

MY AUTHOR STUDY PAPER

A Step-by-Step Guide



Greencastle-Antrim Middle School

Eighth Grade Project

*NAME\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_*

**BEGINNING MY RESEARCH PAPER**

**STEP 1 SELECTING A TOPIC**

According to the instructions from your classroom teacher, you will review topic ideas, which are related to your current unit of study. Select one you are interested in working with for the next several weeks. It must be approved before you begin the research process to ensure materials are available.

**STEP 2 COMPLETING PRELIMINARY RESEACH**

Before you begin taking notes, you must complete some preliminary research in order to make sure that there is enough information available to complete your research project. Identify some key words, terms, names, dates, etc., to help you locate information about your topic. When searching for information on your author’s life, type in ***name* biography, interview with *name*, *name* blog, *name* videos…**

Secondly, a list of sources must be created for the note taking stage. **WHERE** do you look? Many authors have **websites, publisher websites, Twitter accounts, author videos, interviews with the author, author blogs, in the front or back of their books**, and many more places on which they place information about themselves and their books.

From the information you discover through your preliminary research, you will generate a thesis statement. While doing the preliminary research, jot down ideas about your thesis statement.

**STEP 3 WRITING A THESIS STATEMENT**

Now you are ready to write your thesis statement. Review the information you have jotted down. What is your belief or theory about what you have discovered? Your statement of belief or theory will be your **thesis statement-** the single most important sentence in your paper. Your entire paper will be based on this statement. Write this statement on a note card and keep it in front of you throughout the entire research process. Review the next page for information on how to write a thesis statement.

**WRITING MY THESIS STATEMENT**

***Directions:*** *You will be writing your own thesis statement on your author. Decide your opinion of your author, and three points that you can share about him or her.*

**For Example:**

**AUTHOR:** Edgar Allan Poe

**OPINION:** gruesome and depressed author

**REASONS/POINTS:** 1. The loss and pain of his early childhood

2. The rejection and loss of his teen years

3. The depression and alcoholism of his later years

**THESIS STATEMENT:** Edgar Allan Poe is a gruesome and depressed author due to the loss and pain experienced in his early childhood, the rejection and loss of his teen years, and the depression and alcoholism that followed him through his later years.

***Your Turn…***

**AUTHOR:**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**OPINION:**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**REASONS/POINTS (in parallel form):**

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***Now put it all together…***

**THESIS STATEMENT:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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**STEP 4 - CITING YOUR SOURCES**

When you write a research paper or use research as a part of any writing, you must show where you found the material you are using or “borrowing.” This material might be facts, opinions, quotations, pictures, etc. Regardless of what it is, you must acknowledge your sources. You will be shown how to cite or document this information in your written work. You will also need to include a Works Cited page, which is a list of the sources you use in your paper. Your Works Cited is compiled from the sources you cited in your notes, which is why it is important to complete this correctly! Pay close attention to the order of information, punctuation, capitalization, etc. when citing your sources. When it calls for underlining, *you may also italicize*. When writing your sources, double space and indent any lines after the first one. Below are three of most commonly used sources (for your author study) and an example for each.

**STEP 5 – TAKING NOTES**

After writing your first source at the top of your first note-taking sheet, you are now ready to begin the research stage of the process. Write each of the sources you plan to use onto separate note-taking sheet, according to the examples on the previous page.

With your thesis statement as your guide, begin taking notes to support your belief or theory using the note–taking examples on the next pages. After you have taken notes from the useful sources that you have found, you may discover you need more information. At this stage you will need to find additional sources relating to your topic that are available.

For your paper, know the number of sources required. You will want several different kinds of sources. Sources include magazines, newspapers, reference books, encyclopedias, journals, non-fiction books, personal interviews, Internet articles, websites, etc. You may have as many sources as you can find; they just cannot be all of the same kind. For example you may not use only five magazine articles. You may use two magazine articles in addition to two other kinds of sources.

PLEASE NOTE: Google and Bing etc. are **not** sources; they are search engines. The source is the site these search engines bring up for you to use.

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When you find information that you might want to use in your paper, record it on your note-taking sheet. These sheets will help you track where you found your information and save time!

