

Planning and Proposing Research Arguments

Chapter Preview Questions

- 4.1 How do I use questions to get started on finding a research topic?
- 4.2 How do I generate a productive topic?
- 4.3 What prewriting techniques can I use to narrow my topic?
- 4.4 What are the steps for developing a strong research plan?
- 4.5 How do I write a formal research proposal?

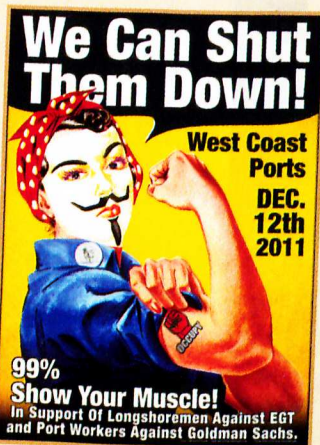


FIGURE 4.1 How does this poster use visual elements and an iconic American image to motivate members of the Occupy Movement?

When we approach the task of research, it becomes clear that we can use many of the skills of analysis that we've practiced in previous chapters to help us interpret the meaning of texts and provide us with a starting point for our own line of inquiry. For instance, look at the poster shown in Figure 4.1. What you probably see first is a familiar image: the vintage 1943 Rosie the Riveter poster. With her hair tied up in a red kerchief, her direct, forceful gaze, and her bicep flexed as she rolls up her sleeve, she operates as a recognizable symbol for resilience, hard work, and motivation. However a closer look complicates this initial impression. How does realizing that Rosie's face has been redrawn in the fashion of a Guy Fawkes mask (a symbol used by the Anonymous movement) change your understanding of whom she represents? How do other alterations to the iconic image – a tattoo, a revision of her catch phrase, the reference to “99%” — sharpen your sense of the poster's context? As you begin to assess these different elements, you realize that the image has been repurposed into a call to action for the recent Occupy Movement. More specifically, by reading the additional information on the

poster, you see that she has been appropriated to address longshoremen on the West Coast. Such careful observations will help you begin to develop an argument about the poster, but in order to back up or substantiate your claims, you need to do some research. That is, you need to place the rhetorical elements of the poster in their historical and critical contexts, including propaganda posters from the World War II era and the events related to the 2011–2012 Occupy Movement.

Research can be conducted in any number of ways, including interviews, fieldwork, and the exploration of sources both online and in print. However, the starting point of any research effort is to determine what questions to ask and what inquiries to pursue. In this chapter, you will learn how to become an active participant in a research community and begin to develop the skills for narrowing your research question and creating an effective research plan and a solid research proposal.

ASKING RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The discussion in this chapter focuses on the subset of persuasion—propaganda—because such texts make very powerful public statements and because, for many of us, we have to perform a certain amount of research in order to understand the motives and purpose behind them. Often this research involves seeking answers to questions we have formulated about the text. In fact, most research begins with the act of asking questions.

One way you can get started on your research is to pick a text that moves you and start brainstorming questions about it. Let's say that you came across the 1917 American enlistment poster shown in Figure 4.2 in an exhibit on campus or as part of a class discussion about World War I posters. Approaching it for the first time, you probably will start to analyze the visual rhetoric, much as we did in the earlier chapters of this book.

What are your eyes drawn to first, the words or the image? Maybe you look first at the simian figure in the middle, roaring menacingly at you, and then at the swooning, semi-naked woman in his arms. In contrast, maybe the person next to you is attracted first to the bold yellow text at the top and then to the bottom, where the words "U.S. Army" in black are superimposed on the imperative "Enlist." In synthesizing various responses to the text, you most likely would find yourself with more questions than answers—a good thing, for those questions can be the beginning of your research inquiry.

4.1 How do I use questions to get started on finding a research topic?

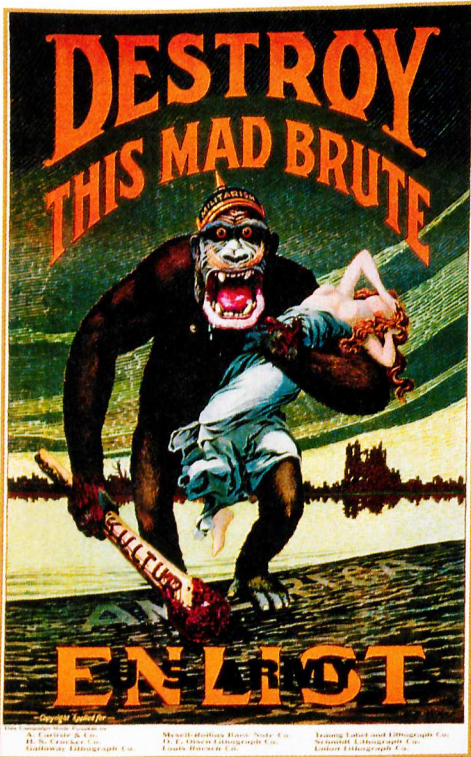


FIGURE 4.2 This World War I propaganda poster (originally published in 1917) offers a wealth of detail for historical analysis.

You might ask: Is that gorilla King Kong? Your research would allow you to confidently answer, No, since you would discover that the poster was made decades before the movie was released. That same research might lead you to discover several books that discuss the wartime practice of casting enemies as subhuman creatures, offering a possible explanation for why the enemy nation is portrayed as a threatening gorilla in this poster. Adding to that your observation that “culture” is spelled “Kultur” (on the club the gorilla is holding), you probably would realize that the enemy symbolized here is in fact Germany.

Then you might ask: What is the significance of that bloody club? Why is the woman unconscious and partly naked? More research might provide insight on how bestiality emerged as a wartime theme in World War I enlistment posters. If a nation’s women were threatened with potential attack by such “monsters,” these posters implied, then the men would surely step up to save and protect their wives, daughters, sisters, and mothers.

By asking questions about your text, you can move beyond an initial response and into the realm of intellectual discovery. In fact, your first

questions about a text will lead you to ask more pointed questions about the context, political environment, key players, and social trends informing your text. For the propaganda poster in Figure 4.2, such questions might include:

- What conflict was America involved in at the time that this poster was made?
- What was the meaning of the word on the gorilla’s hat, “Militarism,” at that time?

