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Student Guide for completing CSEC History SBA

Prepared by Kerry-Ann Watson (MLIS, B.A., Dip. ed.) and Genevieve Jones-Edman (MLIS, BSc.)

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Introduction

The main objective of this guide is to provide helpful information and tips for the successful completion of the School Based Assessment (SBA) required of CSEC students sitting History.

The Guide includes information on:

- ✓ Choosing a research topic
- ✓ Devising your research question
- ✓ Writing the Rationale
- ✓ Where to find historical data
- ✓ Writing a historical research paper
- ✓ Citations and references

The SBA

The School Based Assessment (SBA) is an integral part of students study and assessment in Caribbean History; it represents 21% of the total marks for CSEC. Every candidate who enters the History examination must submit a research project. The research/report should be between 1200 and 1500 words (approximately 12-15 pages excluding illustrations) and should include a bibliography, appropriate quotations, sources, charts, graphs, tables, pictures, references and appendices.

Choosing a topic for research

- 1) **Choose one that interests you.** What would you like to know more about? What topic is close to your heart?

Use a copy of the CAPE and CSEC History syllabuses to guide you in the process. Look at the topics covered and the content of each theme/topic to find one of interest.

And/or

Use the CSEC History Resource Guide; it has all the topics covered in the syllabus and a list of keywords under each theme.

A general historical textbook prescribed for the course should also be useful. It covers the syllabus and shows the various sub-topics within a topic or theme.

Before in-depth research can begin, consult with your teacher and get his or her approval of the topic.

Still at a loss!

Brainstorm

- Jot down some ideas of what you want to research, e.g. *Fig. 1*



Fig. 1

- How alike are the words you have jot down? Is any jumping out at you?

These are the topics you should explore. For example in Fig. 1 above, similar words such as “Tainos” and “Indigenous” can be fused with “Europeans” to give you a topic- “The Europeans and Indigenous peoples”

Before you decide on the topic to research, **do some general reading on the topic**, to understand the concepts related to the topic, as this makes it easier for you to devise your research question, problem statement, and rationales. If you already covered this topic in class you may skip the general background reading; unless you have forgotten the concepts of the topic.

Narrow your topic

The topic must have limitations that include a time period and a geographical area. This ensures that the scope of research is not too broad or unmanageable.

- Example of a topic

The Spanish Conquest of the Taino of the Greater Antilles in the 15th and 16th centuries.

Geographical area- The Greater Antilles; Time period - 15th and 16th centuries

Another way to limit a topic include by population/ethnic group

Example

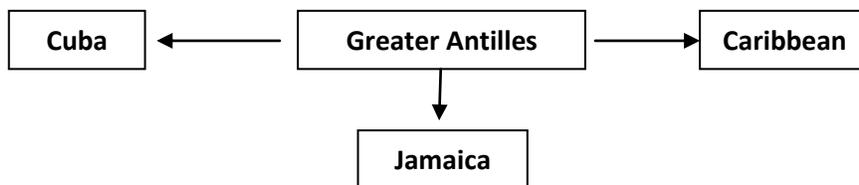
- In the example above, Spanish and Taino are examples of limiting by population/ethnic group

Make a list of Keywords in your topic

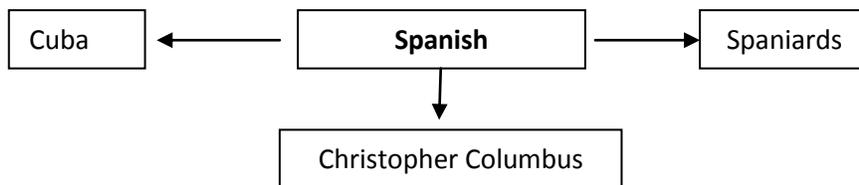
- a. Look for words that best describe your topic. These would have been found in the background reading you had done. If you already covered the topic in class, think of some of the test questions, assignments and discussions about the topic.
 - b. Find synonyms, broader and narrower terms for each keyword you find in order to expand your search capabilities
- Example:

The keywords in our example would be The Greater Antilles, Spanish, Taino and Conquest

