

Language Arts & Geography Issue Research Paper Overview

Task Description

You will write a research paper (minimum of 4 paragraphs) in which you clearly:

- State a well defined thesis
- Support the thesis with well-developed paragraphs
- Research and present two sides of the issue
- Utilize at least 3 credible online or paper sources
- Show source in paper using in-text citations
- Create a Works Cited documenting your sources using MLA style
- Refrain from using you/I
- Incorporate 8th-grade transitions and sentence fluency

Your paper must have an introduction, body and conclusion. You will need to include paraphrasing and direct quoting from your sources to add support the issue's claims. To show where this information came from you will also be utilizing in-text citations (MLA style).

Grading

Check points will allow the project to break down into manageable tasks. You will receive points for meeting your deadlines on time and for the quality of work you turn in. In addition to this, you will also receive points for being on task and using your time productively. By using class time effectively, you will lessen work outside of class.

LA: Final paper will be graded on the 7-Traits of good writing

Geo: Final paper will be graded based on geography knowledge shown and supported.

Timeline

Time in class will be provided during the month-long process. You will have time in your language arts and geography classes. We will work as a team to help you achieve your goals. We highly recommend you use a USB flash drive if you plan on working on your writing both here and at home *because emailing your work back and forth is not an option in middle school.*

A calendar will be available in this packet AND ONLINE on our language arts web sites. Check it out to ensure you meet your deadlines or plan ahead if you will be away! Be responsible for **your** learning. In addition, this packet, graphic organizers and other tools to assist you along the way will be available online, too. Check with your teacher for location information.

If you need to request books from Hennepin County libraries, please try to do so before October 10, so that you may have them for research in class the week of the 13th.

Step 1: Choose a Topic (due Friday, October 10)

This can be the most difficult part of the process. You will be researching the issue, writing about it, revising it, and talking about it so choose an environmental or a political topic that you will be interested in spending 4 weeks with. *You can also bubble map, double bubble or tree map your ideas. Find a thinking style that works for you and use the back; the more you have mapped out, the more likely it is you are interested in the topic!* Remember, your purpose when gathering this research is to use the information you gather to present both or multiple sides of the issue to your reader/listener. Ask yourself the following questions to guide your topic choice:

1. **Do you have a strong opinion about something?** Have you argued with someone recently, heard something in the news that you agreed or disagreed with, or overheard others arguing about different sides of the same issue? *Start paying attention...*
2. **Another option is to think of a subject you are already interested in.** Is there anything controversial about that topic? Is there anything unfair about the topic? Are there any laws or rules unfair or controversial about the topic? For example, if you like to snowmobile, a current controversy is whether or not snowmobilers should be allowed off trail on state park land.
3. **An additional option is to think about something you have always wanted to learn more about** but haven't had the time to look into. For example, you have been curious about wind power, and now is an opportunity to gather information about any controversies or problems surrounding this topic.

Stuck? Try these on for size:

Presidential Campaign Issues			
Abortion Afghanistan Cuba Economic Stimulus Education	Energy Environment Free Trade Guns Health Care	Homeland Security Housing Immigration Iran Iraq	Israel LGBT Issues Russia Social Security Stem Cell Research Taxes

Environmental Issues: Must be connected to a <i>specific</i> region, country or animal/fuel type. Unsure? Check with teacher. ☺			
Global Warming Alternative Energy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Wind, Solar, Geothermal, Nuclear, Biomass, etc. 	Clean Air & Water Standards <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ China and Other "Eastern" Nations ▪ Coal Burning and Effects in Great Lakes ▪ PCB's in Lake Superior 	Rainforests Eco Tourism Deforestation Alternative Fuel <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Hydrogen, Biomass, "Genetic Energy" 	Invasive Species (type) Recreational Use Issue <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Snow mobiles, ATV's, etc. Genetic Engineering <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Grain with high yields ▪ Banning GMFs
Natural Disaster Aid <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Insurance, Government Aid, etc. Drilling for Oil in Alaska in ANWR (Arctic National Wildlife Refuge)	Desertification Resource Use <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Water Scarcity ▪ Irrigation Damage (Aral Sea) 	Pesticide & Herbicide use <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Organic Farming vs. Mainline use of Chemical Sprays ▪ Family vs. Corporate Farms 	Endangered Species (specific type) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Wildlife Protection vs. Rights of Developers (Specific Case)

