Step 1: Identify Your Topic and Develop an Inquiry Question

By teaching and modeling strategies that will allow students to brainstorm topics of interest, narrow down their ideas, and develop inquiry questions, you ensure that students can formulate focused, researchable questions that lead to analysis of historical events and issues. You can choose from the strategies below to meet the learning needs of your students.

Brainstorm Topics	
Interest Inventory Independent time to brainstorm allows students to explore their own interests and reflect on their personal connections to a topic. This helps them identify potential topics that are meaningful and engaging to them. ▪ Students start by generating a list of hobbies, subjects, current events, or personal experiences they find interesting. ▪ Next, students reflect on how these interests might connect to broader themes or questions for a research project.	**Round-Robin Brainstorming** This strategy encourages creative thinking and helps students discover new angles or areas of interest they might not have considered on their own. ▪ In small groups, students take turns sharing potential topics. ▪ Each student adds to or comments on the ideas of others, helping to refine and expand on the suggestions. ▪ Alternatively, you can set a timer and have students write their ideas down. When the timer goes off, students exchange papers with other members of the group for additions or comments. Repeat this process until all group members have reviewed one another's ideas.
Assessment for Learning ▪ Students are ready to move on to the next step when they can: ▪ Generate a list of diverse and relevant topics of personal interest. ▪ Consider personal interests, current events, or historical issues to inspire possible topics. ▪ Explain why they are interested in a topic and what they would like to learn more about.	

Narrow Down Your Ideas

Mind Mapping

This visual method allows students to see connections and explore various aspects of a topic. This helps them to narrow down their focus for a research project and generate more authentic, relevant questions for their inquiry projects.

- Students start by choosing a topic they're interested in.
- Next, branch out with related ideas, questions, or subtopics.
- Then, have students review their mind map to identify an area of particular interest they would like to explore.

Note: If students are deciding between more than one topic, they can create a mind map of each topic to help them narrow their focus to a single idea.

The Goldilocks Test

Once students have chosen a topic, they need to narrow it down to ensure that it is manageable (not too broad) and researchable (not too narrow). To make sure their topic is "just right", student can apply the Goldilocks test by asking themselves the following questions:

- *Too Broad* - Can the topic be summarized in one word, cover a large time period, region, or too many aspects of an event?
- *Too Narrow* - Are there enough credible sources that allow you to research the topic, or does it only address a single, very specific detail?
- *Just Right* - Is there enough available information and different perspectives, but the topic is still focused enough to be explored in depth within the inquiry's scope?

Note: You can provide examples of topics that are too broad, too narrow, and just right to help students understand the differences. E.g.:

- *Too Broad:* World War II
- *Too Narrow:* The experience of my great-grandmother who served in the Royal Canadian Army Medical Corps on D-Day, June 6, 1944
- *Just Right:* The contributions of Canadian nurses to the war effort during World War II

Assessment for Learning

Students are ready to move on to the next step when they can:

- Evaluate their list of topics to identify those that are specific, manageable, and researchable.
- Use criteria (e.g., availability of source, relevance, personal connection) to eliminate topics that are too broad or too narrow.
- Articulate a focused version of their topic that will allow for exploration and analysis.

Develop an Inquiry Question

Question Starters

If students draft a "closed question" that is a yes/no factual question, they can revise it to a more complex question that invites inquiry using question starters. This strategy also works for students who are trying to determine what aspect of an event they would like to explore further.

- Present an example of a "closed" question. (e.g., Did World War I affect Canadian women?)
- Provide question starters like *how, what, why, to what extent, and in what ways.*
- In partners or small groups, have students use the question starters to draft different versions of the question. E.g., In what ways did World War II affect Canadian women? How did World War I change women's roles in Canada?
- Once students have practiced, you can have them use the question starters to draft questions in relation to their own topics.

Adding Specifics

If students draft a question that is too broad, they can use the 5Ws to make the question more specific and manageable.

