**Glossary of Terms**

*U.S. History and American Literature Research Paper*

**Theme:**

Your theme is the general subject you choose to write your paper on. For this paper you will be choosing your theme from a list that your teacher will provide.

**Topic:**

Your topic will be narrower in scope than your theme. The topic is the aspect of the theme that you have chosen to consider. It can often be phrased as a question.

**Thesis:**

Your thesis is the debatable statement that you are defending with your paper. The whole purpose of your paper is to convince the reader that your thesis statement is true. To be effective, a thesis should be controversial and compelling—it is also crucial that your thesis not be too broad or too narrow for the length of paper you are writing.

Example of theme vs. topic vs. thesis:

**Theme:** “Poverty”

**Topic:** “How has poverty shaped the American identity?”

**Thesis:** “The self-reliance, innovation and resilience that form an essential part of the American identity have primarily developed in times and regions suffering from poverty.”

**Evidence:**

Evidence is any type of support for your thesis. For this type of paper, evidence will usually be a quotation, summary of a text or a fact. The fact that it is called *evidence* should help you remember that your whole purpose is to convince your readers that your thesis is correct.

**Common Knowledge:**

You do not need to cite information that you knew prior to beginning research for this paper—especially if it is generally known. However, you ***do*** need to include parenthetical references (and a source citation on your works cited page) for any information you include in your paper that is new to you. Here is an example of each:

**Common Knowledge (no parenthetical reference required):**

Many banks failed during the Great Depression.

**Needs to be cited:**

Between 1929 and 1932, about 5,000 banks went out of business (Walker 54).

**Primary Source:**

An ***original*** account or document from a given time period or about a given event. Primary sources are often interviews, literature, biographies, and newspaper articles contemporary to the periods they discuss. For example, the novel *The Grapes of Wrath*, by John Steinbeck,is a primary source about the Great Depression because Steinbeck experienced the depression and the book was written during that time period.

**Secondary Source:**

An account or document that is either not first-hand or is not contemporary to the period it discusses. For example, your U.S. History textbook is a secondary source because it is written after the events occurred and by someone who did not personally experience them. Secondary sources, like textbooks or critical analysis, will usually refer to primary sources. For more help distinguishing between primary and secondary sources, go to this website: http://www.princeton.edu/~refdesk/primary2.html

**Literary Source:**

A document written primarily for a literary purpose, i.e. to be read for pleasure by the general population.  Most literary sources are fictional and may include novels, short stories, plays, poems, etc.  A non-fiction piece written for a literary purpose is considered literature.  Literary source examples—*The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn,* “The Story of an Hour”, “When the Negro Was In Vogue”.

**Historic Source:**

A document written primarily for a non-literary purpose.  Historical sources were originally written to serve a political or informational purpose.  Most historical sources are non-fiction and may include speeches, documents, diaries, posters, photos, periodical articles (from newspapers and magazines) etc.  Historical source examples—The Declaration of Independence, Speech to the Virginia Convention, propaganda posters.

**Note card:**

The purpose of note cards in research writing is to help you organize your evidence as you find it. The note card provides all the critical information about that piece of evidence: where you found it, the evidence itself and how it supports your thesis. Here is a sample note card:

|  |
| --- |
| **Outline position (Roman Numeral and title):**  III. A. How the poor see large corporations. |
| **Source Citation:**  Steinbeck, John. *The Grapes of Wrath*. New York: Penguin Books, 1976. |
| **Evidence (quotation, summary, fact):**  “But—you see, a bank or a company can’t do that, because those creatures don’t breathe air, don’t eat side-meat. They breathe profits; they eat the interest on money. If they don’t get it, they die the way you die without air, without side-meat. It is a sad thing, but it is so. It is just so.” (p. 41) |
| **How this supports my thesis:**  This quote supports my thesis because it shows how cold and calculating big businesses were to poor people during the depression. For large corporations it was just a matter of profit margins, but for the poor the hunger was real. |

**Works cited page:**

This is basically just a list—organized alphabetically by author—of all of the works you referred to in your paper. For this project the source citations should be done using MLA format (see below). Check out the O.W.L. website for specific information for different types of sources (http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/05/).

**Annotated works cited page:**

This is the same as a works cited page, except that for each source citation you include a brief description of the source and an explanation of how it relates to and supports your thesis. This page should be included with your paper as your final page. Check out the O.W.L. website for specific information for different types of sources (http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/05/).

**Source citation:**

This is a summary of all the important aspects of a publication including the author’s name, the title of the publication, the city it was published in, the publishing company and the date it was published. There are different ways to format a source citation, but for this paper you will be using the MLA format. Check out the O.W.L. website for specific information for different types of sources (http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/05/).Here is a typical MLA source citation:

Hemingway, Ernest. *A Farewell to Arms.* New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995. Print.

**Parenthetical Reference:**

This is a note (in parenthesis) that you will include in the body of your paper immediately after any evidence—for example, after you use a quotation. A parenthetical reference refers the reader to a specific source citation on your works cited page. The parenthetical reference serves two purposes: 1) it lets the reader know that the information just provided did not come from the author of the paper but from another publication and 2) it helps the reader to locate that evidence in its original form. For this paper, your parenthetical references will be in MLA style (http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/02/). Here is an example of a parenthetical reference following a quotation:

Many poor Okie families hoped to start over and find prosperity in California, the “new rich land” (Steinbeck 113).

**MLA Style:**

“MLA” stands for “Modern Language Association”. MLA style is one of several ways that you can format a source citation and use parenthetical references. It also impacts the basic formatting of the paper (http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/).