Step 1: Choose a Topic (due Friday, October 10)

Topic	
Side A	
Side B	

Topic approved by Parent/Guardian

Signature

Printed

Date

Topic Approved by Geography or Language Arts Teacher

Ms. Boschee/Mr. Schwartz

Mr. Lutz/Mr. Bartels

Step 2: Plan Your Research (due Friday, Oct. 10)

The focusing questions of your research are for you to define. Use a bubble map or tree map to help you get going. Work toward “thick” questions versus “thin” questions. Questions that use how or why lead to thick answers, while questions that begin with what or who lead to list answers or thin answers. You want to find enough data, so a minimum of THREE- reliable sources are required to support the sides of the issue. They may be electronic or paper based.

Examples of thick questions

1. How does off-trail ATV use affect Minnesota parks? (open ended and geographically specific)
2. How do DNR officials view the use of off-trail ATVs? (specific group & open ended)
3. Why do environmental groups oppose off-trail ATV use? (specific group to research & open ended)
4. Why do ATV users want to be able to go off trail? (specific group to research & open ended)
5. How do ATV users feel about trail rules? (specific group to research, open ended, & may give multiple views)

Focus Questions Round 1 (Do not erase original questions. Use the “Revised” chart below for changes.)

OK'd	Revise	Question

Focus Questions REVISED (Do not erase original questions. Use the Revised space below for changes.)

OK'd	Revise	Question

Step 3: Find Current Sources (due _____)

Appropriate sources for this project are:

- Nonfiction books
- Magazines or newspaper articles (also called periodicals)—print or online (use ProQuest or InfoTrac)
- Educational or governmental internet sites
- Video, radio or television clips (NPR, MPR, PBS, HBO, National Geographic)
- NO encyclopedias
- NO wikis (may be used as a launch pad for sources)

Some HIGHLY recommended web sites for your research are:

- Wayzata CMS Media Center Web Links (“Catalog, Resource & Research Links”)
- Check out Opposing Viewpoints, Infotrac, and ProQuest hyperlinks on this page:
<http://www.wayzata.k12.mn.us/media/?pageid=17>

Note: accessing the school’s databases from home requires access codes and passwords. Please get these from the media center.

- Hennepin County Library (Must have a library card to access databases.)
All CMS databases can be accessed from the hclib.org site.
<http://www.hclib.org>
 - Select “Reference & Research” tab
 - Select “Databases A-Z” (some suggested databases are: Facts.com, Lands and Peoples, Opposing Viewpoints, ProQuest, InfoTrac, Star Tribune)
- National Public Radio (<http://NPR.org>)
- Minnesota Public Radio (<http://MPR.org>)
- Pros and Cons of Controversial Issues (<http://Procon.org>)
- Middle School National Debate Resources
(<http://www.middleschooldebate.com/topics/topicresearch.htm>)
- National Geographic TV (<http://channel.nationalgeographic.com/>)
- National Geographic Magazine (<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/>)
- Kidon Media Link (international newspapers from all over the world):
<http://www.kidon.com/media-link/index.php>

Step 4: Keep Track of Sources (due _____)

Use this page to keep track of the sources from which you get information. *You only need to write down sources you actually took notes AND use in your paper*, BUT just to be safe, always note it because it is easier now than to try and relocate it weeks later! Another option is to copy and paste the information onto a Word document. Save the document to your flash drive or student Novel folder. You can delete ones you don't use later.

Please see the separate "Works Cited" packet to guide you in noting required information in the MLA format.

Remember, as you take notes, write the source number on the note card so you can cross-reference the note to the source you got it from. This is VITALLY IMPORTANT!

You must have a minimum of **3** sources.