- Students draft their initial question (e.g., How did colonialism affect people in Canada?).
- Students use the 5Ws to add details to their questions:
  - *Who* were the main groups affected?
  - *What* were the most significant effects?
  - *When* did significant changes happen?
  - *Where* in the country were people most affected?
  - *Why* did it impact so many people?
- Students may need to do some preliminary research to find answers that will help them refine their questions.
- Students add details to their question based on their findings. E.g., How did the Canadian government's attempts to assimilate Indigenous peoples through the Shubenacadie Residential School affect the Mi'kmaq (1930 - 1967)?

Assessment for Learning

Students are ready to move on to the next step when they can:

- Turn their focused topic into an open-ended question that invites investigation and analysis.
- Use strategies to formulate a question that promotes critical thinking and research.
- Revise their question to ensure it is clear, focused, and aligned with the scope of the historical inquiry.

Step 2: Conduct Preliminary Research

Showing students how to conduct preliminary research allows them to gather background information on their topic, and make further revisions to their inquiry question as necessary. This is an opportunity to model for students how to look for different types of sources (historical documents, oral histories, etc.) depending on their area of focus. You can choose from the strategies below to meet the learning needs of your students.

Gather Background Information

Use Tertiary Sources	Review Secondary Sources
To help students develop the background knowledge that will provide context to guide more detailed research, you can direct them to tertiary sources (encyclopedias/Wikipedia, textbooks etc.) to establish a baseline understanding of their topic. Using tertiary sources, students identify key terms, events, and figures related to their topic. Next, students create a summary or list of information most relevant to the inquiry question. Students highlight information that will require further investigation in relation to their topic.	As part of their research, students should review a variety of secondary sources. These sources provide analysis and interpretation of a historical event, helping students better understand how their topic has been discussed by historians and other scholars. ▪ Students search for academic articles or books using databases like JSTOR, Google Scholar, or the school library. ▪ Next, students create summaries of the source's main argument or perspective. ▪ Students review their summaries to identify common themes, debates, or gaps in relation to their topic.

Assessment for Learning
Students are ready to move on to the next step when they can:
- Provide a clear overview of the topic, based on preliminary research, including key events, figures, and historical context.
- Phrase background information in their own words, rather than copying directly from a source.
- Give examples of areas for further investigation or questions that have emerged as part of their preliminary research.

Determine Your Research Methods

Research Method Brainstorming Workshop

To ensure that students are locating sources that will be relevant to their topic and examine different aspects and perspectives, engage students in brainstorming with peer and teacher feedback.

- Briefly introduce various research methods (e.g., document analysis, oral history interviews, content analysis, statistical analysis).
- Have students record their inquiry questions and initial thoughts on potential methods.
- In small groups, students share their questions and the group brainstorms different methods and discusses the suitability of each.
- Students can then create a brief proposal of the types of research they plan to conduct to respond to their question for teacher feedback.

Research Method Mapping

You can model how to break down the components of an inquiry question to choose the best method(s) for research.

- Ask students to respond to the following in relation to their inquiry question:
  - What type of question is it? (E.g., analytical, comparative, etc.)
  - List the types of sources available. (e.g., government documents, personal letters, newspapers, stats, etc.)
  - For each type of source listed, note the possible research methods (e.g., content analysis for newspapers, thematic analysis for interviews, etc.)
- Have students compare their responses with others doing similar kinds of topics or questions. They can discuss their responses and add to their lists if appropriate.

Assessment for Learning

Students are ready to move on to the next step when they can:

- Explain the connections between their inquiry questions, the types of sources they will use, and the chosen methods.

Step 3: Locate Primary and Secondary Sources

Teaching students how to locate possible sources that are valid and reliable involves helping them learn to consider the author's purpose in creating a source, the accuracy of the information, and to identify bias in the sources they are exploring. You can choose from the strategies below to meet the learning needs of your students.

