Research Questions

The purpose of research or essential questions is to guide your research by focusing your effort on key elements of a topic. Research questions are used to narrow the scope of your research so you are not overwhelmed by the available information. They also help during note taking by providing a way to organize your facts into a logical sequence.

Today you are going to write 4-5 of your own research questions. Please keep in mind the following as you write your questions:

What is NOT a research/essential question?
1. It is NOT a question that can be answered with a yes or no.
2. It is NOT a question that can be answered in one sentence.

A research/essential question IS:
1. It IS a question that guides your research.
2. It IS a question that will give your research a frame and a focus.
3. It IS clear and concise—or short and sweet.
4. It IS a question that tells your audience what your project will address.
5. It IS a question that has no single “right” answer.

How do I write research/essential question?
1. Use the key words: how, what impact, what effect/affect, why, if, etc.
2. Use words that make sense to you
3. Remember that you might need to revise your question if it doesn’t make sense.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample “Bad” Research Questions:</th>
<th>Sample “Good” Research Questions:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• What was the Holocaust?</td>
<td>• What were the causes of the Holocaust?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• When was the Holocaust?</td>
<td>• How did the Holocaust affect its victims, its perpetrators, and the international community?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Who was involved in the Holocaust?</td>
<td>• Why did it take so long to stop the Holocaust?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
NAME: ______________________________________________________

Research Topic: ________________________________________________

Research Questions:
1. ____________________________________________________________
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Background Questions
As you write your research questions, you may realize that there is some general background information that you need to understand before you can find answers for these complex questions. **Background questions usually answer Who? What? Where? or When?**

For example: If I am researching the Holocaust, I probably need to understand what the Holocaust is before I can research what caused it. Use the box below to list any background questions you have about your topic. (You may have only 1 or 2 or you may have several and that is okay!) PLEASE WRITE THEM DOWN.