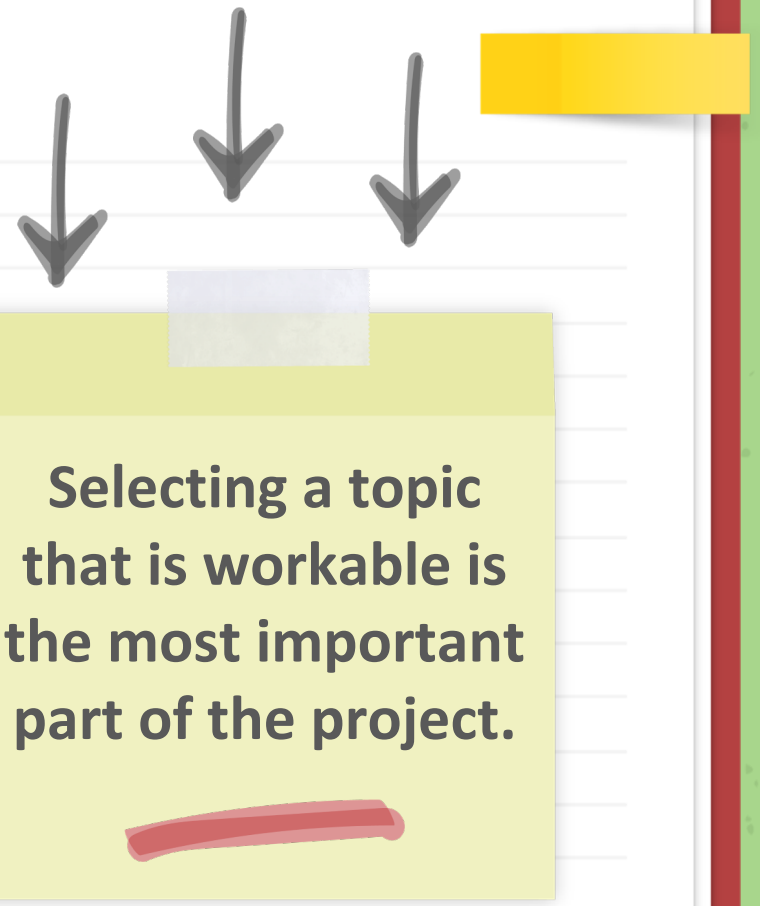
Lesson 1.3 Researching History

Discover Our Past

World History

Planning Your Project

- The first step in a history research project is to identify your topic.
- A topic should not be too broad (The Middle Ages) or too narrow (Middlebury, England, 1535).
- To test your topic, try looking it up in an encyclopedia.
- If there is no entry for your topic, it may be too small.
- If there are many entries, or a very long entry, the topic may be too large.



Planning Your Project

- After you choose a topic, you need to decide what you want to learn about it.
- Create six questions to help you find out *who, what, when, where, why,* and *how*.
- Then write each question at the top of a note card.
- These cards will become your research tools.
- You may need to add additional cards as you research.

Planning Your Project
Choosing Research Material

- After selecting a topic and creating your question cards, the next step is to gather your research materials.
- Begin with a general reference book, such as encyclopedias and textbooks, or your notes from class.
- Next, try looking for books about your subject at the library.
- Your research material must be nonfiction, rather than fiction or persuasive writing.

Planning Your Project
Distinguishing Fact from Opinion

- Scan each possible source to determine if the source is trustworthy.
- Look for opinion statements in the text.
- This will give you a clue that a resource could be biased or untrustworthy.
- Remember, a statement of fact expresses only what can be proven by evidence.
- A statement of opinion expresses an attitude.

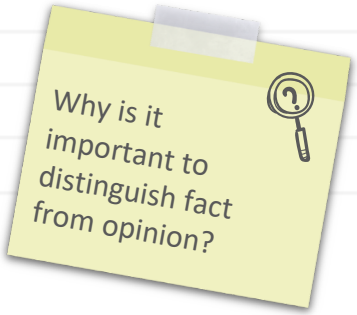
Planning Your Project
Distinguishing Fact from Opinion

- A statement of opinion expresses an attitude.
- It is a conclusion or judgement about something that cannot be proven true or false.

Historical research should rely on on facts and primary sources rather than opinions.

Planning Your Project
Making Notes

- As you find information, make a note about it on your cards.
- Your notes should be in your own words and in complete sentences.
- On the back of each card, make notes about the books in which you find the information.



Researching on the Internet

- Looking for information on the Internet is quick and rewarding.
- However, it can be a challenge to find out if the information you locate is true.
- Good historians follow a few important guidelines as they gather information.

