or comprehension questions.)
April 13 - May 5	Research topic, interview authorities in the field. Rough draft for Part 1 due April 20 Rough draft for Part 2 due April 24 Rough draft for Part 3 due May 4
April 30 - May 7	Conference with peers/teacher. Edit and revise. Start work on Part 4.
May 7 - May 14	Continue proofreading and editing. Final copy of research paper due May 16
May 17 & May 18	Presentations

Please detach and return

_____ Student Name

_____ Parent Name _____ Phone(s)

Please check:

- Yes, I have received the information about I-Search
- Yes, my student has permission to use the phone at school to place and receive calls for completion of this project

I-SEARCH Checklist

- _____ Topic Chosen
- _____ Journal entries _____
- _____ Questions developed
- _____ Questions revised and edited to ask expert
- _____ Note cards with bibliographical information
- _____ Appointment and arrangements made for interview
- _____ Interview completed
- _____ Rough draft completed
 - _____ What I Knew (and didn't know about the topic)
 - _____ Why I am Writing this Paper
 - _____ The Search
 - _____ What I Learned (or didn't learn)
- _____ Teacher conferences
- _____ Peer conferences
- _____ Bibliography completed
- _____ Rubric completed
- _____ Presentation

When you complete a part of the I-Search, please write the date by the section you have finished.

I-Search Part I

Part I is the introduction portion of your paper. It should begin with a personal story. Tell why and how your topic chose you. Use your journal entries and notes you have taken to describe how you narrowed your topic down. Explain what you knew before you started and what you would still like to know. Include some of your fat questions. You should include thoughtshots and details. This should be told as a story. This is a rough draft, but will be graded for content. The rubric is as follows:

- Begins with a personal story 20 pts
- Thoughtshots and details 20 pts
- Identifies topic you want to know about 20 pts
- States questions you especially want answered 20 pts
- Fluency 20 pts

This rough draft, written double-spaced on notebook paper or computer (double-spaced), is due on Friday, April 20, 2007.

I-Search Part II

Part II of your paper should explain how you think this may make a difference in your life. Be specific. This is also a rough draft, but will be graded on content. Be sure to give reasons and supporting details. This part is due Tuesday, April 24, 2007. You may turn it in on Thursday with Part I if you wish.

Making telephone calls:

Think about what time it is, when placing a call. You would not want to call when there is the possibility that person may be asleep. For example on a work morning before 7:00 a.m. would not be a good time. After 9:00 to 10:00 p.m. in the evening is not a good time, and remember to avoid calls around the usual period most people will be eating. Courtesy is expected when using the telephone just as if you are talking in person.

Give your name when the telephone is answered, before asking for the person you are requesting.

Dialing too quickly, or in inadequate lighting may be the cause of dialing a "wrong number," never just hang-up. Express your apology, letting them know you have dialed a wrong number. To avoid disturbing another person unnecessarily dial carefully and make sure you can see the dial pad.

When speaking, think of the way you sound. Make sure you enunciate your words clearly and precisely. It is embarrassing to be asked to repeat what you are saying. Your voice reflects your courtesy, since that person on the other end of the line cannot see your facial expressions your "tone of voice" will need to express this.

Basic Good Manners, Telephone Tips:

* Let the telephone ring a reasonable length of time. It is frustrating to just get to the telephone and hear a dial tone.

* If you dial a number that is wrong, apologize promptly and hang-up.

* Calling a business at or very near closing time is, to say the least, unthoughtful. When it is time to go home, after a long day, do not delay them.

* State your name when placing a call. The game of "guess who this is" may not play very well to a busy friend.

* When speaking to anyone who is working and time is of the essence, make your call informative and short.

*Dial carefully and in proper lighting to avoid calling a wrong number and inconveniencing others.

References

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