

Selecting Complex Research Problems or Questions

Use the following process to identify a problem or question within a broad topic that:

- Has multiple answers, or
- Has no clear “right” answer.

PROCESS FOR SELECTING A COMPLEX PROBLEM OR QUESTION TO RESEARCH

PROCESS	YOUR RESEARCH PROBLEM/QUESTION
1. What is your broad topic area ? <i>[Ex: 1920's]</i>	
2. Read background information to gain an overall understanding of your broad topic and identify aspects that are controversial or complex enough to merit different perspectives. <i>[Prohibition, Economic Overextension, Organized Crime, Role of Women]</i>	
3. Pick one controversial aspect that interests you. Identify the different perspectives on that issue. For each, list who holds the perspective and what that point of view is. <i>[Prohibition. Law enforcement – maintaining a civil society; Temperance movement – save families; Organized crime – profit; Common citizens – Rights vs. Family values]</i>	
4. Predict the availability of information on all the perspectives you listed. Will you be able to find credible, authoritative information for each perspective?	
5. Look carefully at the controversial issue you have identified. If it still seems to be a viable topic for research, then identify the underlying problem or question that you will address. <i>[How did the intended and unintended consequences of Prohibition affect society in the 1920's?]</i>	