

Here is how your Exploratory Essay will go down...

Focus Question: How have the ideals/principles in the founding documents either been upheld or violated?

You will be thinking about this question in regard to a specific topic from your book.

Choose one of the following topics to explore:

1. Education
2. Gun violence
3. Gang violence
4. Prison reform
5. Single parent families
6. Police Brutality

You are going to write an exploratory paper in which you come to explain what you currently understand about the topic you chose in relation to the ideals/principles of the founding documents. Think about following this order, but you may choose to organize your thinking in another way if it is easier. You **MUST** relate any ideas you come up with back to the topic that you chose to explore.

1. **Before Researching:** What is your original thinking on your topic with regard to the principles/ideals in the founding documents?
 - Reflect upon what you are thinking about your topic **BEFORE** you start researching your topic and finish your book.
2. **During Reading/Researching:** What are some of the ideas that your group is discussing while reading this book? What are ideas you are finding from your research?
 - what did you learn about your topic from the various perspectives represented in the book?
 - make sure you include specific quotes and ideas from the book
 - you may also quote your group members
 - what evidence are you finding in your research to support/refute these ideas?
3. **After Reading:** What is your thinking now that you have finished this book and read the articles?
 - has your thinking about your topic in relation to the principles and ideals in the founding documents changed? Why or why not?
 - how can you relate your thinking back to your own experience/s
 - use specific examples from your own life, the book, and the articles and explain the connections
4. At the end is where you come up with a thesis statement, of sorts. It is not as formal as in an analytical paper, but your whole exploration should have led you to a new idea about your topic and the focus question.
5. Finally, after processing through this (because the writing of this paper is a thinking process):
 - How will you apply your (hopefully) new understandings about your topic to your future learning?
 - How will you use your deepened understanding of this topic to inform your perspective in the future?

- In other words, what will you stop and think about when learning new information based on this experience?
- What questions do you still want answers to?

Task while reading these articles:

You will be responsible for collecting information on your topic while you read.

In addition, you should take notes on the following for EACH article:

- What is the author's perspective?
- What are the most important points about your topic?
- What principles/ideals are represented?
 - Are these being upheld or violated?
- What connections do you see to *your book*?
- What questions do you have?
- Where do you agree/disagree with the information?

The more notes you take while reading, the more information you will have to explore in coming to decide on a thesis statement about your topic.

Remember, you are thinking about the following question about your chosen topic:

How have the ideals/principles in the founding documents either been upheld or violated?