- How would an appeal to enlist factor into that historical situation?
- Who was the poster's audience?
- Did other posters of the time use similar rhetorical strategies?

Many of these questions have fact-based answers that invite you to start to better understand the rhetorical situation of the text. By putting a rhetorical spin on traditional journalistic questions (who, what, where, when, how, why), you can sharpen your approach to the text and open up the possibility for it to serve as the foundation for a more rigorous line of inquiry:

- Who is the author?
- What is the claim?
- What strategies are used?
- Who is the audience?
- When was it made?
- What is the purpose and exigency of the argument?

Working with the poster from Figure 4.2, you might chart these questions in a way that both provides you with an enriched understanding of the text and also positions it as the starting point for additional research:

Who: Author	U.S. Army or the U.S. government
What: Claim	Americans (men) need to enlist in the Army to rescue Liberty from the grasp of German militarism.
How: Strategies	<i>Pathos</i> appeal: uses emotionally charged symbolism (Germany as the “mad brute”; Liberty as the female victim)
For Whom: Audience	The American public
When: Context	World War I (specifically 1917)
Why: Purpose and Exigency	With the United States joining the war in 1917, this poster seems a timely effort to persuade Americans to back the war effort, both ideologically (by identifying Germany as a threat) and practically (by enlisting).

Possible research topic: American enlistment posters and war propaganda in World War I

Using such questions to arrive at a possible research topic, you can then take the next step, moving from the individual text to consider it as part of a larger issue, event, or system of meaning. You could develop a line of

questions that encourage you to make connections and explore the larger significance:

- To what extent did other World War I enlistment posters use similar imagery and rhetorical strategies? How did they differ in their strategies?
- How do the techniques used in early twentieth-century posters differ from those used during World War II?
- How are the rhetorical strategies used in this poster similar to or different from enlistment posters or advertisements you might encounter today?
- In what ways have enlistment propaganda changed over time?

Seeing Connections

Look at the invention questions in Chapter 3 for further ways to use questions to develop a topic.

Each of these questions could lead to a more focused *research topic* and, ultimately, a written essay that draws on and contributes to the arguments that others have made about such texts. Generating a range of interesting and productive **research questions** is the first step in any research project; they will guide your work and lead you to your final argument. You can generate these questions by responding to the rhetorical situation provided by a text and by considering what interests *you* most about either the text or the topic. This process of inquiry itself helps you to define a project and make it your own.

WRITER'S PRACTICE

MyWritingLab



Using the poster in Figure 4.3 as a starting point, create your own analysis table like the one above, answering the questions:

- Who? (Author)
- What? (Claim)
- How? (Strategies)
- For whom? (Audience)
- When? (Context)
- Why? (Exigency and purpose)

Use this process of critical thinking and rhetorical analysis to lead you toward a topic that you might explore for a research topic.

FIGURE 4.3 This 1944 poster was produced by the Office of War Information and the War Manpower Commission.

GENERATING TOPICS

At the beginning of this chapter, we suggested that you might use an individual text as the starting point for developing a research topic. However, while sometimes you might find the inspiration for a research project in a text that you encounter inside or outside the classroom, other times you find yourself searching for other modes of inspiration to help you discover that perfect research topic.

If you think back to our discussion of *invention* in Chapter 3, you'll understand that one of the most crucial aspects of starting a research project is selecting a viable and engaging topic. The word *topic*, in fact, comes from the ancient Greek word *topos*, translated literally as “place.” The earliest students of rhetoric used the physical space of the papyrus page—given to them by their teachers—to locate their topics for writing. Similarly, your teacher may suggest certain guidelines or parameters for you to follow when it comes to your topic; for instance, you may be given a specific topic (such as representations of race in Dr. Seuss cartoons) or you may be limited to a theme (the rhetoric of political advertisements on television, radio, and the Internet).

In some cases, you may not have any restrictions at all. Sometimes that might feel overwhelming, but consider ways to make the task of finding a topic more manageable. Review your class notes or readings to see what topics intrigued or even provoked you; do some additional background reading to spark ideas, talk with a friend about possible ideas, and consult with your instructor about topics that might match your interests.

As you consider possible research topics, keep this key principle in mind: successful topics need to interest you, inspire you, or even provoke you. Even with assigned topics, you should be able to find some aspect of the assignment that speaks to you. That is, there needs to be a *connection* between you and your topic to motivate you to follow through and transform it into a successful argument.

Regardless of the degree to which your topic has been mapped out for you, you still can—and should—make it your own. You do this partly by generating your own **research questions** about an issue, an event, a controversy, or—as we did above—a specific text. These questions can guide your work, help you identify a productive topic to explore, and lead you to your final argument. You can generate these questions by responding to the

4.2 How do I generate a productive topic?

AT A GLANCE

Looking for the “Perfect” Topic

1. **Look inward.** What issues, events, or ideas interest you? Are there any hot-button topics you find yourself drawn to again and again? What topic is compelling enough that you would watch a news program, television special, YouTube video, film, or relevant lecture on it?
2. **Look outward.** What are the central issues of student life on campus? Do you walk by a classroom and see the students inside busy writing on laptops or using interactive whiteboards? Topic: technology and education. Do you see a fraternity’s poster about a “dry” party? Topic: alcohol on campus. Do you see workers outside the food service building on strike? Topic: labor relations at the college.
3. **Use creative visualization.** Imagine that you are chatting casually with a friend when you overhear someone talking. Suddenly, you feel so interested—or so angry—that you go over and participate in the conversation. What would move you so strongly?
4. **Use the materials of the moment.** Perhaps the *topos* might be closer to the classical Greek model; although not a roll of papyrus, your class reading list or a single issue of a newspaper can house many topics. Scan the front page and opinion section of your school or community newspaper to see what issues people are talking about. What issues are gripping the community at large?

rhetorical situation provided by your assignment and by considering what interests *you* most about the topic. Even if your whole class is writing on the same topic, each person will present a different argument or approach to the issue. Some will use a different stance or persona, some will rely on different sources, some will use different rhetorical appeals, and all will argue different positions about the topic.

