

Essay #3: Exploring the Problem

Essay #3 is not properly an essay at all: instead, it is a document that explores and details the various perspectives, information, and opinions on your “problem.” What you discover from this investigation will form the basis for you to generate an essay about your problem for Essay #4.

Remember our definition of “problem”:

A problem is a quandary or contradiction for which there is no current explanation;

A problem is a question for which there is no current answer.

A problem resembles an issue, but a problem does not necessary have to be an issue itself.

A true problem is one in which there is no single or “true” answer or solution; there is only the answer or solution that seems more reasonable or plausible than others.

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| Essay #3 |
| will define the nature of the “problem” and the key areas of agreement and disagreement |
| Essay #4 |
| will present an essay toward a specific audience in which you either argue for an answer to your problem or propose a solution to your problem. |

Research Requirement:

Researching and hunting for information will be a crucial prerequisite for you writing Essays #3 and 4. This assignment is premised upon you picking a “problem” that you have a genuine interest in (if you haven’t picked that kind of problem, rethink what problem you choose). Your first task will be to look for various answers or solutions to that problem.

For Essay #3, I will require that you use information from a minimum of FIVE different “sources” from research (books, articles, websites, people) inside your paper. Essay #4 will up that requirement to seven sources. You will be required to include these sources inside your paper by including quotes and other facts from these sources and by documenting them following MLA Documentation form (if you desire to use APA Style I am fine with that).

Description of Essay Structure and Content

NOTE: While the Introduction presents only your voice, in each of the “body” paragraphs, you will be expected to present MULTIPLE viewpoints from your research. **At this point you are not arguing or supporting any single viewpoint—you are summarizing and presenting the information you are finding out from research.** Also, any single one of the “areas of inquiry” this paper is structured around may be more fruitful or less fruitful for your exploration of this problem.

Parts of the Paper

Introduction: Declaration of the Problem

Introduce your “problem.” Include why you have chosen this problem and what you think is “problematic” about it (i.e. what makes it a quandary, contradiction, or question). Conclude this section with a clear statement of the “problem” (that could be in the form of a question).

How is the problem posed?

You will find that different people or groups represent the problem in different ways. It will be valuable for you also to explore the various ways you could pose your problem? Below are two different ways to pose questions or problems:

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|----------------------|----------------------|
| Theoretical/General: | Should anyone marry? |
| Practical/Specific: | Should Cato marry? |

| | |
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| T/G: | Is conservation of the environment more important than economic development? |
| P/G: | Should the City Council of San Antonio reject an application by Wal-mart to build a superstore that would clear cut a large area of trees. |

Who is involved in the problem?

Discuss the various individuals or groups that have an interest in this problem. Who does this problem touch? and why?

What is known about the problem?

In this section, present the various views on what is known about the problem related to these questions:

- Whether the problem exists or is true?
- Where did it come from? How did it begin?
- What is its cause?
- What changes could be made to the problem? Can it be changed?

How is the problem defined?

Definitions are important because they can determine on whose ground the question or problem will be taken up.

- What kind of problem (or thing or event) is it?
- What larger class or problems (or things or events) does it belong within?
- What are its parts? How are they related?

Questions of quality

These questions seek to determine the worth of the issue—its justice or rightness or honor. They explore also the comparative worth of the issue.

- Is it a good or bad thing? Should it be sought or avoided?
- Is it right or is it wrong?
- Is it honorable or dishonorable?
- ***Then these same questions can be asked from a comparative sense:
e.g. Is it a good or bad thing compared to other things?

Questions of action or policy

These questions explore what action is needed or possible and whether some action should be regulated by means of a policy or law. ***It becomes a matter of policy when the proposed action is a policy or law.

- Should some action be taken?
- What action is possible? Desirable?
- How will proposed actions change the current state of affairs?
- How will the proposed actions make things better or worse? In what ways?

Conclusion: The Crux of the Problem

In your conclusion, declare the one to three significant things that this problem hinges upon based upon the research into various views on your problem that you have found. What are the real cruxes of the problem?

Researching Your Problem and Data Gathering on What You Find

Preparing to Research:

Research is CRUCIAL for the success of this project.

1. Start by reading the section “R” for “Research” inside our handbook (A Writer’s Reference). Particularly look at what it says about searching strategies and different places to look for research.
2. Get a Notebook to keep all the research articles and sources, as well as notes and “data sheets” for this project.
3. PRINT copies of articles or get Xerox copies of portions of books and keep them in this notebook (as long as these articles are not too long and expensive to print). Annotate and read these articles “critically”—underline, highlight, define words, write notes
4. Prepare your “data sheets” BEFORE you start researching. See next page

Bouys For Guiding You in Your Researching



The following are research “bouys” to guide your researching. Like a ship heading into harbor, follow these bouys and it will help you write your paper.

