

Thesis Generator

(from Jim Burke's *What's the Big Idea*)

1. Identify the subject/topic (you want/need to study)
 2. Turn the subject into a guiding (sometimes called "Essential") question
 3. Answer the question with a statement
 4. Refine this statement into a working thesis
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What makes a good essential question?

(Based on Smagorinsky's *The Dynamics of Writing Instruction* and Burke's *What's the Big Idea*)

- Has multiple answers
- Provides opportunity to integrate material from multiple sources
- "Connects the text(s) to other texts/ideas through analysis". (Burke)
- "Responds to analytical questions such as 'How are these similar? Different? Related?'" (Burke)

Other ideas for discovering a topic for a research paper

(From C. Olson's, *The Reading/Writing Connection*)

- Is there something in your daily life/school-life/free-time that you need to know more about?
- Are you saving up to buy anything that you need to know more about?
- Are you beginning to think about what you want to do when you graduate and about which you need more information?
- Do you have any concerns/fears that you would like to explore?