In addition, while selecting your topic, you might consider the type of research you’ll need to do to pursue it; in fact, you might select your topic based mostly on the sorts of research it allows you to do. For instance, a student writing on propaganda of the Prohibition era will draw extensively on paper sources, which might involve archival work with original letters, pamphlets, or government documents from that time period. A student writing on visual advertising for ethnic-theme dorms on campus will be more likely to complement paper sources with interviews with the university housing staff, student surveys, and first-person observations. A student writing on sexualized rhetoric in student campaign materials might take a poll, gather concrete examples, and research both print and online coverage of past and present elections. Think broadly and creatively about what kinds of research you might use and what types of research—archival work

versus fieldwork involving interviews and survey taking—appeal most to you. Finally, consider whether you can actually get your hands on the source material you need to construct a persuasive argument.

WRITER'S PRACTICE

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Select a preliminary topic for a research paper, whether from a list provided for you by your instructor or from your own interests. Put it to the test to assess its viability as the foundation for a successful project by answering the following questions:

1. **What is interesting about this topic?** We write best about ideas, events, and issues that we connect with through curiosity, passion, or intellectual interest.
2. **Can I make a claim or argue a position about this topic?** At this stage, you may not have developed a position on the topic, but you should see promise for advancing a new perspective or for taking a stand.
3. **Will I be able to find enough research material on this topic?** Brainstorm some possible sources you might use to write this paper.
4. **Does this sort of research appeal to me?** Since you will be working with this topic for an extended period, it is best to have a genuine interest in the type of research that it will require (for instance, doing archival work, reading scholarly sources, conducting original research, or engaging in fieldwork).

Constructing a Research Log

From the very beginning of your research process—as you move from asking questions about a text to identifying a productive topic, to gathering information and taking notes—keep track of your ideas in a *research log*. This log will help you organize your ideas, collect your materials, chart your progress, and assemble the different pieces of your research.

Your research log can take many forms, from a handwritten journal, to a series of word processing documents, a personal blog, a Google doc, or a collection of bookmarked Webpages. It can contain primarily written text, or it can include images, video, or audio files as well. The key lies not in what your research log looks like, but in the way you use it to help you develop an interesting and provocative research project that keeps careful track of the sources you encounter along the way.

In the early stages of a project, you can use your log to help you record and track your ideas; it provides you with an open, creative platform to

begin your research journey. You might use your research log in a variety of ways:

- To list possible topic ideas
- To annotate excerpts from newspaper articles, magazine sources, blog posts, or even email or forum threads that offer interesting potential topics
- To respond to provocative images related to potential topics
- To write a reaction to ideas brought up during class discussion
- To list questions about your potential topics: What do you know? What do you need to find out? Note down answers as well.
- To track your preliminary Internet searches
- To explore some of the challenges of the topic and also note what excites you about it as well

This page from Oishi Banerjee's research log (Figure 4.4) shows how she used this space as a way to brainstorm ideas for a research paper on the suffrage movement. She moved from close analysis of a primary source—a variety of anti-suffragette postcards—to broader questions that help her situate the postcards in context, consider their cultural impact, and develop several powerful research questions that she could use as the foundation for her ongoing inquiry into this topic.

4.3 What prewriting techniques can I use to narrow my topic?

NARROWING YOUR TOPIC

Once you have selected a topic and generated some research questions, the next step in the research project involves *narrowing* your topic to make your research project *feasible* and *focused*. A productive way to do this is through **prewriting**, or writing that precedes the official drafting of the paper, but, practically speaking, can take many forms. Lists, scribbled notes, informal outlines, drawings—all different types of *prewriting* can help you move from a broad topic to a much more focused one.

Using Prewriting Techniques to Focus Your Topic

For many writers, **freewriting** is a very productive strategy to help focus and sharpen ideas. In its most pure form, freewriting involves writing without stopping for a set period of time; the idea is to simply keep writing out

Research Topic: Pro- and anti-suffrage propoganda in America, at the beginning of the 1900s

Primary Sources: Postcards from the Palczewski Suffrage Postcard Archive, at the University Northern Iowa (http://www.uni.edu/palczews/NEW_postcard_webpage/BSseries.html)

Anti-suffragette themes in the postcards:

- fear of a reversal of gender roles:
 - makes fun of men tending children
 - mockery of men attempting other domestic tasks (cooking and so on)
- vilification of suffragettes:
 - images of women using violence against men
 - wordplay with "suffragette" and men's "suffering"
 - images of crying children, implying suffragettes were bad mothers
 - misspelling "women" as "wimmen" on suffragettes' sashes (both implies that suffragettes were unfeminine and wanted to be men, and that suffragettes weren't well-educated)
 - reducing suffragettes to sex objects ("I'd rather kiss her than hear her talk")

Broader questions:

- Are there any other anti-suffragette themes in the postcards that I haven't yet noticed?
- How powerful were these postcards? To what extent could they influence political discourse in the early 1900s? Did they change public opinion, or simply reflect it?
- What made postcard propoganda different from propoganda in other media?
- Besides postcards, what other works so explicitly attacked suffragettes?
- Who made these postcards? Political groups? Commercial postcard businesses? Independent artists?
- Who bought these postcards? How were these postcards used? Were they kept as private mementos, or were they actually used and sent to other people?
- How do these anti-suffrage postcards compare to pro-suffrage postcards?

