

# HISTORY DAY CALIFORNIA



*Research Questions*



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# Agenda \*

Make it Historical

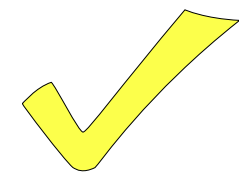
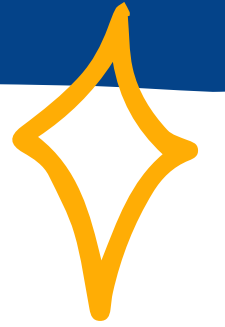
Make it Significant

Make it Compelling

# NHD *Roadmap*

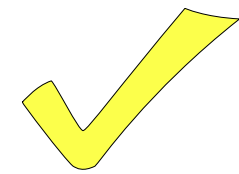


## WE ARE HERE:



Identify the theme

(Frontiers In History: People, Places, Ideas)



Choose a Topic



Craft a Research Question



# HISTORICAL RESEARCH QUESTIONS



Make it  
*Historical*

- Topic at least 20 years old
- Evidence of significant shifts
- Went beyond an idea/place
- Became the building block for a new frontier in the future

# Make it *Historical*



## To make your research question historical, you might:

- "ask **how or why** an event happened (causation, explanation)"
- "ask what the **consequences** were of a particular event"
- "discuss the **intellectual origins** of a particular idea"
- "ask what the **cultural context** of an event was";
- "ask about the **social history** of a political event"

● ● ● Source: Williams, Robert C. The Historian's Toolbox: A Student's Guide to the Theory and Craft of History. Second ed. Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2007.





# Crafting the *Question*



Step 1:

**ASKS LOTS (AND LOTS AND LOTS)  
OF QUESTIONS!**

Identify the  
Parts and  
How They  
Interrelate

Trace Its Own  
History and Its  
Role in a  
Larger History

Identify Its  
Characteristics  
and the  
Categories  
that Include It

Determine Its  
Value

Make it a  
*Question*



**Source:** Booth, Wayne C., Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. 2008. *The Craft of Research*. 3rd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

# Make It *Historical*

## Identify the Parts and How They Interrelate

What are the parts of your topic, and how do they relate to one another?

- historical figures
- historical context
- main event
- frontier

How is your topic part of a larger system?

- historical lenses (political, social, economic, etc)
- local, national, and global histories
- identity (race, class, gender, etc)





# Make It *Historical*

## Trace its Own History and its Role in a Larger History

How and why has your topic changed through time, as something with its own history?

- historiography / different historical narratives
- different audiences
- different contexts

How and why is your topic an episode in a larger history?

- space in a larger historical sequences of events
- causes and consequences
- identity (race, class, gender, etc)



# Make It *Historical*

## Identify Its Characteristics and the Categories that Include It

What kind of thing is your topic? What is its range of variation? How are instances of it similar to and different from one another?

- what is the most common narrative
- how do others differ
- why do others differ

To what larger categories can your topic be assigned? How does that help us understand it?

- what other events/people/ideas are like yours
- how does your topic compare to other locations
- what historical narratives are similar?



# Make It *Historical*

## Determine Its Value

What values does your topic reflect?  
What values does it support? Contradict?

- what is the ethical dimension of your topic
- whose purposes does each narrative serve

How good or bad is your topic?  
Is it useful?

- which parts are most accurate
- white parts are least accurate





# Crafting the *Question*



Step 2:

**EVALUATE THE QUESTION.**

# HISTORICAL RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Make it  
*Significant*

- Based in historical reasoning
- Requires thought & research
- Leads to an explicit argument
- May not be the immediate subject of your investigations



# Evaluate the *Questions*



Stick to questions that  
ask **HOW** or **WHY**.



