

DEVELOPING EFFECTIVE RESEARCH SKILLS

What ONE activity – in any subject area and at any grade level – does all this?

1. Relates to broad-based issues
2. Integrates multiple disciplines
3. Presents related experiences within an area of study
4. Allows for in-depth study of a self-selected topic
5. Develops independent study skills
6. Develops higher-level thinking skills
7. Focuses on open-ended tasks

It's staggering to think that any ONE activity could satisfy the demands of contemporary education. Yet that activity does exist. It is one all teachers are familiar with – but perhaps are not implementing correctly.

1. Broad-based issues? *Research*
2. Integrated disciplines? *Research*
3. Related experiences? *Research*
4. In-depth study? *Research*
5. Independent study skills? *Research*
6. Higher-level thinking? *Research*
7. Open-ended tasks? *Research*

When we think of research for our students we too often think no farther than looking up a topic and writing about it. Effective research however goes far beyond reading and writing. Consider this:

Effective research calls for sophisticated integration of thinking, reasoning, description, analysis, and persuasion with evidence.

Again, beyond the basics of reading and reporting, effective research:

1. Requires reading, understanding, evaluating and connecting ideas
2. Develops lifelong skills of information-seeking and organization
3. Supports various methods of writing that correspond to multiple levels of thinking [definition, examples, cause and effect, compare/contrast, analysis, synthesis]
4. Requires standardized writing conventions
5. Facilitates goal setting
6. Enables students to self-select

Certainly this is what we want all our students to achieve – and it is most certainly what the Texas standards have in mind. (Social Studies Skills 29, 30, and 31) The following research projects will both challenge your students and help you satisfy curriculum requirements.

CALLED INTO QUESTION: A CIVIL WAR RESEARCH PROJECT

Any type of ‘real’ research, whether scientific, economic, or historical, requires some kind of interpretation and an opinion from you, the researcher. Otherwise you have a report – just a gathering of information or facts pulled from a variety of sources; there is nothing new or fresh or personal and certainly nothing that advances knowledge.

On the following pages you will find several topics for research. You might be asked to investigate one of them or your teacher may have other topics for you to choose from. Or, you may be asked to come up with your own topic, one that interests you and you would like to know more about.

Your task is to respond to the topic by answering a series of questions about that topic. Your research project will be complete when you have answered these eight-ten questions. After that, your teacher may ask you to share your findings with the class or perhaps complete a writing assignment on one aspect of your research in particular.

The questions range from fairly simple to quite complex. All are designed to help you stretch your thinking, extend your understanding, and make connections. Those ‘connections’ may be over time (Civil War to the present), or between concepts (why was one idea or strategy better than the other?)

One last thing: You won’t find the answers on the Internet; the conclusions you reach come from YOU. Your teacher wants to know how you solve problems, how you develop new ideas, and how you contribute your own personal thoughts.

NOT SLAVE, NOT FREE: CONTRABAND

KNOWLEDGE-LEVEL QUESTIONS

1. What is the definition of 'contraband?'
2. Who provided shelter for and protected these men?

COMPREHENSION-LEVEL QUESTIONS

1. What is one cause/effect consequence of these men leaving the Confederate plantations?
2. Briefly compare the life of a plantation slave to the life of a contraband.

APPLICATION-LEVEL QUESTIONS

1. Tell what you think would have happened if the contraband had been returned to their former Confederate masters.
2. How did the contraband impact the Union Army?

ANALYSIS-LEVEL QUESTIONS

1. The first slaves presented themselves at Fort Monroe (a Union fort in Virginia) in 1861. How might events have turned out differently if they had made their way there even one year earlier?

SYNTHESIS-LEVEL QUESTIONS

1. Compose a brief speech you think General Butler (commander of Fort Monroe) might have made to defend the contrabands.

EVALUATION-LEVEL QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of giving asylum to the contrabands.
2. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of *being* a contraband.

ADVANCES IN MEDICAL CARE

KNOWLEDGE-LEVEL QUESTIONS

1. Name and describe three advances in medical care that you discovered in your research.
2. Name and describe one important person in advancing medical care.

COMPREHENSION-LEVEL QUESTIONS

1. Two-thirds of the soldiers who died in the Civil War died of disease. How could this occur? What were the contributing factors?
2. Compare and contrast the two types of Civil War hospitals: the field hospital and the general hospital.