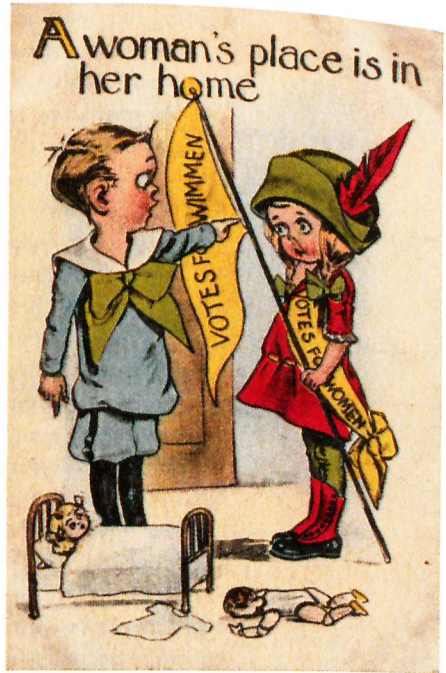


FIGURE 4.4 In her research log, Oishi recorded her analysis of her primary source as a first step to formulating broader questions.

your ideas, without worrying about grammar, punctuation, or even structure so that you can follow your thoughts fluidly and freely. The key is to not hesitate, edit, or even read the freewrite over before the time for writing is up. We've known some writers who even freewrite with their eyes closed or with their computer screen dimmed to prevent themselves from interrupting the flow of ideas.

Such stream-of-consciousness writing on a topic can yield useful insights into what interests you most, what questions you have, and how you might develop your ideas. In fact, many people see the act of writing itself as a way to make meaning and discover ideas. In that sense, freewriting doesn't just allow you to write out what you already know; it leads you to make new connections and create new knowledge.

When you're trying to narrow your topic, you might try a variation of this technique: **funneled freewriting**. Funneled freewriting asks you to do just what it suggests: progressively narrow your ideas into a more concentrated stream. You start by freewriting about your topic for a set amount of time, usually 5 or 10 minutes. When that's done, you stop and read over what you wrote, identifying one key idea or subtopic. Then you freewrite again for the same set amount of time, this time using that subtopic as your starting point. You continue this process for several iterations, each time reading what you've written, identifying a more focused key point, and using that for the next freewriting segment. At the end, you will arrive at a more narrowed topic, one that has been focused by your questions, interests, and ideas.

Occasionally, however, you'll have trouble anticipating when a research topic might be *too* narrow. An alternative prewriting method you might try is the **accordion prewrite**, a technique that asks you to slide between extremely broad and extremely narrow research questions as a way of finding one scaled most effectively for your particular assignment. Let's look at how one student used an accordion prewrite to brainstorm a possible topic about the use of propaganda related to same-sex marriage.

She began by drawing a horizontal line in her research log (Figure 4.5). On one end, she wrote a couple of overly broad questions (To what extent does advertising function as propaganda? How does propaganda affect civil rights?), on the other, she wrote an overly narrow question (Exactly how many Californians voted "Yes" on Proposition 8 because of Frank Schubert's ad campaign?). Having established the extremes, she then filled in a variety of different questions in the center of her "accordion," positioning them in relation to the broad or narrowed points as appropriate. When she was done, she had a spectrum of

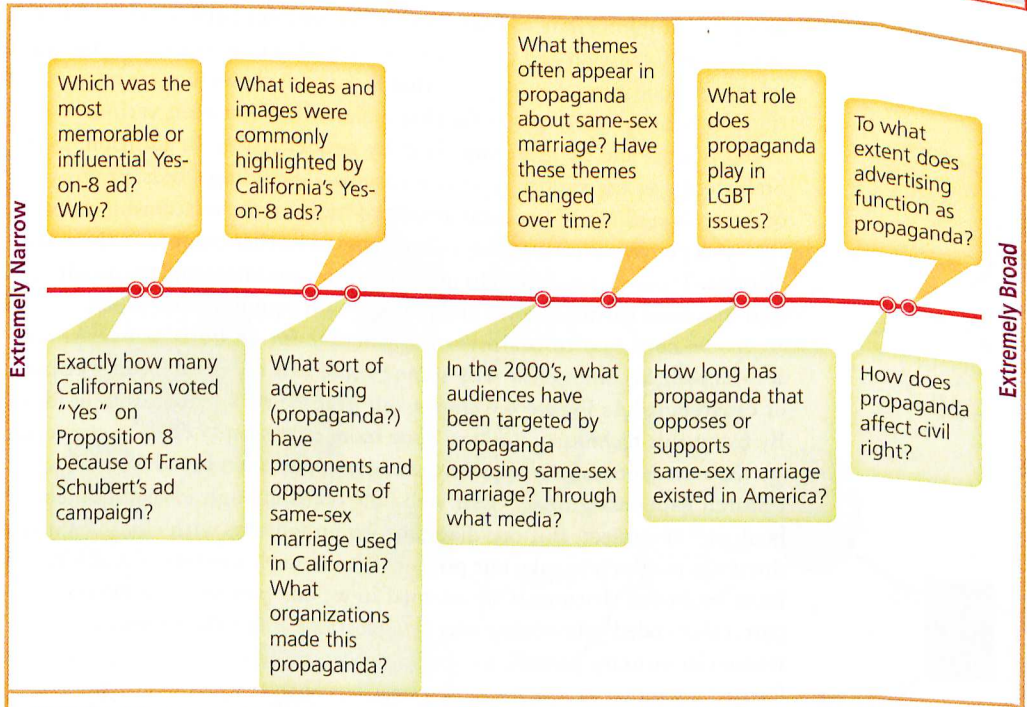


FIGURE 4.5 This student used an accordion prewrite to help her define the scope of her research.

possibilities that helped her conceptualize how she might scale her topic to a manageable size. After brainstorming in this way, she chose to focus on the questions clustered to the left side—about California's "Yes on [Proposition] 8" campaign—allowing her to narrow her focus in a way that suited both her research interests and the requirements of her assignment.

One benefit of the accordion model is that it allows writers to experiment with more visual means of experimenting with the scope of a topic. The practice of **graphic brainstorming** offers another effective way to visualize different ways to narrow a topic. This technique transforms traditional **brainstorming**—jotting down a series of related words and phrases on a topic—into a more visible process. Also called *webbing*, *clustering*, or *mapping*, the goal of *graphic brainstorming* is to help you develop your topic by exploring relationships among ideas. Begin by writing a topic in a circle, and then come up with ideas and questions about that topic. Next, arrange them in groups

around your main circle to indicate the relationships between them. As you answer each question and pose more developed ones in response, you begin to narrow your topic. You'll notice that Figure 4.6 shows how we might start to do this by writing questions that differentiate between various World War I posters and by grouping them by gender issues. In addition, in our brainstorm, we use various types of notations—including words, phrases, and questions—and insert lines and arrows to indicate the relationship between the concepts. We even use images and color to further emphasize these associations. These techniques help us develop the argument and eventually can lead to a more narrowed topic and perhaps even a preliminary thesis.

