

INDEPENDENT STUDY PROJECT

Grade 9

For your ISP, you will prepare a research-based editorial about a significant topic from the Elizabethan Era (1557-1603).

Required elements:

- The Editorial
- An Annotated Bibliography with at least five sources
- Rough Notes

Possible Research Topics

- Concerns about the real identity of William Shakespeare
- Discoveries in the New World
- England's break with the church in Rome
- Queen Elizabeth the First
- The Plague
- The role of women
- Witches and superstition
- Bear-baiting
- Privateers
- Personal hygiene issues
- Weddings and betrothals
- Entertainment in London
- The role of servants
- Elizabethan Fashion
- Honour and duelling
- Crime and punishment
- The Spanish Armada



Part 1: The Editorial

An editorial is an article that presents **an opinion** about an issue. Editorial writers are similar to lawyers: they must have **thorough knowledge** about their topic, and then **choose a position** that they believe they can **persuade readers** to adopt. Editorials are meant to influence public opinion, promote critical thinking, and sometimes cause people to take action about an issue. In essence, an editorial is an **opinionated news story**.



To Do List

1. Pick a topic from the list above.
2. Conduct research about your topic. Read as much as you can! Choose credible sources; that is, have an author or a reputable organization/title behind them, as well as be dated within the last fifteen years.

As you read, take hand written notes of information that is pertinent. Write it down on the *Research Tracking Chart*. Be sure to include the source where you found it. **ISPs will not be accepted without this part of the assignment.**

3. As you read, try to identify opposing viewpoints that exist in your research. For example, someone researching Queen Elizabeth will find that although many people believed she ruled England with strength and purpose, others thought she failed because she never married. As you identify these viewpoints, you will need to choose the one that you hope to persuade others to adopt.

Specific Requirements

- The editorial should be 750-1000 words
- Use direct and indirect quotations within the editorial
- You may choose font and paper styles to make your editorial appear authentic
- Editorials are written using first-person point of view
- Write from the time period of the Elizabethan age. You may even wish to adopt a persona from a real or imagined person from that time period. This always gives the editorial a very personal touch.

Organizing the Editorial

An editorial is a little bit different than a formal essay. Whereas in a formal essay the writer presents his or her opinion almost immediately, an editorial builds up to the position throughout the paper. In your case, you will not explicitly state your opinion until the fourth paragraph. However, the reader should get the sense of where you are heading, starting in paragraphs two and three.

You can use each of the headings below as a paragraph/section in your editorial:

1. Begin with an objective explanation of the issue. Include the five Ws and H. Pull in facts and quotations from the sources that are relevant. **Be sure, when you use quotations, to source the material within the essay.** See sample below.
2. Present your opposition's viewpoint first. Every topic has two sides and a good editorial must acknowledge that both exist. Use facts and quotations to state the other side's position objectively.
3. Refute the opposition's belief. Now is the time to pull in facts and quotations from people who support your position. In doing so, try to point out why the opposition is mistaken in their beliefs.

4. Give reasons to defend your position. This is the most important part of the editorial. It is where you show why readers should adopt your position. This part may, in fact, have begun in the third paragraph.
5. Conclude with some punch! Give solutions to the problem or challenge the reader to be informed. A rhetorical question is often a good way to end an editorial.

Use the *Editorial Planning Chart* to help organize your ideas!

Historical Accuracies

While one of the goals in writing the editorial is to demonstrate knowledge of your topic, you also want to differentiate what we know now and what an Elizabethan person would have known then. Therefore, try not to present information that we know now that people in the sixteenth century mind not have had.

For example, while we now know that that the Black Death was caused by infected rats, the Elizabethans understood the plague as punishment from God or because Jewish people were poisoning Christian wells.

Sourcing Within the Essay

All information you find much be sourced within the editorial itself. Your goal is to give credit to those people who came up with those ideas. If the information is common knowledge—such as the date of someone’s birth—you do not need a source. Rather, sourcing is for *ideas* that are not your own.

Below is a sample of how you might accomplish this.

Let’s say you sourced from the following website:

“The Black Death: Bubonic Plague.” *The Black Death: Bubonic Plague*. N.p., 2011. Web.

13 Dec. 2012. <<http://www.themiddleages.net/plague.html>>

And you discovered the following about the Black Death:

“The disease took its toll on the church as well. People throughout Christendom had prayed devoutly for deliverance from the plague. Why hadn't those prayers been answered? A new period of political turmoil and philosophical questioning lay ahead.”

Then, in trying to give credit to this source, your editorial might read as follows:

I do not understand why so many people are dying. For many, many years people have been praying “devoutly for deliverance” (“The Black Death”). If this doesn’t end soon, people might lose even more faith in God.

Part 2: The Annotated Bibliography

The purpose of an Annotated Bibliography is to present the reader with a fairly detailed explanation of the sources you have used throughout your research. While a standard bibliography only lists the sources, an Annotated Bibliography also explains the usefulness of each one to your research.

Your Annotated Bibliography must have a minimum of five sources. For each source, you will include a 4-5 sentence paragraph describing at least three of the following:

- The type of source it is (e.g. website, database, book, etc).
- The most significant pieces of information that you took from the source.
- An evaluation of the source's credibility. How old is the source? Is there an author or organization associated with the source? Does the source seem authentic? Did you find other sources with similar or contradicting information?
- A recommendation of why others should use this source.

A Sample Annotated Bibliography Entry

Annotated Bibliography

The Black Death: Bubonic Plague.” *The Black Death: Bubonic Plague*. N.p., 2011. Web.

13 Dec. 2012. <<http://www.themiddleages.net/plague.html>>

This is one of the web pages on a website all about the Middle Ages. From this website, I learned that it was suspected that over half of the European population died during the fourteenth century outbreak of the Black Death, and that throughout this period many people were looking for explanations why this was happening. The website itself seems credible: it is part of a greater website that describes a full era in time, and it is also dated only one year ago. However, I would not recommend my peers to use this source because it only discusses the Black Death in the fourteen century and my project is about the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Part 3: Rough Notes

All rough work must be submitted with your final product! Your rough work will include the *Research Planning Chart*, the *Editorial Planning Chart*, and at least one copy of your editorial, hand-edited.