Find Relevant Sources

Source Discovery Workshop Giving students time to practice finding and identifying different types of sources helps them to grow their understanding of how to locate sources that will be relevant to their inquiry questions. ■ Begin with a brief mini lesson on distinguishing between primary and secondary sources and where to find them. ■ Divide students into pairs or small groups and assign each group a sample topic. Each group must locate one primary and one secondary source using school library resources or online databases. ■ Ask each group to present their sources to the class, explaining how they found them and why they are relevant to their assigned topic.	**Bibliography Mining** Students can use bibliographies or works cited lists from existing secondary sources to locate more primary and secondary sources that are relevant to their topics. ■ Have students start with a credible secondary source that is relevant to their topic. Show them how to locate the bibliography or reference page. ■ Model how to scan the bibliography for relevant sources by highlighting key aspects to look for: ■ Titles that directly relate to the inquiry question or topic ■ References for primary sources ■ Works cited multiple times (indicating their importance) ■ Have students locate the new sources they have identified.

Assessment for Learning
Students are ready to move on to the next step when they can:
■ Locate primary and secondary sources relevant to their inquiry question.

Evaluate Sources - Relevance and Reliability

Relevance Rubric

It's important that students learn to identify sources that are relevant to their specific topic and inquiry question. Providing a structured approach to evaluate the relevance of a source ensures that students are using only the most appropriate sources.

- Provide a rubric with criteria such as:
  - *Direct relevance:* Does the source directly address the inquiry question, or a specific aspect of it?
  - *Scope:* Does the source cover the time period, geographic area, or specific issue relevant to the question?
  - *Depth:* Does the source provide enough detailed information, or is it too general or too specialized?
- Ask students to score each of their sources on the rubric, keeping a record of sources that are most relevant to their questions for further exploration.

Reliability Checklist

Students need to consider the reliability of the information found in sources they plan to use as part of their inquiry. By focusing on the accuracy and dependability of the information, students can ensure their response will be supported by dependable sources.

- Provide students with a checklist with criteria to consider when assessing reliability such as:
  - Does the source provide clear evidence for its claims? (e.g., data, citations, primary sources)
  - Is the source up-to-date and does it reflect current research or understanding of the topic?
  - Is the source free of errors?
  - Does the source show a balanced perspective on the topic?
- Have the students apply the checklist to each source and summarize their findings, keeping a record of the reliable sources that they can use to support their inquiry.

Assessment for Learning

Students are ready to move on to the next step when they can:

- Explain how the source directly related to their inquiry question or topic
- Identify whether the source supports its claims with valid evidence
- Evaluate whether the information in the source is consistent with other reliable sources on the topic
- Identify any factual inaccuracies or errors within the source

Evaluate Sources - Credibility

Author and Publisher Analysis

Students can assess the credibility of a source by focusing on the author's and/or publisher's qualifications and reputation in relation to the topic.

- Model evaluating the credibility of a source using the following questions:
  - o Who is the author? What are their qualifications or expertise related to the topic?
  - o Does the author have connections that might influence their perspective?
  - o Where was the source published? Is it a peer-reviewed journal, a reputable book publisher, or a credible website?
- Have students repeat the process for each source they evaluate, discarding sources that do not have credibility.

Background Check

Students can go beyond the source itself to establish credibility by conducting quick background research on the author and publisher.

- Provide students with examples of additional information that would help to verify an author's or publisher's credibility. E.g.,
  - o *Author:* academic degrees, professional positions, history of publications on the topic
  - o *Publisher:* university press, scholarly journal, reputable news outlet
- Have students conduct research on the author/publisher.
- Have students record a brief research note, explaining why they believe the source is or isn't credible based on their research.

Assessment for Learning

Students are ready to move on to the next step when they can:

- Accurately assess the author's qualifications, including their expertise, affiliations, and reputation in the field
- Evaluate the publisher, including reputation and editorial standards
- Determine whether the source has undergone peer review or adheres to scholarly standards (for academic sources)

Evaluate Sources - Bias

Note to teachers: When teaching students to investigate sources for bias, it is important for them to understand that depending on the topic and inquiry question, biases that reflect historical perspectives may be relevant to include in their responses. E.g., if a student is investigating the factors that led to the creation of the Indian Residential School system in Canada, primary sources that reflect the biases of key figures like Duncan Campbell Scott can be used to establish the historical perspectives that were influential within government at the time.