As we continue to brainstorm—whether for an hour or over several sessions—it becomes clear why some people call this technique **webbing** or **clustering**. As Figure 4.6 shows, our graphic turns into a web of ideas. By using this technique, we have done more than simply develop our topic; we have made it visually apparent that our topic is too broad for a standard research paper assignment. Our web now offers enough ideas for an entire book on the subject. But our diagram also provides us with clues about the direction in which to take our project. We can pick a subsection of ideas to focus on in our writing. If we zoomed in on one part of the diagram—the part, color-coded yellow, that asks key questions about the representations of women in military posters, for instance—we could set the foundation for a focused essay that examines the implications of the way women are depicted in these texts. We could explore how cross-dressing is used as a deliberate appeal to the audience, or how military posters evoke the image of wife and mother to mobilize troops.

A final mode you might use to narrow a topic is **heuristic questioning**. In this method, you begin with a general topic and then sharpen it with a series of increasingly focused questions. For instance, if you were to take the topic of gender roles in World War I, you might follow this heuristic process to distill key issues that might help make the topic more manageable:

1. Write down your topic.

Topic formulation: gender roles in World War I.

2. Work with that topic by asking a pointed question based on close analysis of the text at hand.

First question: Is there a sexual undertone to the posters?



FIGURE 4.6 In this graphic brainstorm of the broad topic “World War I posters” (center white circle), the author identifies several more specific ways she might focus or narrow her research.

3. Refine the topic by answering that question.

Topic narrowing: Yes, in one of the posters, the woman is standing in a provocative pose, looking at the audience in a sexual manner, but in another, the women seem more identified with family (mother, daughter) than with sexuality.

4. Revise the narrowed topic to be more specific.

Revised topic formulation: the different constructions of femininity in World War I propaganda posters.

5. Identify significant aspects of that topic to explore.

Second question: How so? In what way? What is the significance?

6. Use the answers to these questions to focus the topic.

Final topic focus: the use of the Madonna–whore stereotype as a persuasive strategy in World War I recruitment posters.

By asking such questions—and we could come up with many others along different lines of inquiry (such as race, sexuality, international representations, and nationalism)—we begin to develop a *focused* topic that will offer us the opportunity for close analysis, rigorous research, and a sharp argumentative stance. That is, we can move from a topic loosely concerned with

gender roles in World War I to one that focuses specifically on a subset of recruitment posters and how they deploy a particular sexist stereotype (the virgin–whore trope) as a persuasive strategy. With this narrowed topic, we'll be able to contribute a new opinion about war posters and write an essay that adds to the ongoing dialogue that we find in our research sources.

AT A GLANCE

Prewriting Techniques for Narrowing a Topic

- **Freewriting:** Write about your topic without stopping for a specific amount of time.
- **Funneled freewriting:** Complete a set of freewrites, each one focusing in a single specific question or idea generated in the previous freewrite.
- **Accordion prewrite:** Brainstorm research question on a scale from ridiculously broad to ridiculously narrow as a way of developing more appropriate questions in the middle.
- **Graphic brainstorm:** Use a clustering or webbing technique to explore questions, topics, and subtopics in a nonlinear fashion.
- **Heuristic questions:** Sharpen your topic through a series of progressively narrowed questions.

WRITER'S PRACTICE

MyWritingLab

Working in a group or on your own, try out this practice of *narrowing a topic* with a selection of posters from the 2011 Occupy Movement. Look back at Figure 4.1 and consider it along with Figures 4.7 and 4.8 below; then use one of the methods described above (freewrite, funneled freewrite, graphic brainstorm, heuristic questions) to develop a feasible topic for a research paper. Be sure that you narrow your topic from “Occupy Posters” to a more focused one that you might pursue in a research paper. You might decide during your narrowing exercise to focus your topic by identifying which images you’d like to write about or by generating key questions to ask about particular texts: How do the words and images work together in these posters? How do they work against each other? How does symbolism operate in these posters? The more specific the questions you ask, the more focused your topic will be.

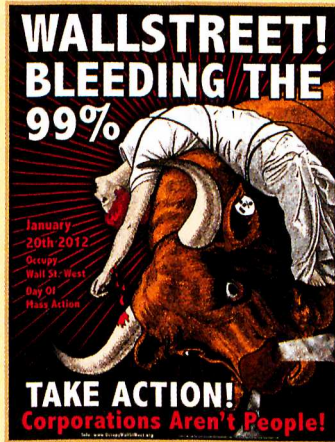


FIGURE 4.7

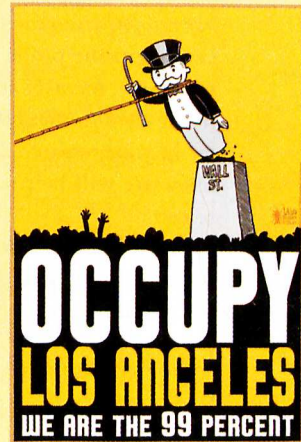


FIGURE 4.8

WRITING ABOUT YOUR RESEARCH PLANS

After you have narrowed your topic, you need to develop a plan for your research process. If you find yourself concerned that you don't have the knowledge necessary to write this essay or are worried that the gaps in your own knowledge will prevent you from answering those questions in a satisfactory way, then realize that you are in good company. All researchers and scholars fear the limitations of their knowledge. The key is to develop a

4.4 What are the steps for developing a strong research plan?

AT A GLANCE

The Research Freewrite

- Write your ideas in full sentences.
- Use a three-paragraph model to focus your answers:
 - Paragraph 1: State your topic and your guiding research question.
 - Paragraph 2: Identify key sources.
 - Paragraph 3: Anticipate challenges.

concrete plan to guide you as you move forward with your project.

