

# SELECTING A TOPIC

Choosing a topic that is right for your project or paper is the first and perhaps most important step in the research process. Try to pick a topic that you find interesting, thought provoking, academically valuable, and/or something you want to explore further. Often if you can connect a topic with a personal interest of yours (ie: theater, music, military, politics, athletics) the research process will be much more enjoyable and your finished product will be better. If your family or friends have some link to an important event or person in history, and/or you have access to primary sources (ie: letters, journals, drawings, interviews) related to this subject, you may find this a great way to make a personal connection to history and write an interesting and insightful paper. There are a number of tools to help you: consider using the online database **ABC CLIO**. Once you have logged in (username = lfhs; password = scouts), select one of the 8 databases available. Inside the selected database, you will have the option to create a general search or you can choose to either: “explore an era” or “analyze a topic”. Both categories are filled with potential topics each with an introductory essay, discussion questions, illustrations, profile of key people and other tools.

After selecting a topic, do some basic research on your topic. Text books, general encyclopedias, even Wikipedia are a good starting point. Read for a while until you can to formulate a research question(s). The answer to this question(s) may become your thesis/central idea statement. For example:

**Topic** = President Franklin D. Roosevelt and World War II

**Research Question:** Did FDR know about the Japanese plan to attack Pearl Harbor?

**Tentative Thesis:** Though the US government knew the Japanese were assembling a major military strike in late 1941, President Roosevelt had no clear evidence regarding the timing or target of a Japanese operation.