Purpose and Perspective Check

To consider potential biases in a source, it's important for students to learn to recognize how the purpose and intended audience of a source can shape its content.

- Choose a source and model working through the following questions (Note - you may wish to model the questions in relation to a few different types of sources (e.g., expository text and persuasive text to highlight the differences):
  - What is the purpose of the source? (e.g., to inform, persuade, entertain, etc.)
  - Who is the intended audience?
  - Is there any evidence of one-sided language, or lack of balanced viewpoints?
  - Are there any viewpoints that are not supported by evidence?
- Have students practice the strategy with their own sources, noting any potential biases or perspectives that could influence the information presented.

Cross-Referencing

No single source can provide a complete picture of a historical event. By reviewing a variety of sources, students can begin to identify perspectives or biases in the information.

- Students with the source they wish to evaluate.
- Next, students find at least two other credible sources that cover the same topic.
- In a comparison chart, students can note:
  - Key arguments or claims in each source.
  - Any information included or omitted across sources that is relevant to their topic.
  - Any differences in tone, language, or perspective.

Assessment for Learning

Students are ready to move on to the next step when they can:

- Identify the purpose of the source and any perspective or bias that may influence the way information is presented
- Recognize and explain any significant omissions or undue emphasis that indicate bias in the source
- Assess whether the sources present a balanced view by considering multiple perspectives or whether it is skewed to one viewpoint

Evaluate Sources - Bringing it all together

Note to teachers: Once students have had time to practice identifying relevance, reliability, credibility, and bias in the sources they located, they can use one of the strategies below to do a more comprehensive evaluation of a source.

PROMPT Checklist

It's important that students use credible sources to support the responses to their inquiry questions. Once students have located relevant primary and secondary sources, you can teach them how to evaluate their sources for validity, accuracy, reliability and bias.

- Introduce the acronym PROMPT (PROMPT stands for Provenance, Relevance, Objectivity, Method, Presentation, and Timeliness).
- Model posing the following questions in relation to a source to help determine if it is appropriate to an inquiry question:
  - Provenance: Who produced the information and why?
  - Relevance: Does it relate to your research question?
  - Objectivity: Is the information presented in an unbiased way?
  - Method: How was the information gathered and presented?
  - Presentation: Is the information well organized and clearly presented?
  - Timeliness: Is the information current and still valid?
- Ask students to repeat the process with the sources they have gathered, discarding those that don't meet the criteria.

Peer Review of Source Evaluations

When students are learning to evaluate sources, a peer review session where students evaluate each other's sources and provide feedback can be helpful to clarify their thinking around sources they are considering.

- Have each student choose two of their sources and write a short evaluation based on the criteria provided (relevance, reliability, credibility, and bias).
- Pair students up and have them exchange their source evaluations. Each student should review their peer's work, checking the source's credibility and the thoroughness of the evaluation.
- After the review, students provide written or verbal feedback, suggesting any improvements or additional considerations.

Assessment for Learning

Students are ready to move on to the next step when they can:

- Accurately and thoroughly evaluate the source based on its relevance, reliability, credibility, and bias.

Begin Your Bibliography

Digital Research Log

Having students maintain a digital research log where they can keep track of their sources, summaries, and preliminary evaluations as they find them make it easier to manage their sources and develop their bibliography.

- Create a shared document or spreadsheet template where students can record the following for each source:
  o Source citation.
  o Type of source (primary or secondary).
  o A brief summary or key points from the source.
  o Notes on how the source might be useful.
- Encourage students to update their research log regularly as they find new sources.
- Review students' research logs at key points to provide feedback on their choice of sources.

Annotated Bibliography Mini-Lesson

Students need to learn how to organize their sources and think critically about how each one contributes to their research.

- Provide a mini lesson on the format and purpose of an annotated bibliography. You may wish to include a template for students to follow.
- Have students practice by creating annotated entries for two sources they have already found. Each entry should include:
  o Full citation in the required format (e.g., MLA, APA).
  o A brief summary of the source.
  o A brief explanation of how the source will be useful for their research.
- Provide feedback on these initial entries before students continue with the rest of their bibliography.