Try to combine smaller  
questions into larger, more  
significant ones

ABCs of

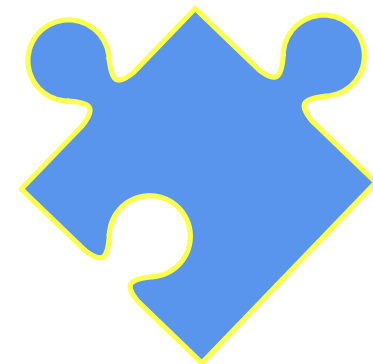
NHD



**ALWAYS**



**BE**



**CONNECTING**

**BACK TO THE  
THEME**



# Let's Practice *Evaluation*



What was Frank Kameny fighting for  
during the gay rights movement?  
What did the protests communicate  
during the gay rights movement?



The theme for these sample questions is  
Communication in History





# Let's Practice

## *Evaluation*



What was Frank Kameny fighting for during the gay rights movement?  
What did the protests communicate during the gay rights movement?



- + Historical
- Missing a connection to the theme
- "what" question
- isn't arguable
- is Google-able

The theme for these sample questions is  
Communication in History



# Let's Practice *Evaluation*



How did Frank Kameny use protests  
to raise awareness of gay rights?

The theme for these sample questions is  
Communication in History



# Let's Practice

## *Evaluation*



How did Frank Kameny use protests to raise awareness of gay rights?

- + How question
- + Connection to theme (kind of)
- + Historic
- Google-able



The theme for these sample questions is  
Communication in History



# Let's Practice *Evaluation*



Why were Frank Kameny's protests an effective counter to the Lavender Scare? How did his protests spark the gay rights movement?



The theme for these sample questions is  
Communication in History



# Let's Practice

## *Evaluation*



Why were Frank Kameny's protests an effective counter to the Lavender Scare? How did his protests spark the gay rights movement?

- + Why & How Questions
- + Theme
- + Historic
- + Not Google-able
- Lacking Significance



The theme for these sample questions is  
Communication in History

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Communication in History



# Let's Practice

## *Evaluation*



How did Frank Kameny's Mattachine Society redefine what it meant to be gay in the United States, ultimately setting the stage for the future gay rights movement?

Why were his protests and newsletters an effective form of communication to help him achieve his goal?



The theme for these sample questions is  
Communication in History



# Let's Practice



## *Evaluation*



How did Frank Kameny's Mattachine Society redefine what it meant to be gay in the United States, ultimately setting the stage for the future gay rights movement?

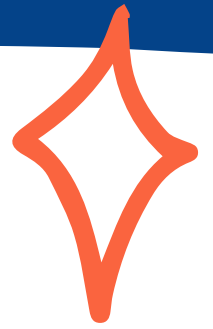
Why were his protests and newsletters an effective form of communication to help him achieve his goal?

- + Analytical
- + Multiple Perspectives
- + Significance
- Context



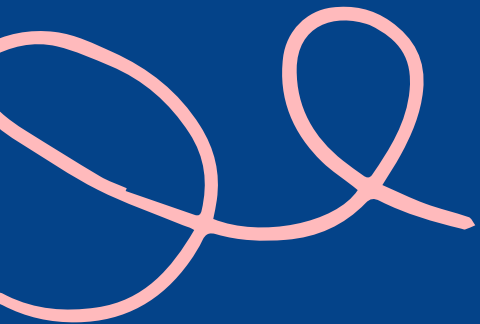
Make It  
*Compelling*

Start by asking -



**"SO WHAT?"**

...





# Make it

## *Compelling*



Step 1: Name Your Topic

"I am trying to learn about \_\_\_\_"



Step 2: Add a Question

"because I want to find out why/how"



Step 3: Motivate the Question

"in order to help my audience understand how, why, or whether:"

**Source:** Booth, Wayne C., Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. 2008. *The Craft of Research*. 3rd ed. Chicago Guides to Writing, Editing and Publishing. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.



"IT IS ALWAYS BETTER TO KEEP ASKING  
QUESTIONS YOU THINK YOU CANNOT  
ANSWER THAN TO STOP ASKING  
QUESTIONS BECAUSE YOU THINK YOU  
CANNOT ANSWER THEM."



HISTORY DAY CALIFORNIA 2023



# QUESTIONS