APPLICATION-LEVEL QUESTIONS

1. Make a drawing or build a model of what you think a field hospital looked like.
2. Explain how the training for doctors of the Civil War era differed from today's training.

ANALYSIS-LEVEL QUESTIONS

1. Predict the health consequences of so many soldiers being gathered in crowded camps.
2. Now further predict the effect of those consequences on the armies.

SYNTHESIS-LEVEL QUESTIONS

1. You have traveled back in time and are standing by the doctors in a Civil War field hospital. You can give them two suggestions that will help them save soldiers' lives. What will you say?

EVALUATION-LEVEL QUESTIONS

1. What do you think is the most important medical advancement to come out of the Civil War and why?

ADVANCES IN MILITARY TECHNOLOGY

KNOWLEDGE-LEVEL QUESTIONS

1. Why is the Civil War considered the first modern war?
2. Name and describe two advances in weapons.
3. Name and describe one advance in transportation.

COMPREHENSION-LEVEL QUESTIONS

1. Cause and effect questions are sometimes like ‘good news-bad news’ questions. Discuss the cause/reason (good news) for these inventions and contrast that to the effects of these inventions (bad news).
 - a. Repeating rifle
 - b. Minie’ ball
 - c. Naval mines

APPLICATION-LEVEL QUESTIONS

1. Explain how important the railroads were to both armies.
2. Explain how important the telegraph was.

ANALYSIS-LEVEL QUESTIONS

1. How is the use of reconnaissance balloons related to the war?

SYNTHESIS-LEVEL QUESTIONS

1. The Civil War was the first war where news media played a major role. Because of the telegraph, it was possible to almost instantly communicate news from the battlefields. Pretend you are a journalist trying to convince a general that he should spend some time answering your questions.

EVALUATION-LEVEL QUESTIONS

1. Evaluate the importance of photography during the Civil War and support with three examples.

Social Studies Skills 29-31

ONE WORE GRAY AND ONE WORE BLUE: ANDERSONVILLE AND ELMIRA PRISON

Students: Your research assignment is to find out what you can about both of these prison facilities: Andersonville, a Confederate prison located near Andersonville, Georgia, and Elmira Prison, a Union facility located in Elmira, New York.

You will then create ten questions (and provide the answers) that show your understanding of the subject of Civil War prisons. To help you write your questions, use the list of question starters on the next page.

TO FREE OR NOT TO FREE: THE ABOLITIONIST MOVEMENT

Students: Your assignment is to research the abolitionist movement during the Civil War. Confine your search to the people and events immediately surrounding the war.

You will then create ten questions (and provide the answers) that show your understanding of the subject of abolitionists. To help you write your questions, use the list of question starters on the next page.

A FEW GOOD MEN: VOLUNTEERS, CONSCRIPTS, AND SUBSTITUTES

Students: Soldiers who served in the Civil War followed several paths to the battlefield. Some volunteered, some were drafted, and some sent a substitute to fight in their place. Your assignment is to research these three types of soldiers.

You will then create ten questions (and provide the answers) that show your understanding of the subject. To help you write your questions, use the list of question starters on the next page.

Social Studies Skills 29-31

KNOWLEDGE questions go after factual answers; they test recall and recognition:

1. What is the definition of...?
2. Who did...?
3. How much/many...?
4. What does it mean when...?

COMPREHENSION questions interpret or explain:

1. What are examples of...?
2. How did...occur?
3. Describe in your own words...
4. Name types of...

APPLICATION questions reveal situations that are unfamiliar or have a new slant:

1. Tell what would happen if...
2. How would this event have turned out differently if...?
3. Identify the results of...

ANALYSIS questions break down information into its parts:

1. In what way is ...like you or unlike you?
2. Draw a diagram or build a model of...
3. How does...compare/contrast with modern day?
4. How does...compare/contrast with...?

SYNTHESIS questions combine information into a pattern that wasn't clear before:

1. What solutions would you suggest for...?
2. How would you create/design a new...?
3. What is the relationship between...and...?

EVALUATION questions reveal criteria, consistencies, or inconsistencies:

1. Do you agree that...?
2. What is the most important...?
3. What are the advantages/disadvantages of...?