

THE “I-SEARCH” PAPER

PAPER 4

ASSIGNMENT: This paper is designed to teach the writer and the reader something valuable about a chosen topic and about the nature of searching and discovery. As opposed to the standard research paper where a writer usually assumes a detached and objective stance, the “I-Search” paper allows you to relate your experience of hunting for facts and opinions firsthand, and to provide a step-by-step record of the search process. It’s a research paper that is overtly reflective.

APPROXIMATE PAGE REQUIREMENT: 8-10 pages (this does not include a separate Works Cited page).

THEME: Language Awareness

TOPIC: Choose a topic that *truly interests* you related to this semester’s theme of Language Awareness. There are a few limitations, however.

The topic you choose has to be *argumentatively rich*, meaning that there have to be many different viewpoints on the issue.

The topic you choose needs to be something about which you have *little or no prior knowledge*. The idea is to use this I-Search paper as an opportunity to learn something new, not reinforce ideas you already have.

The topic must be *researchable*. How do you know it’s researchable? Peruse one of the general databases (I recommend CQ Researcher) to see if the topic you have chosen has been written about (remember the Information Cycle we learned about? It often takes several years or more before some issues get written about in books and journals).

THE ABSTRACT/PROPOSAL

An abstract is simply a summary of the work or paper that others can use as an overview. It helps your reader to understand the paper and it will help people searching for a particular work to find it and decide whether it suits their purposes. Though abstracts are typically composed after a paper has been written, you will be writing an abstract prior to writing your paper in the form of a proposal. Here are the directions:

After you have chosen a topic and checked to make sure research sources are available, you will type up an abstract, no less than one page and not to exceed two pages (double-spaced) in which you explain *what* your topic is, how you *arrived* at your topic (include a brief explanation of the brainstorming process, including problems and how you overcame them), why you are *interested* in this topic, and what you expect to *learn* from researching this topic. Finally, include a brief description of how you intend to go about searching and writing, including a schedule of self-imposed deadlines.

FORMAT OF THE I-SEARCH PAPER

Your paper should have three distinct sections, as noted below. The three parts of this paper can be organized explicitly (for example, set off with subheadings) or implicitly (as a seamless essay).

PART I: WHAT I KNOW, ASSUME, OR IMAGINE

This section is to be written before conducting formal research. Write a section in which you explain to the reader what you think you know, what you assume, or what you imagine about your topic. For example, if you decide to investigate teenage alcoholism, you might want to offer some ideas about the causes of teenage alcoholism, provide an estimate of the severity of the problem, and create a portrait of a typical teenage drinker prior to conducting research. **Approximate length: 1-2 pages, typed.**

PART II: THE SEARCH

Test your knowledge, assumptions, or conjectures by researching your topic thoroughly. Consult useful books, magazines, newspapers, films, and library databases for information (do not consult “open web” sources for this assignment). If possible, interview people who are authorities or who are familiar with this topic. If you were pursuing a search on teenage alcoholism, you might want to check out a book on the subject, read several pertinent articles in a variety of current magazines, make an appointment to visit an alcohol rehabilitation center, attend a meeting of Alanon or Alcoholics Anonymous, and consult an alcoholism counselor. You might also ask a number of teenagers from different social and/or economic backgrounds what their first exposure to alcohol has been and whether they perceive any alcohol “problem” among their peers.

After collecting information, write about your search in a narrative form (chronologically with specific details) to record the steps of the discovery process. Do not feel obligated to tell everything, but highlight the happenings and facts you uncovered that were crucial to your hunt and contributed to your understanding of the topic. When quoting directly from sources, you must document sources of information using citations when appropriate and necessary. **Approximate length: 4-6 pages, typed.**

PART III: WHAT I DISCOVERED

After concluding your search, compare what you thought you knew, assumed, or imagined with what you actually discovered, and offer some personal commentary and/or draw some conclusions. For instance, after completing your search on teenage alcoholism, you might learn that the problem is far more severe and often begins at an earlier age than you formerly believed. You may have assumed parental neglect was a key factor in the incidence of teenage alcoholism, but now you have found that peer pressure is the primary contributing factor. Consequently, you might want to propose that an alcoholism awareness and prevention program including peer counseling sessions be instituted in the public school system as early as the sixth grade. This part of the paper will also contain citations indicating the information you learned from your sources.

Approximate length: 1-2 pages, typed.

WORKS CITED PAGE AND IN-TEXT CITATIONS

Your I-Search essay will be based on a variety of sources retrieved primarily from the Palomar College library (books, articles, videos). Any electronic sources used must be accessed through library databases and cited accordingly. Sources retrieved directly from the Internet will not be permitted. Additional sources such as personal interviews may be used, depending on availability. All quoted, summarized, or paraphrased material must be

cited parenthetically within the text, using the correct MLA format for in-text citations, and all cited sources must also have a corresponding entry in a separate Works Cited page. Works Cited entries must be formatted according to MLA 7th edition style.

It is required that you create a working bibliography in EasyBib for this paper. A library instruction session (required) will be provided to instruct you in the correct use of this resource.

AUDIENCE

Address your paper to peer-scholars who might be interested in your subject and could be interested in your analysis and/or findings.

RESEARCH PRESENTATION

At the end of the semester, you will present your “findings” to the class in the form of a brief discussion accompanied by a visual display. This aspect of the assignment represents your final exam grade and will be due on the day of your regularly-scheduled final exam.

EVALUATION

I have posted sample student-written I-Search papers from previous classes. These papers represent A-quality work and as such serve as models for you to emulate. Though this is not technically a thesis-driven paper, there should nevertheless be a clear and compelling idea that drives the paper forward and around which the entire essay will be focused. The essay must conform to college-level requirements for coherent, well-developed, analytical essays. I will evaluate your paper based on overall quality of writing, quality of source material, sophistication of analysis of sources, organization of ideas, clarity of expression, as well as general areas such as grammar, spelling, and conventions of documentation.

DEADLINES PAPER 4

- _____ **ABSTRACT/PROPOSAL**
- _____ **LIBRARY INSTRUCTION 1**
- _____ **LIBRARY INSTRUCTION 2**
- _____ **LIBRARY INSTRUCTION 3**
- _____ **ROUGH DRAFT/OPEN WORKSHOP/PEER REVIEW**
- _____ **SAFE ASSIGN ROUGH DRAFT**
- _____ **SAFE ASSIGN FINAL DRAFT (REQUIRED)**
- _____ **FINAL DRAFT**
- _____ **RESEARH PRESENTATION**