Assessment for Learning

Students are ready to move on to the next step when they can:

- Cite sources correctly using a citation style with minimal errors
- Provide a brief annotation for each source, including a summary and key information relevant to the research

Step 4: Analyse Perspectives and Formulate a Thesis Statement

Teaching students how to identify various perspectives in relation to their topic helps them to develop their own perspectives and support them with evidence. It also provides them with opportunities to think critically about their topic to form an effective thesis statement. You can choose from the strategies below to meet the learning needs of your students.

Consider Different Perspectives

Perspective Analysis

When students organize and compare different viewpoints, it makes it easier for them to understand the complexity of their topic.

- Ask students to identify different perspectives or points of view found in their research.
- Ask them to create a chart with a column for each perspective, including categories such as:
  - *Perspective:* Whose perspective is it? (E.g., government, Indigenous peoples, women, etc.)
  - *Source and Context:* Which source presents this perspective, and what is the context of the source?
  - *Main Argument:* What is the main argument or stance of this perspective?
  - *Evidence:* What evidence does the source use to support this perspective?
- Ask students to fill in the chart using perspectives from their sources. Then, they can reflect on the different perspectives and how they might contribute to their thinking on the topic.

Perspective Web

When students can visualize the perspectives related to their topics, it helps them see connections and contradictions between different viewpoints.

- Describe or show an example of a perspective web, highlighting how to represent different perspectives, their sources, and their connections.
- Provide students with a large piece of paper or digital platform. Students can add their topic to the center and add each perspective they have found in their research.
- Students can add supporting information for each perspective such as: the source, main argument, and evidence.
- Students can use lines, colours, shapes, etc. to show relationships, contradictions, or influences.
- If students are investigating similar topics, they can share their webs in small groups, discussing the different viewpoints they have mapped out.

Assessment for Learning

Students are ready to move on to the next step when they can:

- Identify and explain different perspectives related to their topic
- Make clear connections between the perspectives and their inquiry topic

Formulate Your Thesis

Thesis Statement Workshop

Providing students with a structured process to develop and refine their thesis statements helps to ensure that statements are clear, specific and can be supported by evidence.

- Begin with a mini lesson on the components of a strong thesis statement (e.g., a strong thesis is clear and specific, takes a position, and provides a "roadmap" for the argument).
- Provide examples of weak and strong thesis statements, and have students discuss what makes a thesis effective.
- Have students draft a thesis statement based on their research to date.
- In pairs or small groups, students exchange statements and provide feedback based on the criteria.
- Students revise their statements based on feedback.

Reverse Outline

Students can identify the main arguments and evidence they have gathered first and then craft a thesis statement by organizing their evidence and identifying a central argument.

- Have students create an outline of their research notes, listing the main points and supporting evidence.
- Ask students to group related ideas together and identify common themes or arguments that emerge.
- Using their themes guide students in drafting a thesis statement that captures the main argument of their research.
- After drafting, students can share their thesis statements with a partner or small group for feedback.

Assessment for Learning

Students are ready to move on to the next step when they can:

- Draft a thesis that is clear, specific, and directly answers the inquiry question
- Draft a thesis that presents a debatable argument or claim

Step 5: Organize and Synthesize Your Research

As students progress with the research process, they need a variety of strategies they can use to organize and synthesize the information they find to develop a clear and logical justification in response to their inquiry questions. You can choose from the strategies below to meet the learning needs of your students.

