

The following is a list of the Research Topics from which you may choose*

*No, unless a specific question gives you the freedom to do so; even then, it must be teacher approved.

Please know that a great deal of time went into the creation of this list, from more than two dozen teachers who contributed ideas last year, to the people who spent much time and energy editing and updating last year's options. Our absolute greatest objective is that you will go into this project with an open mind, find a compelling and worthwhile topic, learn something new, and know that there many of us here ready and willing to help you succeed. We sincerely hope that you enjoy the culminating project of English 10.

Agriculture

1. *A Farming Activist. Cesar Chavez:* Chavez was an American farmworker and labor leader. He co-founded the National Farm Workers Association. Research the man, and make an argument for how Chavez's activism made an impact on the rights of farmworkers, and whether his goals have been met.
2. *An Animal Rights' Pioneer:* Ingrid E. Newkirk: Newkirk founded the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), the world's largest animal rights organization. Research Newkirk and PETA and argue how her work has had an impact on the treatment of animals. Also, include a discussion about whether or not PETA as a whole continues to fulfill her objectives.
3. *Farm Subsidies:* Have government farm subsidies led to "big agriculture" also known as corporate farming? If so, what is the impact on our society? What is the impact on small farmers? After doing some research, argue for or against subsidies to corporate farms.
4. *Organic Farming:* Organic farming is on the rise. Just take a walk through the aisles of your local grocery store, and you will see many more organic products. What are the benefits of eating organic foods and using organic products? Or, on the other hand, are the benefits overstated, a fad of the time? Do organic products really make that much of a difference in our overall health? Make a research based argument.
5. *Herbicides and Pesticides. What's the harm?* Research the difference between the two, and make a research based argument about whether or not we as society are at risk from either.

Art

6. *Chuck Close: Better After Tragedy?* Close is a photorealist who suffered a spinal injury and was paralyzed as a result. He said, "You can put new rocks in your shoes." What did he mean by this statement? Did his art change for the better or worse after becoming a quadriplegic? How is his statement a metaphor for his work as a whole?

7. *Pop Art*: How did the Pop Art Movement connect events happening in the world in the twentieth century? Choose one of the following artists and make an argument about how his art reflected important events: Andy Warhol, Claes Oldenburgh, Roy Lichtenstein, or Jasper Johns.

Business

8. *Family Leave*: Should mothers, fathers, and caretakers be granted paid leave from work after a child has been born, a child adopted, or an elderly parent falls ill and the sole caretaker is full time employed? Research countries like Finland and Denmark and how they successfully grant paid family leave, and make an argument about whether or not a similar system should or could be implemented here in the United States.

Education

9. *Drowning in Homework*. Students often complain that they have hours and hours of homework. When is homework necessary and helpful? When is it harmful? What is the solution? Using research to support your conclusions, develop an argument regarding how schools should best answer the homework question.
10. *OMG I'm Tired*. Recent research suggests that sleep deprivation is a major problem for many students. Some might argue that, because of this, schools should restructure their schedule completely, allowing for things like block scheduling, sports activities in the morning, flexible hours, and the like. Come up with a research-based argument about how we could better serve students' needs with a specific proposal for what would work best.
11. *The Doctor Said Autism. Now What?* It is difficult to determine the best therapy for children diagnosed with autism. After doing some research, what methods of therapy seem to produce the best results in many autistic children? (Keep in mind that there are varying degrees of autism, so your essay should examine a variety of therapies addressing the severity of the disability.)
12. *The Right Setting*: Which classroom setting promotes higher academic success for students, including those with disabilities? Using research and interviews to support your argument, explain what the ideal classroom looks like and why such a set up would prove beneficial to learning and students' overall wellbeing.
13. *Why Dr. Seuss was Right*: Research why it is important for parents to read to their young children, including infants. Argue how and why reading to babies and toddlers positively impacts their school performance in later years. Or, research and make an argument for how reading should be a lifelong activity—how and why can we encourage it?

14. *Cellphones and Parenting*. Research the effect of cellphone usage and how it has negatively impacted parenting. Make an argument explaining this issue and then offering suggestions for what could be done to address it.
15. *Let's Play!* Because of the newer, more rigorous academic demands put on elementary students, play – in the classroom and at recess – has been reduced, sometimes to nothing. Moreover, children with disabilities such as ADHD need more movement, not less. After doing some research, argue for the benefits of play throughout the school day and how it aids in the development of a healthy child. You may also include interviews as research sources.