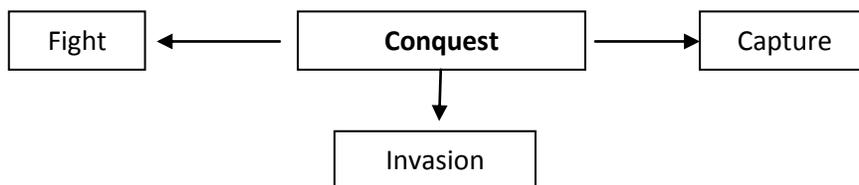
Now we will find synonyms, broader and narrower terms for Greater Antilles



Now we will find synonyms, broader and narrower terms for Spanish



Now we will find synonyms, broader and narrower terms for Conquest



Save these keywords for use when searching for information

- 2) Find out if there is enough content available and accessible on the topic of research in order to produce a substantial research paper. Check the National Library's Online Catalogue and CSEC Resource Guide to see a list of resources relevant to your topic

Devising your research question

A research question is “a direct indirect or implicit question that focuses on a specific topic”¹. The topic under investigation should be written in the form of a question and **the question must be clear and concise and should NOT be answered by a simple yes or no (then it is not researchable)**.

The question must have at least **two** historical concepts that are related to each other.

Example

(For CSEC Students) *What factors led to the extinction of the Taino population in the Greater Antilles in the 16th century and how did the Tainos respond to the Spanish conquest of the Caribbean?*

The concepts in the example of a research question given above are: the extinction of the Taino population of the Greater Antilles and the Tainos response to the Spanish conquest of the Greater Antilles.

It gives in precise language what the researcher will focus on and should be done in one or two grammatically correct sentences.

Other examples of Research Topics:

In what ways did Taino culture differ from that of the Mayan in the pre-Columbian period?

What evidence is there to show that Spanish Town was the capital of Jamaica in the 16th century?

The Rationale

This is a statement that contains the objective of the research or what the researcher intends to accomplish by the end of the research. The Rationale stems from the research question or problem statement and it is the framework of the research, that is, the essay will be written according to the rationale.

Example CSEC rationales

1. To examine the factors that led to the extermination of the Taino of the Greater Antilles by the mid-16th century.
2. To describe the resistance of the Taino to the Spanish conquest in the 15th and 16th centuries.

Where to find historical data

This involves locating secondary and primary sources of history.

These sources can be located at information organizations such as libraries, archives and museums, online resources and through interviewing knowledgeable individuals.

You must use both secondary and primary sources of history; primary sources are more valuable because they are closest to the “Truth”. However secondary sources can provide the context and a better understanding of the topic being investigated. (*See Evaluating Primary and Secondary Sources: An Online Tutorial*)

Do not be afraid to ask your teacher to recommend sources that will be helpful to your topic. Also general historical textbooks can give you additional references that you can use to find historical data related to your research topic.

It is very critical that you make note of the author(s) name, title, place of publication, publisher and year of publication, and the page number(s) of the sources you decide to use.

General Encyclopedias e.g. *Britannica*, Microsoft *Encarta*; online resources e.g. *Wikipedia*, *Ask.Com*, *About.com* **ARE NOT** resources suitable for providing historical data

Finding information at the Library

The National Library is open to the public, for persons fourteen years and older. Users are required to register by providing a school ID or have the registration form stamped and signed by the school principal.

NLJ's Collection

NLJ's collection includes primary and secondary sources. Primary sources are first hand evidence, for example diaries, letters, official records. Secondary sources are second hand evidence, for example books, newspapers and magazine articles. Our collection includes:

- **Books and pamphlets and journals** dating back to the 16th century
- **Manuscripts** of unpublished materials such as **estate journals, diaries and letters.**
- **Maps** - estates and plantation maps covering the 18th and 19th century; as well as parish maps
- **Photographic prints and drawings** from the 19th century to present
- **Programmes, Posters and Calendars** (theatre, concerts, art exhibitions, sports journals)
- **Newspapers** dating back to 18th century
- **Archival films, video and audiotapes, phonodiscs and CDs**
- **NLJdigital** the collection of digitized resources

Writing the Research Paper

The introduction should be no more than a page to page and a half. This provides the background information to the research topic. Its purpose is to: (1) set out the problem to be discussed; (2) define key terms that will be used in that discussion. Where and when are we? What are we examining? It is especially important to clearly define the limits of your exploration³.