1. From each source, write on only the note-taking sheet from that source.
2. On every note-taking sheet identify the source from which the notes come. Beside each note, write the page # from which the notes come. If you do not do this now, you will be wasting your time to go back later and do it!
3. Put only one idea from one source at each bullet point on your note-taking sheet.
4. Identify the topic/idea of each note by identifying each bullet point with a slug. A slug is a word or phrase that tells you at a glance what is contained in that note. For example: “Rescue Attempts” “Survivor Testimony” “Statistics on Deaths.” You may have many notes with the same **slug** but from different sources. That is good research. Adding the slug now will prevent you from having to reread every note later to determine where it belongs in your paper. **Slugs go next to each note on your sheet.**

EXAMPLES OF NOTE-TAKING SHEETS

**Original Passage:**

Once free, Harriet Tubman joined the Abolitionist cause and soon decided to become a conductor on the Underground Railroad—the secret organization that aided southern slaves in their flight to freedom. Over the next ten years she made at least 15 expeditions into Maryland and personally escorted more than 200 runaway slaves to the North. Undeterred by the large rewards offered for her capture, she appeared to have something of a sixth sense in finding food and shelter during these hazardous missions and never lost any of her charges.

From “Tubman, Harriet.” *Collier’s Encyclopedia*. 1994, page 12

**Direct Quotation**

Tubman—sixth sense

According to *Collier’s Encyclopedia*,

“Undeterred by the large rewards offered for her capture, she appeared to have something of a sixth sense in finding food and shelter during these hazardous missions and never lost any of her charges.”

Page 12

**Paraphrase**

Tubman—Underground Railroad

Risking her own life and avoiding capture, Harriett Tubman led many other slaves to freedom on the Underground Railroad by crossing into Maryland and leading them north

Page 12

**Summary**

Tubman’s Actions

Harriet Tubman:

1. Joined Abolitionist.
2. Led slaves north on Underground railroad
3. Escorted over 200 slaves

Page 12

**NOTE-TAKING SHEET**

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| Author (last name first):  Article name in quotation marks:  Title of website/book in italics:  City of Publication:  Publisher Name:  Publishing Date:  Page Numbers (if available):  Medium of Publication: Web  Date you Accessed Material (military style): |

Citation:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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**NOTES FROM THIS SOURCE**

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**STEP 6 – CREATING AN OUTLINE**

This step helps you develop a road map for writing your paper and proving or supporting your thesis statement. Remember that all parts of your outline and final paper should support your thesis statement.

1. Write your thesis statement in the introduction of your topic outline
2. Look through your notes and make sure your slugs can be placed according to the main points you plan to address to support your thesis. If your slugs do not coordinate with your planned topics, you may need to change your topics to fit the research you found.
3. Decide which slugs fit together as topics and subtopics for your essay.
4. Any notes that do not fit into any of the parts of your thesis statement must be set aside or they may be useful in your introduction or conclusion. Keep all notes! Next, look at the number of notes you have for each section of your essay. Do you have enough notes for each major division and for each subdivision? If you do not, you must do additional research!
5. You have now organized your information in preparation for writing your working topic outline.
6. Spend some time considering how to begin each paragraph with a strong topic sentence and how to complete each paragraph with a powerful clincher. Since you are writing about an author, the author’s own words could be used to prove how life impacts art.