Researching on the Internet: Authorship

- Many articles on the Internet are unsigned.
- A reader has no way of knowing who wrote the content and whether the author is an expert on the subject.
- However, reliable articles will be signed by well-known experts on the subject.
- The authors will include details about their **credentials**, or evidence that they are experts.

- There are other ways to decide if an article is worth using for research.
- You can look at the homepage for the article.
- If the article is on the site of a university, government office, or museum, it is probably reliable.
- For example, suppose. You find a signed article about the foods eaten by American colonists.
- You find that the article is published by an academic journal at a university.
- You can assume that this page is a better source than an unsigned article about the same subject by a blogger on a cooking Web site.

Researching on the Internet: Web URLs

- A uniform resource locator, or **URL**, is the address of an online resource.
- The ending on a URL tells a great deal about the content.

.edu

- educational institution
- pride themselves on accuracy
- documents may contain opinions in addition to facts

.gov

- most likely government
- probably accurate **data**
- usually up to date

.org

- Nonprofit organization
- May be very accurate
- Often gather information to support their cause
- May contain biased information
- Often contains opinions

Internet Tips

If you answer NO to any of the questions below, the Web page or Web site is probably not a reliable resource.

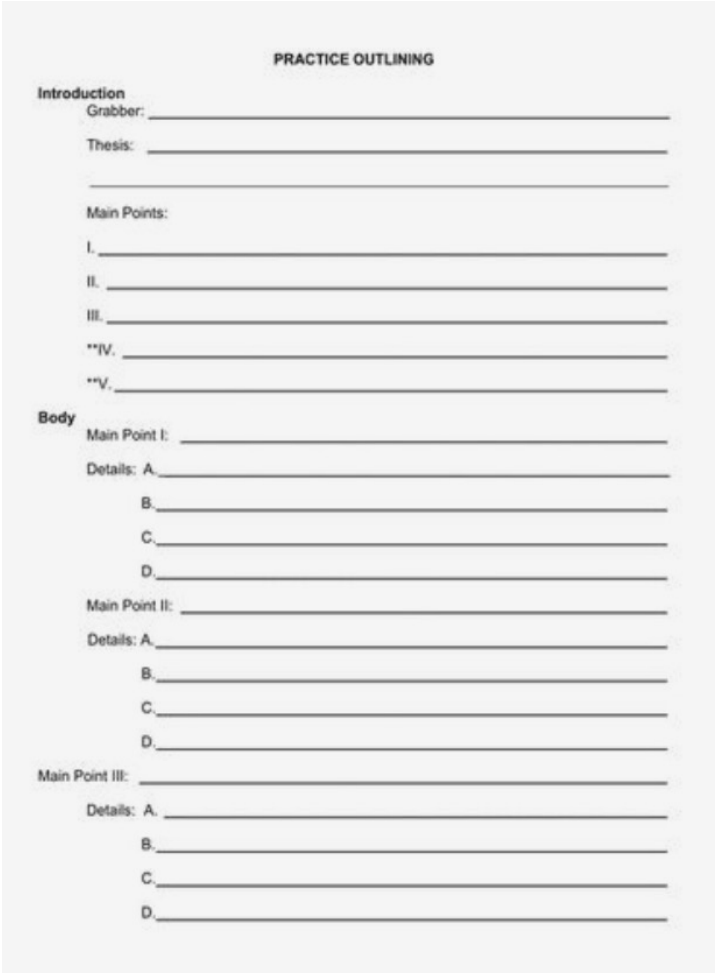
- Is the authorship of the article clear?
- Can you easily find out who is responsible for the Website?
- Has the Web page been updated recently?
- Does the writing seem balanced, or does it contain a bias toward on point of view?

Outline

- You have gathered information and answered the questions on your note cards.
- Then organize your cards into categories.
- Once your cards are sorted, you can use them as an outline for writing your research paper.

Writing Without Bias

- You have chosen a good topic.
- You have created your question cards and used them while reading encyclopedia articles and library books.
- You have also used your cards while reviewing reliable Internet resources about your topic.
- You have turned the answers on your question cards into an outline.
- Now you are ready to write your research report.
- As you work, be aware of some important guidelines for writing about history.