Bouy1: Become familiar with and use “keyword search strategies”

- particularly Boolean “and” searching
- as well as “phrase” searching

Bouy2: START your searching in the SAC Library online databases

- try Academic Search Complete for general subjects
- try Nexus/Lexus Academic for current information in newspapers and media
- try subject-specific databases if you are able

Bouy3: LOOK FOR BOOKS

- see if there are any interesting books on your subject
- as well as searching the SAC Library, you could look in any SA university library from this site: <http://lib.trinity.edu/catalogs/>

Bouy4: TALK to an “expert”

- if possible and your subject seems to allow for it, consider interviewing someone knowledgeable about your subject.

Bouy5: Search the web using a search engine

- notice I am recommending that you NOT start researching through search engines on the web

Bouy6: Take advantage of the SAC Library Research librarians

- either go in person to the SAC Library or you can “Ask a Librarian” online at <http://sacguide.libguides.com/ask> and chat with them for help

Preparing “Data Sheets” (before you begin researching)

Your first step will be to READ your sources you find from research carefully—with a pen and dictionary to underline and note important things AS YOU READ. Look up words you don’t understand so you better understand the reading.

Next, you will want to RE-READ (or re-skim) your sources to pull out relevant information from them. In order to help you eventually write your Essay #3, I recommend that you sort this relevant information according to the topics you will have to write about.

PRINT out all the data sheets that follow. Place them in your research notebook and then sort the relevant information you glean from any single source into the appropriate data sheet.

Use the following list of these topics as an index to help you sort the information:

- I. **How is the problem posed?**
Theoretical/General or Practical/Specific
- II. **Who is involved in the problem?**
- III. **What is known about the problem?**
--various views on what is known about the problem
- IV. **How is the problem defined?**
- V. **Questions of quality**
- VI. **Questions of action or policy**

Recording information from your sources onto your data sheets

Record relevant information from your sources onto your data sheet. These could be
--a quote from the source (be sure to record word for word and put these words in quotation marks)
--a shortened version of a quote or summary of a passage
--a fact or figure
--a summary of the important point

Be sure to record the author and place in the text where the quote came from (so you can find it again later as well as “document” the source if you use it in your paper)

NOTE: You will get different levels of information to put on each data sheet. Let your curiosity into the problem guide you and your quest to find out what others have said and thought about the same problem.

DATA SHEET I:

PRESENT THE DIFFERENT AND SIMILAR VIEWS FROM YOUR RESEARCH SOURCES (AS WELL AS YOUR OWN THINKING) ON THE TOPIC OF--

How is the problem posed?

Is the problem posed theoretically or generally or is the problem posed practically and specifically?

Theoretical/General:

Should anyone marry?

Practical/Specific:

Should Cato marry?

DATA SHEET II:

PRESENT THE DIFFERENT AND SIMILAR VIEWS FROM YOUR RESEARCH SOURCES (AS WELL AS YOUR OWN THINKING) ON THE TOPIC OF—

Who is involved in the problem?

--the various individuals or groups that have an interest in this problem. Who does this problem touch? and why?

DATA SHEET III:

PRESENT THE DIFFERENT AND SIMILAR VIEWS FROM YOUR RESEARCH SOURCES (AS WELL AS YOUR OWN THINKING) ON THE TOPIC OF—

What is known about the problem?

Does the problem exist or is true? Where did it come from? How did it begin?

What is its cause? What changes could be made to the problem? Can it be changed?

DATA SHEET IV:

PRESENT THE DIFFERENT AND SIMILAR VIEWS FROM YOUR RESEARCH SOURCES (AS WELL AS YOUR OWN THINKING) ON THE TOPIC OF—

How is the problem defined?

What kind of problem (or thing or event) is it? What larger class or problems (or things or events) does it belong within? What are its parts? How are they related?

DATA SHEET V:

PRESENT THE DIFFERENT AND SIMILAR VIEWS FROM YOUR RESEARCH SOURCES (AS WELL AS YOUR OWN THINKING) ON THE TOPIC OF

Questions of quality

Is it a good or bad thing? Should it be sought or avoided? Is it right or is it wrong? Is it honorable or not?
***Then these same questions can be asked from a comparative sense:

DATA SHEET VI:

PRESENT THE DIFFERENT AND SIMILAR VIEWS FROM YOUR RESEARCH SOURCES (AS WELL AS YOUR OWN THINKING) ON THE TOPIC OF

Questions of action or policy

Should some action be taken? What action is possible? Desirable?

How will proposed actions change the current state of affairs?

How will the proposed actions make things better or worse?

***It becomes a matter of policy when the proposed action is a policy or law.