

## RESEARCHED FEATURE ARTICLE

**The purposes of this assignment are:** 1) To ask an interesting question 2) To research an interesting question 3) To convince others that your question matters 4) To write with creativity and authority in your response to an inquiry question

**Task:** You will write a researched essay of about 2100-3000 words (7-10 pages double-spaced). This assignment is an exercise in hybrid writing (both narrative and researched-based) that is modeled after the popular genre of the “feature article.” Using a combination of first-person and third-person point-of-view, your essay will be guided by an inquiry question of your own crafting that you present in the beginning of the essay. By the end of your essay, readers should have gained evidence-based insight (if not a complete answer) to your inquiry question. You will use MLA citation (or another academic citation system) and include a **Works Cited**. Using strong “signal phrases” as a form of **in-text citation** is especially important in this genre. Your essay should have a **thought-provoking title** and include a **copyright clean image** (from a site such as Unsplash or your own photo) that illustrates the content of your essay.

## PROJECT STAGES

### Brainstorming:

- **Mine Your Personal Experience:** Your project’s theme should relate to something about which you have a personal narrative. The richer your personal story, the better, though your proximity to the subject about which you write may vary. Please note, however, that this is a public assignment; *do not write about something so personal you would feel uncomfortable with other people reading it*. Your personal narrative serves as an entrée into a broader arena of research. You can mine your hobbies and interests, family history, hometown, personal experiences, etc. for starting points. **Think broadly and creatively**. I am happy to entertain unexpected connections between personal narrative and research theme.
- **Develop a researchable inquiry question.** A good inquiry question will be one that genuinely interests you, but would also interest a broader audience. You should set yourself up to learn something new and gain deeper insight into your inquiry, rather than doing research that merely backs up an already existing opinion. Framing questions in terms of *Why?* or *How?* instead of *for* or *against* will help you develop a good inquiry question. **Managing the scope of your question** will be very important to writing a successful essay.

**Study Model Essays:** During this unit, we’ll be reading the following essays from *Fresh Writing* in order to study narrative and research techniques, rhetorical moves, and structures:

- “The Fifty-First Star: A Story of the Puerto Rican Exodus” by Carolina Morena
- “Public Education: How the Government is Failing Its Citizens” by Conlan Jarvis
- “Signing Their Lives Away” by Mary Killeen McCans
- “Peng! Chow! Hu!” by Skye Deng

**Do Research:** Credible sources might include academic/peer-reviewed articles or studies, organizational or think tank reports, books or chapters, organizational websites, and popular sources of credible and traceable origin. *If you would like to conduct an interview, please consult with me first*. Use your sources holistically (read the whole thing!) rather than simply grabbing a statistic or a short quotation. While I encourage exploratory research in the beginning of your process, you will need to weed out the less credible sources as you refine your inquiry. Do not include sources unless you are clear about who wrote and published them (i.e., weed out random websites). Consider your sources in connection with one another as you answer your inquiry question. Most successful papers will include 8-12 sources.

**Write an Annotated Bibliography (5 core sources):** Cite and annotate your five most important sources in MLA format (or the citation system you are using). Below each citation, write a bibliographic entry with bullets that briefly answer the following questions:

- **Who** wrote it? Not just the name of the author, but their area of expertise. Are they a journalist, a blogger, or a chemist? Evaluate why they are a credible author and note any reservations you may have about their credibility.
- **What** did the author say? Summarize the source's content and argument.
- **When** was the source published? Ask yourself if this source is still current. Some sources stay relevant for a long time, while others do not. Note how the publication date affects your reading and interpretation of this source.
- **Where** was it published? A lot of source credibility rests on the standards of publication for a particular source. Was this source peer-reviewed? Was it published in venue that adheres to standard journalistic ethics? Is the source associated with an organization or a think tank, etc.
- **Why** was it written and for whom? Analyze the author's motivations and intended audience. What is the purpose of this article and for whom does it seem to be written?
- **How** will you use this source in your paper? What connection does it have to other sources?

**Develop a Structure as You Draft:**

An outline for the **structure** of a researched feature article *might* look something like this:

1. First-person: an anecdote or first part of the story as the article's lead
2. Bigger picture: an overview and framing statement of the inquiry question. Introduction of research.
3. First-person: the next scene or segment of your story, foregrounding the connection to the bigger picture
4. Bigger picture: development of the question, including more interesting research you've found
5. First-person: an additional scene or story that gets at another complicated aspect of the bigger picture...more integration of research, etc.
6. Bigger picture: the take-away, perhaps in the form of a reflection on your story, as a conclusion

**Write, Get Feedback & Revise:** Because of the hybrid nature of this genre, your writing process may not proceed as linearly as some other kinds of research papers. Therefore, **I encourage to start writing right away; begin writing your personal narrative and laying out why you and others have a stake in answering your inquiry question.** Let your initial interest and writing guide your research; then, allow yourself to be influenced by your research and write some more. Your inquiry question is likely to evolve as you continue your research. Take into account the feedback you receive from your peers, instructor, and perhaps a Writing Center tutor as you write and revise.