When writing the essay pay attention to paragraphing. Paragraphs must discuss one MAIN point and include supporting points or sub-points. Begin your paragraph with a topic sentence that clearly states what the paragraph will be discussing.

For the essay to read smoothly and to flow, use connecting (transitional) words or connecting sentences at the end of the previous paragraph or at the start of the next paragraph, this will prevent the essay from sounding disorganized. Examples of connecting terms are: “furthermore”, “in addition to”, “also”, “therefore” and “however”⁴.

Of course you must pay keen attention to grammar, sentence construction and spelling as this is an academic essay. Historical research papers are always written in the **PAST TENSE** unless you are quoting from a primary source.

The conclusion is usually one or two paragraphs long, pulling all your arguments together. Do not introduce new ideas and do not contradict what you have previously said. It should clearly but succinctly summarize the main points to meet your research objectives. Do not draw conclusions that are not supported by the data.

CITATIONS AND REFERENCES

Citations are references made within the body of the text and must be given when you write:

- ✓ **facts and statistics, unless they are common knowledge and are accessible in many sources;**
- ✓ **quotations;**
- ✓ **somebody else’s ideas and opinions, even if you summarised or paraphrased them⁵.**

It is compulsory to cite your sources, that is, to provide the author or title information for the source used for the following reasons:

To prevent **plagiarism**, this means the kidnapping or stealing of someone else’s ideas and presenting them as your own⁶.

Also to give your research paper **credibility**, this means it can be verified if the information used in your research paper came from an acceptable historical source.

The Modern Language Association (MLA) system is used for citations for historical research papers and you can either use footnotes or endnotes for your citations. Within the essay a note is made whenever a citation is needed, this note is a superscripted Arabic numeral. Then the note is referenced as a footnote or endnote.

Footnotes come at the bottom of each page, while endnotes come at the end of the essay on a separate page before the bibliography; they are numbered using Arabic numeral. The numbering of each footnote or endnote must match the superscripted Arabic number it refers to within the body.

Example: A quote taken from the book, *The history of the Maroons, from their origin to the establishment of their chief tribe at Sierra Leone...*

“We have seen, that by the treaty made with Cudjoe, 1500 acres of land in the parish of Trelawny were granted to him and the body of the maroons under his command.”¹

Footnote or Endnote

1. Dallas, R.C. *The history of the Maroons, from their origin to the establishment of their chief tribe at Sierra Leone....*, 79.

A reference list must come at the end of your report. This gives the full bibliographic information of all the sources you have used, so that your sources can be verified.

In the MLA style of referencing the bibliography is known as the **Works Cited**. This is a list done in alphabetical order, see example below.

Example of a works cited list done according to the MLA style

Works Cited

Green, William. *British Slave Emancipation: The Sugar Colonies and the Great Experiment 1830-1865*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991.

Hall, Douglas. *The Caribbean Experience: an Historical Survey 1450-1960*. London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1982.

Knight, Franklyn. *The Modern Caribbean*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989.

Watts, David. *The West Indies: Patterns of Development, Culture and Environmental Change since 1492*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987.

(For additional information see the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* (7th ed.) or go online and visit *Purdue Owl* website, or *Google* and search “MLA format”).

All the best!!

“The heights by great men reached and kept were not attained by sudden flight, but they, while their companions slept, were toiling upward in the night.” Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Works Cited

1. Sambucharan, M. *Research Handbook for CSEC Candidates*, 8.
2. Leedy, P and J. Ormond. *Practical Research: Planning and design*, 4.
3. Rael, Peter. *Reading, Writing and Researching for History: A guide for college students*.
<http://www.bowdoin.edu/writing-guides/>.
4. Raimes, A. *Keys for Writers: a brief Handbook*, 28.
5. Ibid, 84.
6. Ibid, 82.