Organize Your Information	
Thematic Outline This strategy helps students to group their research logically and ensures that their response is organized in a way that clearly supports their thesis. ▪ On a blank page, students list their main arguments or key themes, with space between each. ▪ Under each main argument, students list their supporting evidence (e.g., quotes, statistics, examples) from their research. ▪ Ask them to think about the best order to present these themes in their final project, numbering them to indicate the sequence. Note: Many writers will save the strongest point to last, and either put the weakest point first, or "sandwich" it between two stronger arguments. ▪ For each theme, students should consider a transition sentence that links it to the next theme.	**Argument Map** Visual strategies help students see the logical structure of their arguments and ensure that all points are directly supporting their thesis. ▪ Provide students with a large piece of paper or digital platform. ▪ In the center, students write their thesis statement and create branches for each main argument or point they want to make. ▪ For each branch, they add sub-branches with pieces of evidence that support that argument. ▪ Ask students to reflect on their map to consider the order of their arguments and if any areas need stronger evidence.
Assessment for Learning Students are ready to move on to the next step when they can: ▪ Organize their evidence into clear, logical categories in relation to their thesis. ▪ Create a clear and coherent outline that presents arguments in a logical order. ▪ Use transition statements to clearly indicate how one argument or theme leads to the next	

Support Your Argument

Evidence Evaluation

In developing the response to their inquiry question, students need to critically assess the evidence they gather to ensure they use only the most robust and relevant information to support their arguments.

- Provide students with a graphic organizer with columns labeled: Argument, Evidence, Source, Notes
- For each argument, students consider the evidence they have and the number of sources that they can use to support their argument.
- In the "Notes" column, students reflect on whether they need additional evidence, if any evidence is weak, or if they should discard certain pieces.
- After completing the chart, students can prioritize their strongest evidence for use in their response.

Evidence Integration

Students need to practice incorporating evidence into their work clearly, persuasive, and supports their arguments.

- Provide students with a paragraph that integrates a piece of evidence effectively, including a lead-in sentence, the evidence itself (e.g., a quote or statistic), and an analysis sentence that connects the evidence to the argument.
- Have students choose a piece of their own evidence and write a paragraph following the same structure including:
  o A lead-in sentence that introduces the context or source of the evidence.
  o The evidence (properly cited).
  o An analysis sentence explaining how the evidence supports their argument.
- Students can peer review each other's paragraphs and suggest improvements if needed.

Assessment for Learning

Students are ready to move on to the next step when they can:

- Use evidence from credible and reliable sources to support each argument in their response
- Incorporate evidence representing different perspectives on the topic
- Integrate evidence effectively to support their argument

Refine Your Bibliography

Source Justification

As students progress with developing their response, it's important that they review their bibliographies and remove sources that are not directly useful to their response.

- Ask students to review their main arguments and supporting evidence.
- Next, students review their working bibliographies and indicate which sources they have used to support their arguments.
- Students strike through or remove sources they did not use and review the bibliography again to ensure they have sufficient sources to support their argument.

Annotated Bibliography Peer Review

Students can get feedback from their peers to make sure their bibliography is well-curated and aligned with their inquiry topic.

- Have students exchange their annotated bibliographies and inquiry questions with a peer.
- Provide a checklist for review such as:
  - Are the sources directly relevant to the inquiry question?
  - Has the student explained how each source contributes to their response?
  - Are there any sources that seem unnecessary, or could they be replaced by stronger ones?
- After the review, students revise their bibliography based on the feedback received, either adding new sources or removing unnecessary ones.

Assessment for Learning

Students are ready to move on to the next step when they can:

- Refine their bibliography to include those only directly relevant to their response
- Ensure that all citations are complete and up to date

Extension: Using Historical Thinking Concepts

Once students have drafted and revised their question, they may need to make further revisions as they gather their information and begin to organize their argument. They can use historical thinking concepts to consider various ways they can formulate their question. For example:

Topic: The role of the No. 2 Construction Battalion and the rights of African Canadians in World War I

- **Historical Significance:** What impact did the contributions of the No. 2 Construction Battalion have on challenging racial discrimination and creating opportunities for African Canadians within the Canadian Expeditionary Force?
- **Continuity and Change:** To what extent did the contributions of No. 2 Construction Battalion lead to changes in the Canadian military's recruitment practices during and after World War I?
- **Cause and Consequence:** What factors led to the creation of the No. 2 Construction Battalion during World War I, and how did these changes affect African Canadians in the military?