

2026-2027 AP Research Summer Project

Mrs. McGowan

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Welcome to AP Research! We will be exploring what fascinates us about the world by investigating the details of topics we have a personal interest in, so it is quite different from most traditional classes. AP Research follows a research framework called QUEST that mimics the type of research that you will experience in many college-level courses! QUEST stands for

Question and Explore
Understand and Analyze
Evaluate Multiple Perspectives
Synthesize Ideas
Transform and Transmit

We begin with the Question and Explore phase by identifying topics that interest us, lightly investigating, and posing questions about the issues that arise from the topic. Since you will spend a lot of time next year delving deeply into one topic, the last thing you want to do is choose a topic that you really don't care about. The goal of this project is to expose you to diverse topics you may have never considered otherwise. You are not choosing a final topic right now,, but the most important prep work you can do before class starts is to explore and be curious!

Our summer project (there is an example included to help you visualize what you're doing) is to create a slideshow with seven slides total. Again, your main goal with this is to ask deep questions (no answers needed!) and explore your interests. Directions:

1. Find six "sources." Sources in this non-traditional sense are just things you do this summer that trigger the desire to do some thinking and questioning. Ideas for sources (you are not limited to this list): documentaries, movies, books, concerts, news articles, nonprofit organizations, museum exhibits, historical sites, botanical gardens, athletic events, the mall, state and national parks, places of worship, conversations with interesting people, plays, ceremonies, social media, restaurants, podcasts etc. You can be inspired by things you do this summer, or you can be inspired by something you just want to know more about (maybe a special interest you have). Try to visit places or do something (it's summer!), but if you can't, the internet is a fine source. For example, I recently saw a TikTok about a café in South Korea where visitors can drink tea while playing with meerkats, so as a curious person, I wanted to know why meerkats were in South Korea, am I allowed to own one as an American, are they more fun to drink tea with than perhaps a wombat or capybara...
2. Prepare a slide for each of the six sources. On each slide include (see example):
 - A short explanation and the circumstances of your source (when/where did you visit or find this source)
 - Any relevant, thought-provoking images (mostly because I like fun pictures on projects)
 - Most importantly, try to conjure up as many questions as you can about the source; try to ask varying questions that fall under many different educational disciplines* (disciplines are listed on the second page). Your goal is at least five questions per source. Try to avoid "search and report questions" that can be answered in 2 seconds on Google; sometimes the best questions are the least answerable!
3. Create one last slide and answer the following in a short paragraph. If you had to choose one question (or discipline) from this project to spend a lot of time investigating, which is calling to you as of right now? What do you like about it?

*A **discipline** is also known as a field of study. Six common disciplines that AP Research uses are:

Art (paintings, sculptures, literature, music, dance, architecture, film, theater): communicates thoughts and emotions in a creative way, uses skill and imagination to form aesthetic products/productions

Math: uses quantitative interpretation of real world conditions to explain how the universe behaves, creates models and theories that allow even more complex devices to be created

Social Science (includes economics, psychology, politics, linguistics, anthropology, religion, cultural studies, etc.): studies how humans function individually and as a group/society, including how different circumstances change behaviors

Physical/Natural Science (also known as Hard Sciences, includes chemistry, biology, physics, environmental science, etc.): tries to explain how the universe (planet) functions and sometimes attempts to solve problems, finds patterns in the natural world

Humanities: studies how different people experience life, explores the values of different cultures

History: studies the causes and effects of historical events to help understand times, trends, wars, tensions, social problems, etc.

Your slides are due Monday, Aug. 10 on Canvas.

Questions about this project are welcomed! I check email all summer.

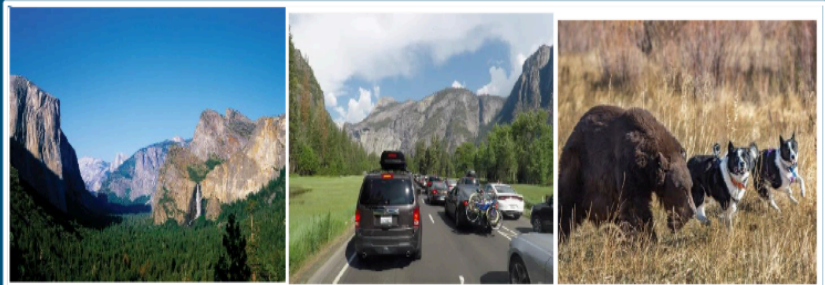
EXAMPLE

(Note: Your goal is 5+ questions per source; 9 are included on this example just to give you ideas)

Explanation: This is one of America's best known national parks. I'm not truly sure why though – it's pretty, but other than hiking, you spend most of the day looking for places to park. After visiting, I think I'm more interested in human aspects of the park.

Circumstances: I visited the park in June for three days.

Source #1: Yosemite National Park



Questions I Thought Of

1. Physical/Natural Science: Could the "bear dog" program they have (uses a particular breed of dog to chase off and repel nuisance bears from populated areas so they don't have to be euthanized) be copied and used in urban places in Arizona for nuisance coyotes or bobcats?
2. Social Science: What is the ratio of foreigner visitors to American citizens? Follow up: What is the main reason foreign visitors go to the park (what are their expectations)?
3. Art: Which famous national park has more published photographs – the Grand Canyon or Yosemite?
4. Art/Social Science: How realistic are image searches of Yosemite – are the photographs online accurate, or is the reality of the park a lot more crowded and dirty?
5. History: The guide said there are unmarked First American burials all over the valley floor. Is there a record or map of who is there? Is there any value in creating that?
6. Social Science: Does their social media presence actually drive visitors to the park, or do they come just because it's famous?
7. Humanities: There's a law prohibiting the collection of eagle feathers in that area. Does this law impact the traditions of the First American people in the area? Are they or should they be exempt and what is required to prove exemption?
8. Physical/Natural Science: Did the larger than normal amount of rainfall this year have any impact on this year's fire season?
9. History: Who is the oldest person buried in the cemetery; how hard is it to get records of this person's life and death if I wanted to do an ethnography?