

### ***Prompts for Question Analysis***

Jot down answers to these questions *before* you begin searching for sources.

1. What question do you plan to investigate in this paper?
2. What makes this question worth pursuing?
3. What kind of expert would be able to provide good answers or the current best thinking about finding answers? (Perhaps a physician? Wildlife biologist? Water resource engineer? CPA? Social worker?)
4. Where do you expect to find particularly good information about the matter? General interest publications? Specialized publications? Are you aware of a specific source with material relevant to your needs?
5. How recent must materials be to be relevant? What factors might make information outdated (such as a congressional election or the announcement of important medical findings)? Do you need information recorded *before* a particular event? For situations that change rapidly, such as AIDS research or foreign policy, even a few months could make a difference in the relevance of some material to your project. Defining a particular calendar period will help you search more efficiently.
6. What individuals or interest groups have a major stake in answering your question in a particular way? For example, players' unions and sports team owners look at salary caps from different perspectives; lumber companies and environmental activists evaluate the effectiveness of the Endangered Species Act differently.
7. What kinds of bias do you need to be especially alert for on this particular question? Neutral sources are valuable, but bias of some kind is unavoidable, so it's important to recognize how it is operating in your sources.
8. Finally, jot down some words or phrases that you might use to begin searching.

### Notes for Question Analysis:

- You will not be graded on grammar or punctuation. This assignment is intended as a focused brainstorm. The QA is designed to give you a headstart with your research. You are encouraged to fill it out in any order, use colloquial language, scribble, draw, talk it out, erase, cross-out, type it, write out *any and all* thoughts, questions, etc.
- You must fill out and complete a QA before your first draft can be submitted. I want to see you thinking about your subject using nothing but what you already know.
- There is no requirement on length.
- See example on the next page of a completed QA. Notice how the student has rephrased each question for her own benefit and comprehension. I'd like to see you do the same.

Excerpts from Jenny's research log

### Question Analysis

1. My question: How do people defend romance novels? (I'm assuming some people do!) What do they say is the value of them? What criteria do they use? Maybe I have to set up criteria, but I'd like some experts to base my ideas on and use for support!
2. Why is it worth pursuing: Because (1) MacFarquhar uses romance novels as an example, so they'll fit the "extending the conversation" idea, (2) lots of people read them – including me, sometimes, (3) I need to understand what my future students might be reading....
3. Experts I need: teachers, librarians, maybe that Center for the Book that LM mentions
4. Sources I think will work: I hope there will be good material in regular newsstand magazines, possibly women's magazines, maybe magazines/journals for teachers & librarians.
5. Dates? They have to be pretty current, from 1997 (LM's article) to now.
6. People with a stake in this: teachers, except I don't know which way they'd lean. Some of my teachers thought they were OK!
7. Bias to watch for: Publishers and bookstores – they want to sell books, no matter what kind. I have to watch out for material that's just hyping romance writing. Would data about bestsellers prove cultural value? Probably not. Need to find serious discussion, not just somebody arguing back at MacFarquhar.
8. Words for searching: "romance novels" (obviously), "reading" ?? (possibly too broad) "readers" ?? Maybe look for reviews of books by specific authors – Nora Roberts, Amanda Quick – and see how reviewers talk about them for evidence of cultural value. Look for author names of bestseller list? Ask at a bookstore?