

# Research Assignment Ideas

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## Tips for creating successful research assignments

### Be specific about your expectations.

- Specify what type of resources students should be using (popular or scholarly, primary or secondary).
- Be clear where students should do their research (library resources, original research, websites).
- Designate the number of resources students should consult (and what types).

### Follow student process and progress.

- Assign projects early in the semester to allow ample research time.
- Help students adjust the project to make it more searchable (i.e. broaden it, narrow it, shift the focus).
- Make the bibliography one of the first assignments to review sources early.
- Have students create a research log to track their progress and describe their investigation
- Talk about appropriate information sources in class (i.e. why not to cite Wikipedia as a source).

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## Examples of Research Assignments

### Starting the Research Process

Using library resources, choose two credible types of information (articles, websites, encyclopedia entries, books, etc.) that will be useful to you in answering questions about your topic. Explain why you chose them. Then, write a one-page summary of these two articles and why they will be helpful in your research. Be sure to use proper in-text citation and create a

complete citation at the end.

### **Finding Sources and Completing Citations**

Identify several library resources (article, eBook, book in the library catalog) and provide students with a partial citation for each. Students then must locate the sources on the library website to gather the rest of the information in order to complete the citation. This assignment helps them practice finding sources through the library, as well as citation practice.

### **Primary Sources vs. Secondary Sources**

Locate two resources on a topic of your choice. One must be a primary source; one must be a secondary source. Then, describe the documents including three things the author said that you think are important, why you think the document was written, and what evidence in the document helps you know why it was written. In a few sentences, describe the main differences between these two sources, and why each is useful when researching this topic.

### **Follow That Lead!**

Locate a news article on your topic using either a local newspaper or an online news source. In a few sentences, describe the major theme of the article, including important keywords and phrases. Use those keywords and phrases to research the story in one of the Hartness Library news databases, such as [NewsBank](#) , [LexisNexis Academic](#) or the [Custom Newspapers](#) collection.

### **Popular vs. Peer-Reviewed Articles**

Find an article from a newspaper or popular magazine, such as *Newsweek*, *Time*, or *People*. Then locate a peer-reviewed article on that topic from Hartness Library's

[Academic OneFile](#)

database. Describe the difference between popular and peer-reviewed articles.

### **Opinion vs. Fact**

Review one pro/con argument on your topic using the [Opposing Viewpoints](#) database at the Hartness Library. How does a viewpoint article compare to an academic journal article? A primary source?

### **Research Detective**

Provide students with a popular or magazine article which refers to original research in an academic journal article - contact a librarian for assistance locating examples of such articles. Have students locate the original research findings on which this article is based. Describe the difference between the popular article and the original research. How accurate is the popular article? Does it summarize the research correctly or is it biased?

### **Research Log**

Create a research log! Document where you found information for your assignment, describe the resources you find (content, author, scope, date of publication) and why you chose to include them. Plan to share your research log in class.

### **History Sleuth**

Use the Hartness Library's [historical New York Times database](#) to research your topic. Find

one article on your topic from a [current New York Times article](#) (2005-2010) and one from the past. How do they differ? What is the earliest date for a *New York Times* article on your topic? Why?

### **Author and Book Review**

After reading [book title], look up more information about the author in the Hartness Library's [Literary Reference Center](#) and