

Good historical research essay example

[Profession](#), [Student](#)



Activity 22. 1:

Historical Research Questions

Which of the following questions would lend themselves well to historical research?

The questions that would lend themselves well to historical research are:-

- What was life like for a woman teacher in the 1920s?
- What were the beginnings of the modern social studies?
- Is the deception of research subjects ever seen as appropriate by students?

- How were women portrayed in 1930s fiction?
- How has the age of children leaving home changed between the years 1920 and 1980?

Activity 22. 2:

Primary or Secondary Source?

In the space provided after each of the items listed below, write “ P” if the item is a primary historical source or “ S” if it is a secondary source.

- An essay written by an eighth grader in 1935 ___P_____
- A 1945 photograph of a high school cheerleading squad ___P_____
- A magazine article describing a school board meeting in 1920 ___S_____
- A World War II veteran’s description of an air raid ___P_____
- A history textbook ___S_____
- A description of a scientific experiment carried out by one of the authors of this textbook ___S_____
- A complete set of the Encyclopedia Britannica for years 1949-1953

____S____

- Music charts composed for use by the Benny Goodman sextet in the 1930s

____P____

- A newspaper editorial commenting on the death of John F. Kennedy

____S____

Activity 22. 3:

What Kind of Historical Source?

- A researcher that wishes to investigate changes in high school graduation requirements since 1900 might investigate the following hypothesis: “ Gown with the Wind: Graduation Requirements now a breeze, 1900-2014”. The researcher might consult high school magazines from 1900 onward as well as teachers in today’s school system in order to make a comparison.

- A researcher might be cautious about the following sources for the reasons below:-

- A typewriter imprinted with the name “ Christopher Columbus.” – Typewriters were not yet invented in Christopher Columbus’ time. A manufacturer could have written the name on it to get attention to his product.

- A letter from Franklin D. Roosevelt endorsing John F. Kennedy for the presidency of the United States. – FDR died long before JFK decided to run for the presidency. That letter could be a fraudulent document.

- A letter to the editor from an eighth-grade student complaining about the adequacy of the school’s advanced mathematics program. –Advanced Math is usually taught to students of grade 9 and higher. Also, there are usually age restrictions for accepting letters to the editor. Hence, this may be a

fabricated letter.

- A typed report of an interview with a recently fired teacher describing the teacher's complaints against the school district – The teacher's views may be biased, having been fired from the school.

- A 1920 high school diploma indicating a student had graduated from the tenth grade – The genuineness of that document would be in question as it would have to first be determined who created it and if the date of 1920 is the actual time that the document was created.

- A high school teacher's attendance book indicating no absences by any member of her class during the entire year of 1942 – This could be a document with the intention of presenting an inflated picture of that teacher's performance.

- A photograph of an elementary school classroom in 1800 – the researcher would need to question who the photographer was and investigate the trueness of the timeframe that the picture was taken.

- Historical research is harder to do because it is difficult to study an entire population of individuals or events while getting the research done.

Additionally, conducting historical research pulls on the skills and integrity of the researcher as well as knowledge of other disciplines that the researcher may not presently have.

- Researchers cannot ensure representativeness of the sample in historical research because it is subject to missing sources of information or to sources that are not representative of all the possible sources that exist.

- Which of the steps involved in historical research that we have described do you think would be the hardest to complete? Why? Locating relevant

sources would be the hardest step to complete because the researcher would have to take additional steps to ensure the authenticity and trustworthiness of these sources. This is to avoid erroneous information being included in the research.

- Can you think of any topic or idea that would not be a potential source for historical research? Why not? Suggest an example. – “ The Car Company’s Profits Month to Date, 2014” This would not be a potential source for historical research because it would require information pertaining to the current year. An example of a topic that would be a potential source for historical research would be: “ The Car Company’s Profits 2012, 2013.”

- Historians usually prefer to use primary rather than secondary sources. Why? Can you think of an instance, however, where the reverse might be true? Discuss. Primary sources are usually preferred for historians because they are more detailed and more accurate than secondary sources. They are usually prepared by an individual who was a participant or an actual witness to the event being described. Secondary sources are open to biases, opinions and other elements that corrupt the truthfulness and authenticity of events that happened in the past. However, the farther back in history you go, the more difficult it gets to find primary sources. This is where the use of secondary sources becomes necessary. The researcher would then be responsible for checking the authenticity of the secondary sources consulted.

- Which do you think is harder to establish – the genuineness or accuracy of a historical document? Why? The accuracy of a historical document is harder to establish than the genuineness because events that appear highly unlikely

to have happened have been proven to be accurate; it is also easy to assume that because something would not have unfolded a particular way today, that it would not have in the past either. This is an incorrect assumption because the behavior of people in the past was totally different from people today as they had different influences around them. Additionally, the researcher would be inclined to believe an eyewitness report, and even more so several similar eyewitness reports of the same event. However even similar eyewitness reports given by different individuals have turned out to be incorrect information.

In-Class Exercise 15A

How to Calculate a Correlation Coefficient

Actually, there are many different correlation coefficients, each applying to a particular circumstance and each calculated by means of a different computational formula. The one we will use in this exercise is the one most frequently used: the Pearson product-moment coefficient of correlation. It is symbolized by the lowercase letter r .

When the data for both variables are expressed in terms of quantitative scores, the Pearson r is the appropriate correlation coefficient to calculate. It is designed for use with interval or ratio data. The formula for calculating the Pearson r coefficient is:

$n - ()$

$$r = \frac{\sum (X - \bar{X})(Y - \bar{Y})}{\sqrt{[n - ()] \sum (X - \bar{X})^2 [n - ()] \sum (Y - \bar{Y})^2}}$$

$[n2 - ()2] [n2 - ()2]$

The Pearson formula looks a lot more complicated than it really is. It does

have a lot of steps to follow before you actually get to the end, but each step is easy to calculate.

For this exercise, let's imagine we have the following sets of scores for two variables—reading and writing—for five students:

What we would like to know is whether these two variables are related, and if so, how—positively? negatively? To answer these questions, apply the Pearson formula and calculate the correlation coefficient for the two sets of scores. In other words, plug the appropriate numbers into the formula to calculate the r . Most of the computation has already been done for you and is provided in the bottom two rows of boxes. (See Appendix D at the end of the textbook for a step-by-step example of how to calculate a correlation coefficient using this formula.) Once you have calculated the correlation coefficient, describe in one sentence below the type of relationship that exists between reading and writing scores among this sample of five students:

The relationship that exists between the two sets of scores is a slightly positive one, where an increase in reading scores does result in an increase in the writing scores but only in a small percentage of students.