English and Literature

16. *Mark Twain: The First American Novelist*: While it is true that Mark Twain was not the first American to write and publish a book, he was the first to write in the American vernacular, something that got him into quite a bit of trouble. Make an argument for explaining how and why Mark Twain can be considered the first truly American writer.
17. *Poetry is for Everyone*: Billy Collins, former United States Poet Laureate, argued that poetry is for everyone, that it is supposed to be real and accessible. Research Billy Collins' and read some of his work. Then make an argument how he sought to change people's minds about poetry.
18. *Poetry Part II*: Much of the world's most famous poets are actually revolutionaries of their time. Their poems were written to criticize something in society and to bring attention to their cause. The Harlem Renaissance Writers, The Beat Poets, and many Latin American poets easily fit this definition. Choose one writer from one of these categories, research that person, and make an argument about what that person's poetry challenged in society.
19. *You Can't Read That!* Is censorship of books in high school ever justifiable? Should a school library censor its collection? Argue for or against censorship in public school libraries, framing your argument using references to specific texts.
20. *Shakespeare in High School*: Should high school students have to read Shakespeare? What are the benefits to reading Shakespeare as a young student? What are the downfalls? Argue for or against reading Shakespearean plays at the high school level.
21. *One Story*: Some theorists suggest there is only one story, retold in a thousand different ways. The theory is related to Joseph Campbell's "Hero's Journey" framework, which is also known as the monomyth. Research the monomyth and make an argument about how it is evident in a specific novel you've read thus far in high school. (You may not use *The Hunger Games*, as the hero's Journey is taught in some English 10 classes).

Foreign Language and Culture

22. *Bullfighting*: Research the practice of bullfighting and argue whether it is a matter of cultural preservation or a dangerous and outdated display of animal cruelty.
23. *Modern Gypsies*: What is a gypsy, anyway? Why have they been mistreated by so many countries and people over the centuries? Are they troublesome miscreants or inheritors of a legitimate, often misunderstood culture? Research the history of gypsy life and argue for or against its legitimacy in the modern world.
24. *It's a Small World*: Argue the benefits of knowing a second (or even third) language in today's ever-shrinking world. You may also explore why it is important to have an understanding of other cultures, especially in today's world.
25. *The Little Prince or Don Quixote*: When it comes to these two philosophical approaches to life, who has had more influence: the French or Spanish? For this topic you will explore the influence of the teachings from *The Little Prince* and *Don Quixote*.
26. *Secularism in France*: Research the rise and influence of secularism in France and argue with it has had a positive or negative impact on society, especially regarding religious tolerance.

History

27. *Ronald Reagan and the American Economy*: President Reagan, revered within the Republican Party, set forth a number of economic policies in the 1980s. After doing some research, argue whether these policies—especially “trickle-down economics,” did more harm than good.
28. *What about the New Deal?* The New Deal was a series of domestic programs intended to lift the country out of the Great Depression. Some people say that it saved the country and its most vulnerable members; others might argue it destroyed it. After doing some research, argue whether it was a successful and necessary for its time.
29. *When It Governs Least*: According to economic philosopher Adam Smith, the government should play a minimal role in society. How minimal is minimal? Is he right? Defend or refute his belief.
30. *Morality in Politics*: Do politicians have an obligation to follow a higher moral standard? Should private “sins” be held against them and used against them? Why or why not?
31. *Female Pioneers in American History*: There have been many, many women throughout American history that have made a dramatic, positive impact; however, they are often not talked about or discussed very little. Research one of the following women (or one you yourself have discovered) and argue why she made a positive, lasting impact: Sacagawea, Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Elizabeth Blackwell, Sandra Day O'Connor, Gloria Steinem, Madeline Albright.

32. *The Iron Lady*: Did the conservative policies of Margaret Thatcher help or harm the United Kingdom?
33. *His Finest Hour*: "Leadership determines the fate of a country." To what extent is this true, and how are the leadership qualities of Winston Churchill absent in today's leaders?
34. *Revolutionaries and Freethinkers from Around the World*: Choose one of the following people who, through their philosophies or actions, changed the world: Emiliano Zapata, Mangal Pandey, Confucius, Miltaides, or Vasili Alexandrovich Arkhipov.

Mathematics

35. *Should We Change How We Teach Math?* Common Core. It's become a dirty word. Is it? Does it teach higher level thinking? Or does it confuse to the point of doing harm? What does current research tell us about how we best learn math? Is this reflected in the classroom? Make an argument for a methodology that, based upon research, will lead to the best results.
36. *Math and Technology: When Numbers Are Not Enough*: Should mathematics curriculum evolve to include technology as an elective or even required course (perhaps replacing something else?) For instance, should students be required to learn things such as how to write code? Use research to support your conclusions.
37. *Grading*: Every teacher grades differently. Should they? Make an argument for how schoolwork should be assessed, mathematically, so that it is accurate, fair, and rewards success. Use research to support your position.
38. *Grading, Part II*: Make an argument **against** using a numeric or letter grading system. What would be a better or more accurate way to assess whether or not a student has retained and learned what they need to know? Use research to support your conclusions.
39. *When Numbers Are Not Enough*: Do our classic mathematics courses meet the needs of our technologically-driven society? Research how some schools are including more technological training (learning how to write code, for instance) in their math courses, and how does this better prepare students for the future? Make an argument for why or why not this is a worthwhile and necessary endeavor.

