

Ron Savageau
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Writing the Research Paper

My goal this year in 8th grade is to help the students write a better research paper since they will be entering High School sooner than they think. Using the Theme: The Enduring Legacy of the American Revolution that we are studying this year at TAH I thought I would begin with an outline using as my bible a book called "Writers Inc," a student handbook for writing and learning.

I will begin this year's approach with the personal touch. By selecting someone that interests them during this time period and then researching that person getting as much information and firsthand accounts as possible.

First, I made sure that the students, to the best of my ability, understood the project. This can be a project onto itself. Second, I suggested that they could use their text book for ideas and a starting point but the book would not be used as one of their sources. Next, I had a collection of biographies placed in my classroom along with books that the librarian got me for this project. The books were at different grade levels and abilities.

What I was attempting to do was to get the student to find something about a person that they truly would find interesting.

Note taking was going to be, for most of the students, a big problem. However, I gave them examples:

Use four by six inch cards
Record only important details, write down page # and not bibliography info
Remember quotation marks
Use primary sources as much as possible

Hardest tips for 8th graders

Use your own words
If you feel strongly about something say so
Avoid slang
Present information that you can support with facts and details
Have a plan

Introduction

Background information, more or less, is pertinent to your paper some interesting or surprising facts

The impact of their person had on this period

Body and main part of paper

Conclusion should leave me with a clear picture of your person and the importance of that person

Using the internet

This can be a great resource or a place for copying a student's paper with little regard for original work.

One of the hardest things to do is evaluate information and judge the value of the content. Best, or best reliable, are government and education sites.

Selecting Reference works

HISTORY PROJECT

Choose a person, research them, and write a paper. The paper is to include the following:

- Background – Parents, where they were born etc.
Early life, education, profession,
Jobs, notable accomplishments
- How did this person become involved with the Revolution?
If male, were they in the military? If female, what was her contribution to the Revolution?
- Did this person work on the Declaration or the Constitution? Please identify which and explain their role.
- Other interesting facts

References: Primary Source
Biographies
Internet
Encyclopedia
Articles/Periodicals

Length of paper should be 4-5 pages. Times New Roman font, size 12 font, and double spaced is required for this report.

Document will be MLA style.

Your research paper will include the following:

Title page
Introduction
Body
Conclusion
Bibliography

“Alexander Hamilton: A Life”, by Willard Sterne Randall, New York: Harper Collins

The book was readable. However, aside from Randall’s fascination with Hamilton’s sexual and romantic adventures, I really did not find anything new in Randall’s book which I had already learned from “Chernow’s “Hamilton” and Thomas Fleming’s “Duel”. Nevertheless, “Alexander Hamilton: A Life” is one more book as a resource for my students. They could use this resource to find out about someone Hamilton liked, disliked, or about whom he had no opinion.

“1776”, by David McCullough, _____: Simon & Schuster

McCullough’s writing style is not only reader friendly, but colorful, engrossing and full of nuances. He provides insights into the personalities of these historical figures and background of, what would initially seem unrelated, current events which are new to me. For example, I already knew of the disdain of American insurgents held by Parliament and the British officers, “They desert in large bodies, are sickly, filthy, divided, and unruly.” However, it was interesting to learn, not only, of Washington’s specific disapproval of the New Englanders, but also the basis for his opinion, “exceedingly dirty and nasty”.

McCullough’s narration of the fight for Long Island brought me new respect for this commonly overlooked battle. He clearly showed the differences in the fighting experience and styles of the British and American military...and, ultimately, how Washington’s temperament and personality saved the day and won the cause for the American colonies.