



exploratory essay

a big microtheme w/ research

1. Your starting point is, "How I got interested in this problem."

2. Ask a question. Problematize. Don't assert a

thesis. Be patient as you discover your position. Avoid exploring something about which you are already extremely biased. Choose something new, and follow your genuine curiosity. For example: I'm curious about updates on findings regarding Lasik surgery. I've always wanted to do it, but the long-term results weren't available; I wonder where we stand now regarding the results? See how I'm already speculating about consequences, as some of you did in the microtheme?

3. Avoid asserting a thesis and forecasting a plan. You should develop an earned conclusion, even if it is something like, "This is complicated." Develop your claims from your sources. Let your expert's claims, those that you will share through your summaries, do the work of asserting your emergent position.
4. Consider multiple "solutions" or approaches to the problem. Summarize sources beyond those with which you agree. This shows that you're open to a range of views and that you can read with & against the grain.
5. Create tension among the potential "solutions" or approaches. ("Whereas X argues Y, Z nevertheless finds this position problematic, and here's how ..."). You can also use your personal narrative glue to create tension ("This solution makes sense, but I continue to worry about X").
6. Use an open form — a variety of rhetorical strategies — to make your essay engaging and lively. You might think of a lively discussion or conversation as the guiding metaphor for the assignment (including the research). You are part of this conversation, so use a reflective prose voice to guide us through your thought processes. I call this narrative glue.
7. Organize the essay chronologically, detailing in narrative form your engagement with the processes of exploratory thinking, reading, and writing about your chosen problem. Work summary-by-summary, analysis-by-analysis, and simply share what you are finding. Your narrative glue will indicate how your thoughts are evolving.
8. Generate a brief summary for each source used. Consider using the Microtheme to help you structure your essay, but instead of speculating about causes or consequences, you'll be summarizing experts. Keep track of your emerging disposition via narrative glue.
9. Your essay should be 4 - 7 pages, using 3 sources (at least one academic journal article).
10. Use MLA format.