Topics Related to Music

40. *Music: Good for the Grades*. Research the effect of music on learning. Specifically, what parts of the brain are impacted when music is playing? How are students' learning improved in subjects like mathematics when they learn how to read and write music? Should music theory be an optional mathematics course?

41. *Can we listen to our own music?* Students ask this all the time. What does the research say about it? Can students listening to music while simultaneously doing something else? Or not? Is there an argument to be made regarding the TYPE of music that is beneficial vs. distracting? What about other issues related to people who are always listening to music? Are there any societal impacts? Use research to support a specific position regarding music, learning, or social impacts.
42. *Music: Good for the Soul:* Research music therapy as a career, and make an argument about how and why such therapists can serve a variety of populations.
43. *The NEA:* Some people believe that The National Endowment of the Arts should be abolished; that our tax dollars should not go to support individual artists or musicians. Research it yourself (the NEA), and make an argument about whether or not it should or should not be abolished. Along with your research into facts and figures, use stories involving real people who have been impacted (positively or negatively) to support your argument.

Physical Education, Health, and Athletics

44. *Violence in Sports:* Examine the impact of excessive violence in sports, especially as it effects behavior OFF the field. Are athletes conditioned to be violent? Do we as a society glorify violence? How should a team address an athlete when his or her behavior off the field is violent or harmful? What should society do to better teach how to channel aggressiveness?
45. *Professional Athletes as Role Models:* How their behavior on and off the field impact children and society as a whole? Make an argument about a specific athlete who HAS or HAS NOT been a good role model. Further, explain how Society (such as advertisers and sports teams) should respond when an athlete is a good or bad role model.

My Head Hurts: Research and Write an Argument Regarding Concussions and Traumatic Brain Injuries in ONE of the following options:

46. *Schools' and Youth Leagues' Responsibilities.* What responsibilities should schools or leagues implement to protect young people from lasting harm? Go beyond discussing equipment. What about teaching and coaching methodology? Include this in your argument.
47. *Professional Sports Organizations.* How should professional sports deal with traumatic brain injuries? Are they doing enough now? What do the unions who represent the players believe? Weigh both sides, and make an argument about how Professional Sports Organizations should deal with the issue.
48. Does the NFL bear legal responsibility to athletes who have suffered TBI's and have since retired? Use specific research and stories about real retired athletes to support your conclusions.

49. *Stop Saying You're Fat.* Why do people regard one's *weight* (the number on the scale) as more important than actual overall health? That is, how does society stress and seem to value a person's physical appearance over one's actual health? How could society *better* stress the importance of a healthy lifestyle? Why should society do so?
50. *Youth Sports.* What do we know about children and organized sports—what works, what doesn't? What's positive? What's the opposite, and perhaps destructive emotionally and physically? Using a combination of articles and interviews, make an argument about the best way to run a youth sports program. (You may opt to choose one specific sport and age group.)

Science

51. *Fritz Haber: Evil Genius or Savior of Mankind?* Haber is considered the “father of chemical warfare” for developing the use of poisonous gas during World War I; however, is also the same man who won the Nobel Prize in Chemistry for developing fertilizers that led to an increase in the world's food production, thus feeding more of the world's growing population. So, what is he? An evil genius or a savior? After doing some research, you decide.
52. *What the Frack?* Is fracking (the process of fracturing rock with high-pressured liquid to release natural gas) safe or can it have serious environmental consequences? Fracking is something that has been banned in New York State, but some people are in support of it, especially when it comes to selling their own land to a company that wants it for drilling rights. What do you think? Argue for or against the practice of fracking.
53. *It's All Abuzz... Or Is It?* Honey bees (you know, the insects responsible for the pollination of most of our plants) are disappearing at alarming rates. Why? What are some theories about what's happening to them? Should the government take action to protect the life of honey bees? If so, what can be done to save them?
54. *Wind Turbines: Wonderful Green Energy and Financial Boon to Some, Or Terrible for Migrating Bird, an Eyesore and Blight on the Land and Bad for Tourism and Other Landowners?* Research the conflict regarding the Wind Turbines that Apex wants to build near Lake Ontario. Research the issues related to the topic (the effect on birds, the effect on health, the beliefs of individual property owners) and, after reviewing all of the relevant material, make an argument over whether or not the turbines should be built.
55. *It's Normal...Right?* Are hormones in our food supply leading to strange mutations in humans? It may sound like the stuff of science-fiction, but there could be some truth to it. Research the impact of the use of hormones in our food (e.g. meat and dairy) and argue how it might be leading to mutations in humans, and what the FDA should do about it.

