

**HistoryMakers: Research Paper**  
**Audience: Junior US History II C1 Class**

**Preface:** I attempted to have students use HistoryMakers as a research tool. I did this in part because as second semester juniors, they are in their last required History class before college, and I felt this would be a good time to *practice research skills* (eg boolean searching and identifying reliable sources).

The other motivation was to *enhance their general technological literacy*. The junior class at WHS is not on any one-to-one program and I have found many students have needed support in our other lessons in the computer lab this year (accessing the GoogleClassroom, submitting documents, and finding their work on GoogleDrive).

**Structure of Events:**

Day 1: Paper introduction with expectations in class (end of period, introduces possible topics) - see [project outline document](#)

-topics were vetted through HistoryMakers to ensure content existed relevant to topics/enough to use in a paper. This created later frustrations when students claimed the content “was not there” (see [surveys](#))

-I used topics across several decades of discussion this year in response to our conversations at Brandeis about thinking of African-American History beyond the Civil Rights Movement. This also provided scaffolds for some students who were more comfortable operating within a subject we had covered in class for some of their research.

Day 2: Computer lab. Demonstration of login and search. Instructions/links posted to GoogleClassroom. Topic to be approved by end of class

Day 3: Formation of thesis, identifying key sources

*(individual student conferences)*

Day 4: Introductory paragraph due, HistoryMakers source identified and submitted

*(individual student conferences continue)*

Day 5: Research continues, search for primary sources

*(individual student conferences continue)*

Day 6: Research continues, search for primary sources

*(individual student conferences continue)*

Day 7: Research continues, EasyBib demo/recap, primary source submitted

*(individual student conferences continue)*

Day 8: Move to writing, outlines submitted/checked

*(individual student conferences continue)*

Day 9: Writing conferences, outlines checked

*(individual student conferences continue)*

Day 10: Source list finalized and submitted, writing continues

*(individual student conferences continue)*

Day 11: Writing continues, quick check-ins

Day 12: Last day of writing/in computer lab, final paper due in 2 weeks.

(Papers were submitted directly into GoogleDrive at the beginning of April - I am currently sifting through them for further content used and to grade and give feedback for final drafts)

**Successes:**

- Students were digging into interviews, putting on headphones and actively listening and gathering information from people who experienced these events firsthand. While in computer lab, students were offering specific feedback about *why* the interviews were interesting and making some deep connections with the material.
- Students learned skills in how to form searches (ie, searching -Little Rock Nine- (no quotes) vs. "Little Rock Nine" vs. "Little Rock 9" vs. "Central High School" and how that can yield different results.
- HistoryMakers provided citations, which was very helpful as students created their Works Cited pages!
- Transcripts helped students sift through information in the interview - I was surprised how much they were using the text (and searching it) to find the information they were looking for. (Some students came in knowing how to use "find" on a page of content, and some learned it through this process)
- Writing conferences allowed time to help students troubleshoot early and often to ensure students were on track in research. This also allowed me to check in on HistoryMakers progress and help troubleshoot as necessary. This also helped students to get the personalized support needed on such a project.

### Challenges:

- In the computer lab we were using, several computers could not load the HistoryMakers website. We managed to work around it by using Chromebooks available elsewhere, but this caused frustration for some students. (These were Apple Computers running Windows, I do

not know if that impacts it at all) Several students also reported difficulty accessing the archive at home.

- This is something I squarely blame on myself: I think the combination of asking for *both* a primary source AND a HistoryMakers source made it more difficult for students to form a sophisticated research question. My emphasis in this research project is usually “creating” new information through the creation of a research question. In some ways, I think incorporating both HistoryMakers *and* primary sources as required types of sources made some of the papers more “reports” than “research papers” as the source requirements outweighed the original content/critical thinking produced by students.
- Student surveys showed challenges with the interface of the website - more information on that below.
- A couple of students, despite deadlines to submit their HistoryMakers citation in class, did not include them in the paper, and said it was a result of not being able to use HistoryMakers on their home computer. I had planned project deadlines so it was not necessary to access HistoryMakers outside of school to avoid this, but failed to avoid this problem in the end.