Source #1:

Source #2:

Source #3:

Source #4:

Source #5

Step 5: Read Sources and Take Notes (due _____)

- You must use a new note card for every piece of information you write down, no matter how small.
- Only take notes that apply to the focusing questions in step one.
- Do not use complete sentences when taking notes unless you are writing down an exact quotation.
- For every note you take, write the focus question, source number, and page number on the note card (see example below). **THIS IS VITALLY IMPORTANT!**

Sample Note Cards

Focusing Questions	Page Number	Source Number
FQ#1	Pg. 17	S#1 Outdoor Magazine
ATV use is a “national recreation” 6% of Minnesotans use them. [direct quote of written material and paraphrased information]		
FQ#2	NP	S# 4 Sierra Club News
Mr. Yonkers, Sierra Club President, Off-trail ATVs “ ‘ruin natural habitats.’ ” [who said it] [their position] [what was said & taken word for word from web site]		
FQ#5	p. 52	S# 3
Bob Smith, member of Off-Highway Vehicle Association, [who said it] [their position] “ ‘If we don't treat trails properly they won't be there in the future for our kids and their kids.’ ” [what was said & taken word for word from web site]		

pink

blue

green

Things to keep in mind:

- You will only have page numbers for electronic resources if it is a PDF document. You do not add page numbers from printed web site information.
 - No page number, no problem, just write “NP” for “No Page.”
- Use a different colored note card for each focus question type. It makes it easier to sort when you are writing your draft.
- The more notes you take the better your paper will be. There is no minimum number of note cards, but for a good paper, students generally have between 40-60 cards.

Step 6: Write Your Thesis Statement (due _____)

You now have a lot of knowledge about your issue. You should have information on your topic, the issues, and the effects of this issue of the people or land. The purpose of this essay is to use what you've learned to create an expository paper to inform your audience of the issues. You do not take a side or show bias. You will let the reader come to his or her own conclusion.

A thesis statement is one sentence that alerts the reader to what the whole essay will be about. Continuing with the ATV topic, my thesis is:

Because the future of off-trail ATV use in Minnesota is unclear, the voices of our state riders, Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and environmentalists are clamoring to be heard in our state legislature.

In math terms, **S + E= T (S) Subject + (E) Emphasis = (T) Thesis**
(S) is off-trail ATV use in Minnesota + (E) state riders, DNR, and environmentalists = (T) Thesis

Focus Questions

1. How does off-trail ATV use affect Minnesota parks? (open ended and geographically specific)
2. How do DNR officials view the use of off-trail ATVs? (specific group & open ended)
3. Why does environmental groups oppose off-trail ATV use? (specific group to research & open ended)
4. Why do ATV users want to be able to go off trail? (specific group to research & open ended)
5. How do ATV users feel about trail rules? (specific group to research, open ended, and may give multiple views)

My focus question data becomes shifted and grouped into the following body paragraph **emphasis: ATV riders' reasons, Department of Natural Resources viewpoints, and environmentalists' opposition.**

Write your **initial** thesis statement here:

Thesis statement approved by teacher _____ Date _____

Revised thesis:

Thesis statement approved by teacher _____ Date _____

Step 7: Organize Your Notes & Write an Outline or Use a Graphic Organizer (due _____)

- First, separate your note cards into piles based on the focusing question they help support.
- Next, organize the notes in each pile into the order in which they make the most sense. This will help you write organized paragraphs when the time comes.
- Now create a graphic organizer from your notes using either the brace map or the alternative graphic organizer. You are only focusing on your body paragraphs in this outline.
- Each body paragraph needs 1 topic sentence, 3 supporting details, a minimum of 1 follow up (proof/evidence) per supporting detail, and a closing sentence.

Step 8: Write Your Introduction Paragraph (due _____)

Your persuasive essay will be structured using the 5-paragraph essay format. You will use persuasive language to convince your readers to act, but the structure (intro, body, and conclusion) is the same as we have been working on in class.