The Research Freewrite

One way to start planning your research process is complete a focused freewrite about your ideas in your research log—it's called a *focused* freewrite because while you still adhere to the principle of informal writing, you do so within the constraints of a concrete structure. In complet-

ing your research freewrite, follow a **three-paragraph model**: in the *first paragraph*, announce your topic and state a preliminary thesis so that you can begin the project with a critical and focused perspective; in the *second paragraph*, identify the sources you plan to use to investigate this topic; and in the *third paragraph*, speculate on obstacles or problems you might encounter in your research and how you might avoid or solve these problems. This freewrite will help you concretize your topic and assess your next steps in research.

Let's look at a freewrite from student Rafe Salinas, who shaped his research inquiry to explore the relationship between U.S. propaganda and the destabilization of Salvador Allende's government in Chile in the 1970s.

Research Freewrite

The destruction of the government that Salvador Allende instituted in Chile in the early 1970s was as a result of several key factors, including direct and indirect intervention by the United States of America. I want to examine the extent to which the United States was responsible for the downfall of Allende's government by investigating the role of propaganda created and distributed by the U.S. government in Chile before and during Allende's term as president. I'm hoping to analyze specific

This first paragraph introduces the research topic and describes what Rafe thinks the main focus of his paper might be. At the end of the paragraph, he includes a preliminary research question to help him focus his interest and argument as he begins researching this topic.

examples of propaganda to get a closer look at the United States' rhetorical strategies, what the primary appeals and methods were, including how they used *ethos*, *pathos*, *kairos*, and *logos*. By analyzing sources that indicate the political atmosphere following the use of this propaganda, I hope to get a deeper understanding about the destabilization of his government as well. *Guiding research question*: How, why, and to what extent did the propaganda produced by the United States lead to Allende's downfall?

In terms of key sources, I hope to examine the U.S. propaganda itself to understand the persuasive strategies behind the various types of propaganda. This includes press, radio, films, pamphlets, posters, leaflets, direct mailings, paper streamers, street activities, wall painting, etc. By examining intelligence from the U.S. government—I'm thinking specifically of analyzing a congressional report examining the years 1963–1973 (*The Church Committee and Report and the Hinchey Report as Presented to the U.S. Congress*, 2008)—I will gain insight into how the U.S. intervened, and what the intentions behind intervention were. Finally, I'm sure it will be important to read secondary sources on intervention, particularly those with emphasis on U.S. propaganda and the resultant political climate. Currently, I plan to use *The Nixon Administration and the Death of Allende's Chile: A Case of Assisted Suicide* by Jonathan Haslam and *The Black Book of American Intervention in Chile* by Armando Uribe for this part of the research.

In the second paragraph, Rafe discusses the sources he intends to use. Notice the broad range of possibilities he considers: flyers, television commercials, radio broadcasts, and both American and international sources.

in the third paragraph
Rafe anticipates the
difficulties he might face
and how he can solve
them.

I have a feeling that I will encounter some difficulties in both the sources and the broadness of the topic (i.e., the reasons behind the destruction of Allende's government). Although I possess a working knowledge of Spanish, I know it's fairly limited, and given that propaganda targets a very specific audience in a very specific time period, I probably won't totally get the slang and popular references. I also realize that propaganda isn't the whole picture, and I will need to balance the analysis of the role of propaganda with an honest recognition of the impact of other elements (like military intervention) on Allende's downfall.

Drafting a Guiding Research Question and Research Hypothesis

In reading Rafe's freewrite, you might have noticed that as he developed this topic, he was simultaneously starting to experiment with how to formulate his own argument. That is, in his first paragraph, he moves from the open-ended language of a proposal ("I want to examine," "I'm hoping to analyze") to a restatement of his subject in terms of a guiding research question at the end of the paragraph. You might be tempted in your own freewrite to include a tentative thesis statement along with your research question. While an early hypothesis can be useful, be careful about forming your own argument about a topic too early. How can you responsibly make a claim about a topic that you have not yet researched completely? How can you know what to argue about an issue before you listen to what your sources have to say? These are often frustrating questions for many writers. If you decide on your claim too early, you may set in motion a research process that tempts you to cherry-pick your sources and dismiss

Seeing Connections

See Chapter 1 to review
how to develop a strong
preliminary thesis
statement.

or ignore voices that do not concur with your hypothesis. For this reason, many scholars suggest that writers should focus on identifying a **guiding research question**, as Rafe does, at early stages of the research process, rather than formulating a tentative hypothesis.

There are many benefits to developing a question of this sort. A well-crafted research question can keep you focused as you delve into the research process. In addition, by posing your project as one grounded in inquiry, you can focus on finding sources that help you answer your question rather than prove your point, leading ultimately to a stronger, more persuasive argument. Your question may in fact undergo revision as you learn more about your topic; that is a natural step in the process of exploration and discovery that is at the heart of any research process. To begin, however, you can generate your guiding question by synthesizing some of the more pointed questions about your topic, similar to those we discussed at the beginning of this chapter. Alternately, you could use a prewriting activity like the accordion prewrite to help you identify a strong question to focus your research. In general, a strong research question:

- opens up a line of inquiry (rather than inviting a yes/no response)
- has a sharp focus, appropriate to the scope of the assignment (rather than being overly broad or overly narrow)
- avoids bias or preconceptions (rather than posing a “leading” question)
- offers a solid foundation for further research (rather than posing a question that you might not be able to answer, due to lack of sources or methods for exploring it)

Once you have your guiding research question and have begun to explore your topic, you can start to rework it into a hypothesis, or a working thesis that makes an argumentative claim that you'll attempt to prove. You may move to this step once you start researching, or you may wait until you begin drafting—or even revising—your research paper. Keep in mind that you will probably revise your hypothesis—and maybe your entire approach to the subject—several times over the course of your research. Indeed, this revision process is a natural part of what happens when you actually begin to read your sources, take notes in your research log, and read what your sources have to say about your topic.