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*Sample*

POE OUTLINE

1. **Introduction**
   1. **Attention-Getter:** “Now this is the point. You fancy me mad. Madmen know nothing. But you should have seem me. You should have seen how wisely I proceeded—with what caution—with what foresight—with what dissimulation I went to work!” Was Edgar Allan Poe referring to himself? Was he a madman or a sane and intelligent genius? Looking through the events of Poe’s life and analyzing his writings, one must wonder.
   2. **Thesis Statement:** Due to the tragedies experienced throughout his life, from childhood, throughout adolescence, and into the careers and family life of his adulthood, depression and melancholy is the prevalent theme in all of Edgar Allan Poe’s writings.
2. **Supporting Paragraph 1 (Topic:** Childhood)
   1. **Topic Sentence:** From birth and throughout his childhood, Edgar Poe’s life was wrought with tragedy and pain.
   2. Birth
   3. Siblings
   4. Abandonment and death of parents
   5. Foster family
   6. **Clincher:** The deaths of his birth mother, his childhood crush, and his foster mother were the first tragedies to mold Edgar Allan Poe into the morbid writer he became.The amount of lossEdgar Allan Poe experienced in childhood compounded the sadness he portrayed in his writings. As he states in his story “Ligeia,” “…my memory is feeble through much suffering.”
3. **Supporting Paragraph 2 (Topic:** Adolescence)
   1. **Topic Sentence:** Pain and heart ache continued to follow Poe throughout his adolescence.
   2. Education
   3. Death of foster mother
   4. Relationship with foster father
   5. College
   6. **Clincher: A**s he grew older, Edgar Allan Poe’s life did not become any easier; his problems just grew bigger too. The culmination of which occurred as he attended his foster father, John Allan, at his deathbed and was rejected again. His mind must surely have imagined an act of revenge upon this cold-hearted “father.” As Poe continued to write, his writings grew even darker, and his revenge spewed forth in “The Tell Tale Heart,” in which the narrator kills the old man for whom he works because of an irritation. “I made up my mind to take the life of the old man, and thus rid myself of the eye forever.” Poe exacted his revenge.
4. **Supporting Paragraph 3 (Topic:** Careers)
   1. **Topic Sentence:** Even when he gained his independence and set out to establish himself in his career, Poe struggled with disappointment around every bend.
   2. Debt
   3. Army
   4. Editor
   5. Writer
   6. Speaker
   7. Debt
   8. **Clincher:** Throughout his life, every one of Edgar Allan Poe’s attempts at success was thwarted. His writings reflect the dismalness of his life. In “The Fall of the House of Usher” he begins, “One dark summer day, when the clouds hung low in the sky, I rode on horseback through the dreary countryside. By evening, I could see the melancholy House of Usher. With the first glimpse of that bleak and lonely building, a sense of gloom overcame me.” Looking over his own failures, a sense of gloom must have overcome Poe also.
5. **Supporting Paragraph 4 (Topic:** Family Life)
   1. **Topic Sentence:** The only area of his life in which Poe found joy was with his chosen family, but even there, tragedy struck again.
   2. Loves
   3. Marriage
   4. Wife’s Death
   5. Lostness
   6. **Clincher**: Every time Edgar Allan Poe sought solace in a romantic relationship, his loves were taken from him, frequently by the dreaded disease -- tuberculosis. Several of Poe’s writings portrayed this evil villain in his life. In “The Masque of the Red Death,” Poe describes this villain as “Darkness and Decay and the Red Death held limitless power over all.” This villain held a limitless power over Poe and all he held dear.
6. **Conclusion**
   1. **Restate Thesis: T**he tragedies that Edgar Allan Poe experienced throughout his life, through childhood, adolescence, his failed careers and family life in adulthood, left him with only depression and melancholy to fuel his writings.
   2. **Final Thought:** Poe’s life of woe is summed up in his famous poem, “The Raven,” when Poe utters the words that describe his life--raised hopes dashed to bits before his eyes: **“**And my soul from out that shadow that lies floating on the floor shall be lifted—nevermore!”

***Now you try…***

**AUTHOR STUDY OUTLINE**

# Introduction

## Attention-Getter:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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## Thesis Statement:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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# Supporting Paragraph #1 – Topic\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

## Topic Sentence:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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# Supporting Paragraph #2 – Topic\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

## Topic Sentence:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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# Supporting Paragraph #3 – Topic\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

## Topic Sentence:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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# Conclusion

## Restate Thesis:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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## Final Thoughts:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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**STEP 7 – DOCUMENTING and CITING YOUR SOURCES**

When you use information from your notes, you must properly document it within your paper. You must state the author and/or source from which you have taken the information.

**For example:**

According to *Collier’s Encyclopedia*, “Undeterred by the large rewards offered for her capture, she appeared to have something of a sixth sense in finding food and shelter during these hazardous missions and never lost any of her charges.”

**If you do not do this**, you are plagiarizing which will result in a **0** for your paper! You will need to redo the paper correctly!

Go through your note-taking sheets and cross out any sources from which you did not take notes or any whose notes you did not use. Next, arrange them alphabetically according to author’s last name, or in the absence of an author, first word of article or book title. Using examples on the next pages, write the rough draft of your Works Cited page.

**STEP 8 – WRITING OUT YOUR ROUGH DRAFT FROM YOUR OUTLINE**

**STEP 9 – CREATING YOUR WORKS CITED PAGE**

The Works Cited page is a separate page at the end of your paper, which lists alphabetically by author or article title every work cited in your paper

**\*\*List only those sources you actually cited in your paper.**

* Place the list of works cited at the end of the paper.
* Center the title, "Works Cited," one inch from the top of the page.
* Double space between the title and the first entry.
* **Double space both within and between entries**.
* Begin each entry flush with the left margin.
* Indent subsequent lines one-half inch (five spaces).
* Alphabetize by the author's (or editor's) last name.
* Entries without an author are alphabetized by title.

**USING CITATION MACHINE**

An easy way to create your Works Cited page in the correct format is to go to an online resource, such as Citation Machine at <http://citationmachine.net>.

* Click on the button labeled MLA format.
* Decide which type of print or non-print source you are using.
* Then input all of the information that it asks of you from your source. (You will need to have your source—or your note-taking sheet with all of the source information--in your hand at this time).
* When the program generates your citation, simply copy and paste it into your word document for your Works Cited page.

*See Sample Works Cited page below…*

Name 5

Works Cited

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**STEP 10 – TYPING and FORMATING YOUR ESSAY in MLA FORMAT**

**STEP 11 – REVISING and EDITING YOUR PAPER**

**STEP 12 – TURNING IN YOUR FINAL COPY ON OR BEFORE THE DATE IT IS DUE**