### **Small Suggestions:**

- Search tags are based on experience of person, but some based on events, chronology or decade could help sort more easily for classroom purposes.
- Videos opening in a new window so as to not lose the information/place in your search.

- Permanent links to find each video (even if it requires login) - I could not find a consistent rhyme or reason, but at times the links could not load after students saved them in their GoogleDoc research documents

**Answers to Laura's Qs:**

**1) How often/how many times did you use the archive?**

Over the course of a 2+ week research paper unit. Almost daily.

**2) In what class? (subject/grade/level/class size)**

11th Grade US History II C1 Level, 26 students, included 6+ FLEP/ELL students

**3) Was it used alone or with other resources? If the latter, which?**

Students found other resources based on their topic (guided through research conferences) from PBS, LOC.gov, and Archives.gov - among others

**4) How were students prepared to use it? Was such preparation useful?**

Students had specific instructions on their GoogleClassroom but also had a demo of these instructions in the computer lab on our first day. I

think the preparation was necessary but I did not anticipate every area of student confusion.

**5) Did the use of the archive meet/fail to meet/exceed your expectations (in terms of ease of use, anticipated and perceived impacts on students)?**

The archive certainly met my expectations! It was a fantastic resource that really helped students empathize with people who lived through history and think of not just major figures but those who surrounded them or followed their achievements.

I think some of the challenges that would have been hard to anticipate included ease of clicking back and forth (eg - clicking on a video, deciding it isn't the one you want, hitting back on browser, and it bringing you back to the main search page to start over - *this could be remedied by having videos open in a new window?*) and students saving links to return and research later, and sometimes the links would not open.

## US II C1 Research Paper 2017: African-American History & Civil Rights

*This* is your last required History class in high school. Therefore, by the time you leave this class, you should have successfully written a research paper. This paper should be 4-6 pages in length.

Each person must use and cite a **HistoryMakers** video and a **primary source** related to their topic. (Primary sources include: letters, speeches, diaries, newspaper articles from the time, oral history interviews, documents, photographs, artifacts, or anything else that provides firsthand accounts about a person or event.)

### Requirements:

1. 4-6 pages, double spaced, typed - **NO EXCEPTIONS**
2. Topic must be approved by 3/2
3. Font size 12, Times New Roman
4. Thesis statement- underlined in your paper (by 3/3)
5. Intro paragraph (by 3/6)
6. Supporting paragraphs with clear facts and details that support your thesis statement as well as your own analysis
7. Use and cite an interview from *HistoryMakers* archive related to your paper topic (by 3/6)
8. Use and cite a **primary source** related to your topic (by 3/9)
9. Clear conclusion

10. A clear works cited page, use **EasyBib** to help organize your research! You should have at least 4 academic sources (not Wikipedia, About.com, etc, see me if you have questions)
11. Cover page - separate from paper
12. Use of parenthetical citations (MLA FORMAT!)
13. All work must be received on assigned dates. Late papers will **NOT** be accepted.

**Possible topics:**

Jim Crow Laws

African-American Experience during the Great Depression

Tuskegee Airmen

Desegregation of Armed Forces

NAACP (Can choose a court case)

Thurgood Marshall

Brown v. Board of Ed

Little Rock 9

Greensboro Sit Ins

Emmett Till

Ku Klux Klan

Medgar Evers

Birmingham March/"Bull" Connor



James Meredith/Ole Miss Desegregation

SCLC (Southern Christian Leadership Conference)

SNCC (Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee)

CORE (Congress of Racial Equality)

16th Street Baptist Church Bombing

24th Amendment (banning poll taxes)

Montgomery Bus Boycott

Selma March

March on Washington

Freedom Rides

Freedom Summer

JFK - Civil Rights Advocate?

Civil Rights Act

Voting Rights Act

Stokely Carmichael

Malcolm X

Watts Riot (LA)

*Loving v. Virginia* (Supreme Court - Interracial Marriage)

Black Panther Party

Boston Busing & Desegregation

**(This is a starting point- feel free to get in touch about other ideas you might have!)**