



From the IB Extended Essay Guide, Teacher Support Material

Practice exercise: Formulating well-focused research questions for the English Literature Extended Essay

Developing a narrow, focused research question is an integral part of your extended essay process. A research question will provide a path to guide you through your research and writing. In English Literature, selecting your resources is also of utmost importance.

<p>Step 1.</p> <p>What inspires you within your subject area</p>	<p><i>What areas within are of most personal interest to you? (Poetry, short stories, Science Fiction, Feminist Literature, Archetypes, etc.,)</i></p> <p><i>Is there something you read that inspired you in your IB English course?</i></p>
<p>Step 2.</p> <p>Choose more refined topics that interests you</p>	<p><i>Describe your work in one sentence.</i></p> <p>I want to think about _____.</p> <p>I want to read about _____.</p> <p>I want to learn about _____.</p> <p>I want to write about _____.</p> <p>Example: I want to learn about authoritarian principles in Residential School fiction. I want to think about platonic love. I want to read about the use of dominance in relationships. I want to write about the use of bestial imagery in Pre-Colonial fiction.</p>
<p>Step 3.</p> <p>Suggest a question</p>	<p><i>Refine your topic by crafting a question that specifies something about the topic.</i></p> <p>I am reading _____ because I want to find out (who, what, when, where, whether, why or how) _____.</p> <p>Example: I am reading <i>The Kite Runner</i> because I want to learn more about conditions in the Soviet-era Afghanistan and how characters cope with the realities of living in a conflict zone.</p> <p>Direct question: To what extent does Amir’s betrayal parallel the betrayal of the Afghan community during Soviet occupation?</p> <p>Include a literary concept from your subject area to help form the R.Q. (<i>symbolism, use of foils, metaphor, use of letter writing</i>)</p> <p>Can you argue a specific position? What are some possible issues or arguments?</p>

<p>Step 4. Evaluate your question</p>	<p>Answer these questions:</p> <p><i>Is there a range of perspectives on this topic?</i></p> <p><i>Does the research question allow for analysis, evaluation and the development of a reasoned argument?</i></p> <p>I am studying _____ because I want to find out _____ in order to understand (how, why or whether) _____.</p> <p><i>i.e., How will I ensure that my R.Q. doesn't create the conditions for a narrative essay. What am I actually going to prove/argue/analyze?</i></p>
<p>Step 5. Restate your question using a different command term</p>	<p><i>Asking the question in a different way might help you view your topic in a different way.</i></p> <p>How does <i>analysing</i> ...</p> <p><i>To what extent</i> ...</p>
<p>Step 6. Review with your supervisor</p>	<p><i>Is your supervisor able to understand what you want to find out?</i></p> <p><i>Is it clear to your supervisor how and why your topic is relevant in your subject area?</i></p>
<p>Step 7. Reflection</p>	<p><i>If you can adequately respond to the "so what?" question, you may be on your way to a clear and focused research question using your initial topic idea.</i></p> <p>Do that here:</p>
<p>You must now start some preliminary reading around the issue or topic. In English Literature E.E.s you will need secondary research to set your selected sources in the context of literature as a whole. What do the experts say about your source? About the genre? About the literary concepts discussed? Remember that you will most likely need to revise your research question once you start to undertake this research and read the sources. In this sense your research question should always be considered provisional until you have enough research data to make a reasoned argument.</p>	