Remember your introduction must have:

- 1) Attention Grabbing Lead: The first 1-3 sentences should make the readers want to learn more about your issue. Do not start with dialogue in this type of paper. Consider using an interesting/pertinent question, a startling fact, a quote, or a snapshot/descriptive lead.
- 2) 3-5 sentences to provide necessary background or to connect your attention getter to your thesis.
- 3) Thesis Statement: The next part of the introduction is the thesis statement, which you have already written. This is the LAST sentence in your paragraph.
 - You will BOLD it in your final paper so that it is clearly noticeable.

Sample introductory paragraph:

Regardless of the season, Minnesotans are known around the country as outdoor enthusiasts. They are proud of this fact and don't allow much to stand in the way of enjoying themselves outdoors. For many, the addition of a loud motor, high speeds and a little dirt allow some Minnesotans to be as happy as pigs in mud! ATV riders are just such people and how they have fun has become the source of much debate because some Minnesotans think ATV use is a danger to the environment. Because the future of off-trail ATV use in Minnesota is unclear, the voices of our state riders, Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and environmentalists are clamoring to be heard in our state legislature.

Step 9: Write Your Conclusion Paragraph (due _____)

Your conclusion paragraph should answer the following questions:

- 1) So what? Why was this paper of importance? Summarize key points in your paper.
- 2) Restate your thesis in a slightly different way.
- 3) Return to the theme of your introduction paragraph. Bring your reader full circle. Provide them closure.

Sample Conclusion paragraph

Those representing various viewpoints on off-trail ATV use continue to battle. Riders believe they can reduce impact on Minnesota parks and their budget woes by paying an annual use fee, like Minnesota hunters, to put toward park repair and enhancements. Environmentalists do not want any off-trail riding because of their destructive capacity and history. While the DNR would prefer riders to stick to trails, this group would be willing to charge a license fee and a per-use fee to help offset damage to trails alone. What happens to the Minnesota parks and ATV riders is of a concern to many parties. The state legislator's telephones are sure to be ringing and email boxes dingling with new messages about this issue, but in the end, will ATV riders be happy as pigs in mud or just plain stuck in the mud?

Step 10: Write Your Rough Draft (due _____)

You will now draft your first attempt at the complete paper. This paper needs to include in-text citations, transitions, and a Works Cited page.

- In-Text Referencing: See attached sheet to understand in-text references.
- Use your outline to write your rough draft. It is okay to deviate from your plan if you now see a better way to write it.
- If possible, type this draft so it is easier to edit. If you must handwrite, skip every other line.
- Bold your thesis
- Underline each body paragraph's topic sentence

Step 11: Revise Your Paper and Works Cited and Type Second Drafts of Both (due _____)

- Using the writing stations in class, hand-revise your paper.
- Type your second draft and rename this draft by adding the number 2 after its name (e.g., Issue Research Baltrausch 2.doc).

Step 12: Obtain a Parent/Adult Edit (due _____)

Have a parent or significant adult in your life read your research essay. Ask them to complete the questions below and sign their name.

1) In what ways was my lead catchy and attention grabbing? Does it flow smoothly into my thesis?

2) Was my paper clearly organized and easy to follow? If not, what can I do to improve?

3) Did you detect a bias or did I present both sides of the issue fairly?

4) Could you hear my voice come through my writing? How did my personality come through?

5) Was my paper free of spelling, grammar, punctuation, mechanical, and typographical errors? If no, what were my errors?

6) Did I clearly articulate the problem facing my issue? Did I explain how it affects the people or the land?

7) Did I summarize my main points in my conclusion? Did you hear an answer to the question "So what?"?

Parent Name _____ Parent Signature _____

Step 13:
Type and Turn in Final Draft (due _____)

Use the checklist below to help you get your materials ready to turn in. Put everything in your folder.

You must also turn in the following components:

Note cards _____ (ziplock bag, labeled with name, Geo and LA cores)

Graphic Organizer or Flow Map _____

Rough Draft _____

Typed Second Draft _____

Final Draft _____

Rough Draft of Works Cited _____

Final Typed Works Cited _____