PRACTICE OUTLINING

Introduction

Grabber: _____

Thesis: _____

_____

Main Points:

I. _____

II. _____

III. _____

**IV. _____

**V. _____

Body

Main Point I: _____

Details: A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

D. _____

Main Point II: _____

Details: A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

D. _____

Main Point III: _____

Details: A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

D. _____

Writing Without Bias

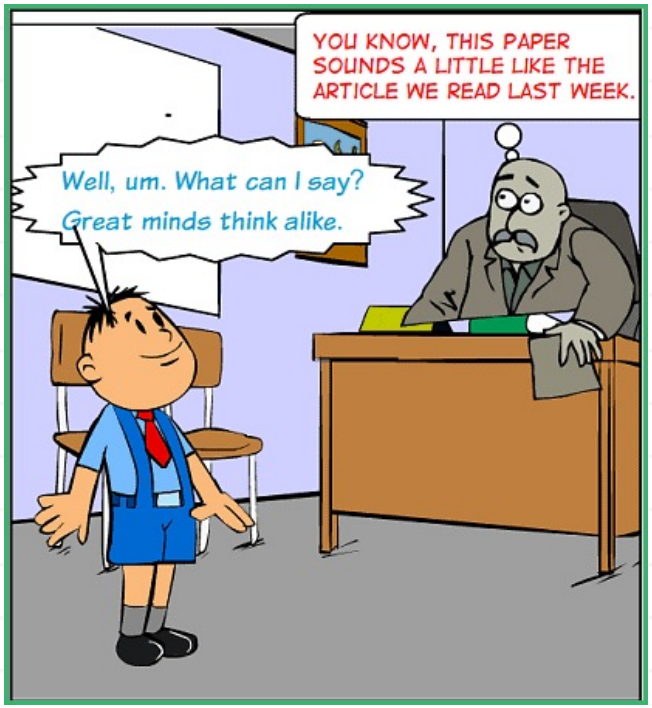
Plagiarism

- To plagiarize is to present the ideas or words of another person as your own without offering credit to the source.
- Plagiarism is like forgery or copying something that is not yours.
- It also violates copyright laws.
- These laws prevent the unauthorized use of a writer's work.
- If you copy an idea or a written text exactly word-for-word, that is plagiarism.

- Some scholars have ruined their careers through plagiarism.
- The use content from books or the Internet without citing the source or giving credit.

Writing Without Bias
Plagiarism

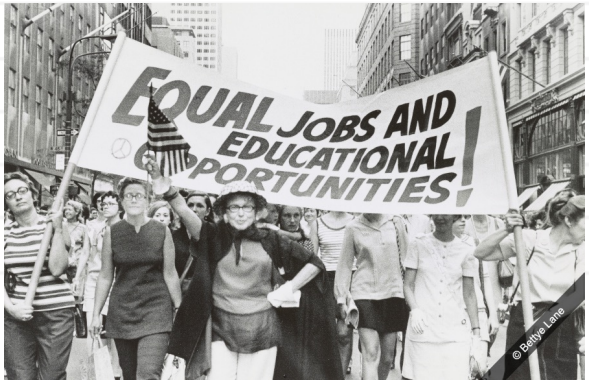
- To avoid plagiarism, following these rules:
  - Put information in your own words.
  - When you restate an opinion from something you read, include a reference to the author: “According to Smith and Jones…”
  - Always include a footnote when you use a direct quotation from one of your sources.

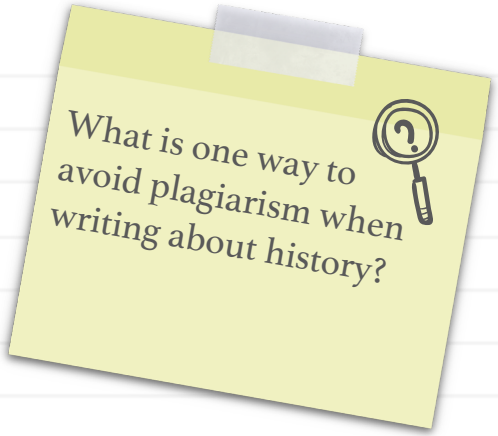


Writing Without Bias

Ancient History and Modern Values

- Avoid using modern ideas to evaluate a historical event.
- For example, a scholar of women's history may want to apply modern ideas to women's rights in historical settings.
- Ideas have changed over time.





- Drawing conclusions about women's attitudes in the Middle Ages using modern ideas would be a mistake.
- Your evaluations of history should be based on the evidence, not on today's understanding of rights and society.

Review This Lesson

Vocabulary

- credentials
- URL
- .gov
- .edu
- .org
- plagiarize
- data
- violate

Key Ideas

- recognize a bias
- distinguish fact from opinion
- evaluate reliable sources
- Importance of avoiding plagiarizism