4.5 How do I write a formal research proposal?

DRAFTING A RESEARCH PROPOSAL

In many academic contexts, you will be asked to formalize your research plan through composing a **research proposal**. This type of text—common in many disciplines and professions—is used by writers to develop agendas for research communities, secure funding for a study, publicize plans for inquiry and field research, and test the interest of potential audiences for a given project. In the writing classroom, the research proposal provides a similar formal structure for developing a project, but it also serves another purpose: it is a more structured means of organizing your thoughts to help you solidify your topic and move into the next stages of the research process. For these reasons, the *genre*, *organization*, and *content* of the research proposal differ in important ways from other kinds of popular and academic writing that you might do. To write your proposal, include the following elements:

- **Background:** What do I already know about my topic? What do I need to find out more about?
- **Methods:** How am I going to research this topic? What research questions are driving my inquiry?
- **Sources:** What specific texts will I analyze? What additional scholarly or popular sources can I research to help build my knowledge and my argument?
- **Timeline:** What are my goals for the different stages of research, and how can I schedule my work to most effectively meet these milestones?
- **Significance:** What do I hope to accomplish in my research? What are the broader issues or implications of my research? Why do these matter to me and to my readers?

As this list suggests, your proposal should explain your interest in your chosen subject and establish a set of questions to guide your inquiry. The proposal should delineate the timeline for your research and writing process—a crucial time management strategy.

Your proposal serves to clarify your research intentions, but it should also *persuade* an audience of the feasibility and significance of your project. In fact, perhaps the most important step in launching your research inquiry is to address the issue of your project's larger relevance or, as some writing instructors call it, the “So what?” part of the project. It is the

“So what?”—an awareness of the *significance* of the topic you’re addressing and the questions you’re asking—that moves the proposal from being a routine academic exercise to a powerful piece of persuasive writing. When addressing the “So what?” question, consider why anyone else would care enough to read a paper on your topic. Ask yourself:

- What is at stake in your topic?
- Why does it matter?
- What contribution will your project make to a wider community?

Let’s look at an example: a research proposal Molly Fehr developed on Hitler’s use of rhetoric.

Fehr 1

Molly Fehr
 Dr. Alyssa O’Brien
 PWR 2: Rhetoric and Global Leadership
 Final Research Proposal
 8 May 2016

Inspiring Nazi Germany:

How Hitler Rose to Power through the Use of Propaganda and Rousing Rhetoric

World War II involved all of the major world powers and was the deadliest conflict in human history. The men who led these powers into battle were extraordinary historical figures ranging from Winston Churchill to Franklin D. Roosevelt to Joseph Stalin. Perhaps the most infamous historical leader of all time, Adolf Hitler, was a major component of World War II. For this research project I will examine how Hitler used powerful rhetoric to inspire his followers. The speeches that Hitler gave to the German public were effective enough to convince an entire country to go to war to fight for his beliefs. His powerful

Molly’s research proposal begins with a title that reflects her focused research question. In this way, she is sure to offer a more narrowed approach to her topic than the research freewrite.

The proposal opens with background, based on common knowledge.

In the last three sentences of the paragraph, Molly articulates her increasingly narrowed focus: from speeches to powerful rhetoric, to violent propaganda. This narrowed focus will help prevent her project from being too broad.

Fehr 2

rhetoric influenced a generation of German citizens to adopt his ideology and practice his principles. In addition to persuading countless people to embrace his ideas, he used a widespread and violent propaganda campaign to effectively silence his opposition.

There are many different facets of World War II leadership and Hitler's power that one could explore. I will be focusing on Hitler specifically and how his use of violent rhetoric influenced both his supporters and his opposition. Some questions I will attempt to answer are: what part of his campaign was the most convincing? My focus will be on his overt use of violence and how that impacted his rise to power. So, what part did violence play in Hitler's rise to power? How did Hitler use fear as a rhetorical strategy? Is violent or emotional imagery the most powerful type of rhetoric? Then, more generally, how did Hitler's leadership affect Germany's role in the war? And finally, how does our understanding of his use of violence impact our view of Hitler as a leader?

Hitler's extremely lengthy and provocative speeches will be the cornerstone of my research as they are excellent examples of both *ethos* and *pathos*. I will examine several of Hitler's most famous speeches, focusing on those given each year on the anniversary of his rise to power. In each of these speeches he spoke of the superiority of the German race and his future plans for the great nation. My discussion of Hitler's leadership

As she generates specific research questions, Molly keeps her focus on "violence" as her main line of inquiry.

Turning to research methods, Molly names and describes the texts she plans to analyze. This makes her proposal seem quite feasible and builds her *ethos* as a scholar.

Fehr 3

and rhetorical style will also include with an analysis of his book, *Mein Kampf*, which outlines his core beliefs. There have been several scholarly books and articles written about *Mein Kampf* that I will use as secondary sources in my analysis. One book in particular that I will devote time to is Felicity Rash's *The Language of Violence* in which she discusses how the linguistic style of *Mein Kampf* created powerful imagery and elicited strong emotions. Other secondary sources that I will explore include John Angus's article "Evil As the Allure of Protection," and Monika Zagar's *Knut Hamsun*. These sources and others investigate the violent imagery of Nazism and how its effects were far-reaching and dramatic. A possible field resource that I could interview might be a Stanford professor specializing in World War II. I could also interview one of the Stanford research librarians, specifically, either Nathalie Auerbach who specializes in German history or Patricia Harrington who is a general reference librarian.

This project has significant implications for the manner in which historical and contemporary leaders inspire their followers into controversial actions. Understanding how Adolf Hitler employed violent rhetoric to convince people that genocide was not only acceptable but desirable is crucial to unraveling the power of other infamous leaders. Additionally, it is interesting to explore why Hitler was so successful. If certain types of

She refers to several books that have made important contributions to her topic.

She also includes field research as part of her plan, identifying scholars she might interview to learn more about the field.

Molly ends the formal writing of the proposal with a strong statement of significance. Suggesting the “So what?” will help her focus on the importance of her work as a writer and researcher. This section on implications is often the most crucial to readers who evaluate proposals for merit and funding.

