Research Essay Requirements:

- The paper should be **3-5 pages** long, typed, double spaced. The Works Cited page or outline do not count towards the page limit
- Use 12-point Times New Roman font
- Use MLA style for documenting sources (**see PurdueOwl for details**)
- Use outside sources to gather information from research. Consult at least **five sources** (**make sure they are credible; no Wikipedia types**)
- Incorporate information gathered from research by **quoting, paraphrasing, and summarizing**
- Document sources within the essay using **parenthetical (in-text) documentation** and at the end of the essay in a **works-cited list**
- The paper should have a clear **introduction, body, and conclusion** with a **thesis statement** in the introduction
- If you choose, your paper may include one **graphic, picture, illustration, chart, or graph** to explain key concepts (**Do not make it absurdly large, max dimensions 2x3 inches**)

The research essay counts as 50% of the final Test grade for this Unit

**SELECTING A TOPIC AND MAKING A PLAN**

One of the most common challenges students face when tackling a writing project is choosing a topic. When assigned a writing task, maybe your first thought is, “I don’t know what to write about!” Difficulty in selecting an appropriate topic often leads to frustration, and many students are tempted to give up even before they start writing. However, choosing a topic does not need to be frustrating or difficult.

It is often necessary to consult outside sources when selecting a topic for research. If you are given a general topic (such as the Russian Revolution) or a list of topics from which to choose, you need to do background reading to develop a general understanding of the topic.

Look at the following list of topics. Once you have chosen a topic, the goal of your research is to discover the significance of the topic to the Russian Revolution and the events that followed it.
Research Topics:

- Abdication of Nicholas II
- Bolsheviks
- Cheka
- Czar Nicholas II’s rule
- February Revolution of 1917
- Great Purge of the 1930s
- Joseph Stalin
- Karl Marx
- Leon Trotsky
- October Revolution of 1917
- Proletariat (working class)
- Red Army
- Red Terror
- Rise of communism in Russia
- Russian Civil War
- Stalin’s Five-Year Plan
- *The Communist Manifesto*
- Totalitarianism
- Vladimir Lenin
- White Army

Perhaps you already have a topic in mind and are ready to begin researching. However, if you are having difficulty choosing a topic, you can select a few topics, and after doing some preliminary reading about each one, choose the one that interests you the most. Each of these topics is a broad, general topic that you will need to narrow as you begin your research.

In order to develop a focus for your research and a foundation of knowledge about your topic, you should first consult a general resource, such as an encyclopedia. An encyclopedia entry can give you a good overall impression about your topic and help you narrow your focus to a specific aspect about your topic. As you do background reading about your topic, consider how the topic relates to the Russian Revolution and the rise of communism in Russia.
Narrowing Your Topic

Your research topic should be specific. A topic such as “the abdication of Nicholas II” is a start, but it is too broad for a research paper. To narrow your topic, begin asking questions about it. Consider its significance to the Russian Revolution, Stalin’s dictatorship, and the rise of communism. For instance you could ask the following questions:

- What were the major causes of Nicholas II’s abdication?
- What were the effects?
- What events surrounded his abdication?
- Why was Nicholas II’s abdication important to the rise of communism?

Each of these questions could be used as a major research question. To narrow the focus of your research, develop one major research question. The major research question is the question you will seek to answer throughout your essay. Therefore, it should not be a simple yes-or-no question. It should be one that requires inquiry, research, and explanation to answer it. Questions that begin with “what,” “why,” and “how” are often best for major research questions.

Brainstorming and Making a Research Plan

Once you have selected your topic and created a major research question, you can now begin to brainstorm ideas and develop a plan for your research. Consider your major research question. The major research question identifies the main focus of your research. What are some specific subtopics that relate to your research question? Two ways to brainstorm ideas are to create a jot list or a cluster diagram with ideas for your research. A jot list is simply a list of words or topics that relate to your narrowed topic or major research question. A cluster diagram is a graphic organizer that allows you to brainstorm ideas and show the relationships among ideas. Creating a jot list or a cluster diagram can help you generate ideas for your research and writing.

After doing background reading about your topic, you should have a basic understanding of your topic. Before you begin researching facts for your essay, create a plan for your research. Writing a tentative outline is a good way to plan the development and organization of your essay. A tentative outline, also called a working outline, is an outline that you create before you begin researching and writing. It shows the main topic you plan to research and discuss in your essay. Though you still need to research your topic, a tentative outline will guide your research and help you look for specific information to include.

(Information taken from Responsive Education Solutions, English I Unit 6: Research Process)