Fehr 4

rhetoric such as emotional imagery or evocation of pride are so profoundly effective, how can they be used for good? This brings me to my final point: practical application. There are relatively few historical examples of people who succeeded in amassing so many followers to support a cause that is inherently wrong. A closer look at how Hitler managed to propagandize and affect a nation could reveal important lessons about how contemporary leaders can mobilize their supporters. Conversely, it could give important wisdom about how to prevent or combat such an influential leader in the future.

In her timeline, Molly lists not only deadlines assigned by her instructor but also key steps in the research process: finding books, evaluating sources, reading and taking notes, constructing a thesis, peer review, a second round of research, drafting, and revising.

Fehr 5

Timeline

1/20: Research Proposal due

1/21–1/23: In-depth research of speeches; write up notes

1/22–1/27: Read secondary sources and write up notes; search for more articles using online databases

1/27–2/1: Review notes and write a preliminary thesis; talk with peers and instructors for advice on thesis as well as for guidance on argument. Evaluate sources in research log and continue to read sources.

Fehr 6

2/2–2/7: Outline due: decide on major argument. Use subheads to indicate sections of the essay.

2/8–2/10: Conduct field research interviews, using my argument and questions.

2/12–2/17: Write first draft of argument. Compose topic sentences for each section. Include evidence for my claims in drafting the argument.

2/18–2/21: Peer review feedback and instructor conference (get feedback).

2/22–3/2: Additional research and revision, as necessary.

3/5: Submit second full draft for feedback.

3/8–3/12: Final revisions, proofreading, works cited list, format paper, include images where appropriate.

3/15: Submit final revision. Done!

With this detailed timeline, Molly shows her careful time management and builds her *ethos* by demonstrating her understanding of the research process.

Fehr 7

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THE WRITER'S PROCESS

Now that you've learned about the process of generating research questions, narrowing your topic, developing a hypothesis, and then writing up your plans for research in a three-paragraph freewrite or a formal proposal, what might you argue about the first poster of this chapter (Figure 4.1) if you were asked to use it as a starting point for a research project?

In answering this question, you might start to work through the writing activities related to the research process that we've discussed. You might develop a research focus that begins with questions and ends with a "So what?" or statement of significance. You might speculate about which sources that you could use to answer your questions and on opportunities and obstacles you might encounter when pursuing this project. You might try to develop a proposal that concludes with a clear statement of your future authority on this topic as a researcher. Along the way, you might use a research log to keep track of your ideas and work in progress, setting a strong foundation for the next steps of research—gathering and evaluating sources—that we'll be exploring in the next chapter. Now it's time to get started on the research process for writing a persuasive argument about an issue that matters to you.

SPOTLIGHTED ANALYSIS: PROPAGANDA POSTERS

MyWritingLab

Use the following prewriting prompts to follow the example from the beginning of the chapter and analyze the propaganda poster of your choice (for instance, from the Library of Congress online archive):

- What is the poster's underlying message?
- What rhetorical situation informs this text? Who produced the poster? Who was its intended audience? How was it distributed or shared?
- What is its historical context? What was the contemporary social and political situation of the country that produced it?
- What types of rhetorical appeals (*logos*, *pathos*, *ethos*, *kairos*, or *doxa*) does the poster feature and how do they operate in the poster?
- Recalling Chapter 2's discussion of exaggerated use of appeals, does the poster rely on any logical fallacies? Any exaggerated use of *pathos*? Any fallacies of authority? If so, how do these work to persuade the audience?

- How do design elements such as color, font, layout, image selection, and the relationship between word and image operate as persuasive elements?
- How does the poster use stereotypes or symbols to convey its message? What is their cultural significance?
- What research questions can you develop about this poster?

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

MyWritingLab

- 1. Brainstorming Topics:** Early in this chapter, we used propaganda posters as a starting point for generating research topic ideas. Choose a written text—an essay you read for class, a newspaper article, a government report, a transcript of a speech—and create an analysis table such as the one on page 139 for it in which you answer questions about its author, claim, strategies, audience, context, and purpose. For added challenge, fill out the table on your own, but then circulate a blank version—accompanied by your text—among a small group of classmates. Have them answer the questions about your text in the table, each one filling in one or more of the columns and adding a potential research topic at the bottom. When they have done, compare the collaboratively authored table to the one you filled out yourself to get a deeper understanding of the text and how it might lend itself to additional research.
- 2. Narrowing Topics:** Follow the instructions for the Writer’s Practice on page 151, but instead of focusing on the Occupy posters, use your own research topic as the foundation for the narrowing exercises. Record your prewriting in your research log.
- 3. Research Freewrite:** Develop your ideas for your research project by composing a three-paragraph freewrite. In the first paragraph, introduce your research paper topic and describe what you think the main focus of the paper might be. Include a guiding research question or a preliminary thesis in this paragraph. In the second paragraph, discuss the sources that you intend to use. In the third paragraph, speculate about what obstacles you foresee in this project and/or what you anticipate to be the most difficult part of the assignment. If appropriate, use an image to complement your written text. Share your three-paragraph freewrite to your instructor or your peers for feedback.
- 4. Research Proposal:** Write a detailed research proposal that discusses your topic, planned method, and purpose in depth. Be sure to cover your topic, your hypothesis, your potential sources and problems, your method, timeline, and, most importantly, the significance of the proposed project. When you are done, present your proposal at a roundtable of research with other members of your class. Answer questions from your classmates to help you fine-tune your topic and troubleshoot your future research.

- 5. Peer Review:** Collaboratively peer review your research proposals with a small group of classmates. Assume that you are on the review board granting approval and funding to the best two proposals of your group. Read through each proposal, and then draft proposal review letters for the members of your group that evaluates each proposal's strengths, weaknesses, and your assessment of whether it deserves funding. When you are done, discuss your letters with your group and what changes you can recommend to strengthen the proposal. Then revise your proposals to make them stronger, better written, and more persuasive. See Chapter 6 for more discussion of effective peer feedback sessions.

MyWritingLab Visit Ch. 4 Planning and Proposing Research Arguments in MyWritingLab to complete the Writer's Practices, Spotlighted Analyses, and Writing Assignments, and to test your understanding of the chapter objectives.