

# Brainstorming

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Compliments of the wonderful consultants who attended the Brainstorming Workshop—we wanted to share our tips with you too!

## **Narratives:**

- Make a list of 10 ways you define yourself. Then, for each characteristic, list events or memories that explain why you are that way.
- Draw a timeline of your life: what are the important events?
- Pretend interview yourself: what would you find interesting about you?
- Draw your house -- What rooms or items can you recall the most detail about? Are there any stories connected to those objects or rooms?
- Start with a set "meaning," and find a moment in your life that matches up to it. For example: "The best things in life are free." Was there ever a moment in your life that illustrated that? Even better: was there a moment in your life that proved a popular maxim *wrong*? Such as: "Sometimes, the best things in life AREN'T free." Was there ever a moment in your life that matched up to that?

Some other set meanings:

- Don't judge a man till you've walked a mile in his shoes.
- If you have nothing nice to say, don't say it at all.
- One man's trash is another man's treasure.
- Don't judge a book by its cover
- Some other questions to think about:
  - Who has had the biggest influence on your life, and why?
  - What are your passions in life and why did they become your passions?
  - Describe a moment when you were fierce!
  - Remember the extreme emotions: when were you the happiest? Saddest? Angriest? Most Scared?
  - What's your major? Why?

## **Research Papers:**

- Check out a variety of news sites—npr.org, googlenews, cnn.com, MLIVE.com (for local issues), news.bbc.co.uk/ to see if any articles interest you.
- Type any keyword of interest into GVSU's databases, such as Infotrac, Academic Search Premier, Lexus Nexus, to see what articles pop up about the topic.

- Do you have a question that you always wanted to know the answer to? For example: Why do I have to take WRT 150? Why does GVSU charge so much for parking? You may be able to research and answer these questions!
- Fill in the blank: "Why do we need \_\_\_\_\_" or "Why DON'T we need \_\_\_\_\_"?
- Think about these questions: What would you be doing right now if you weren't in class? What are your hobbies? What don't you know about your hobbies?
- Have a conversation (with a consultant, a friend, whomever!) about your life—maybe there are some researchable details to focus on (Did you grow up in a single parent family? Not play sports? Win a piano competition?)
- If in a group: play the keyword game. One person says a word, and then next says the first word that pops into their mind, and around the circle it goes!

### **Profiles:**

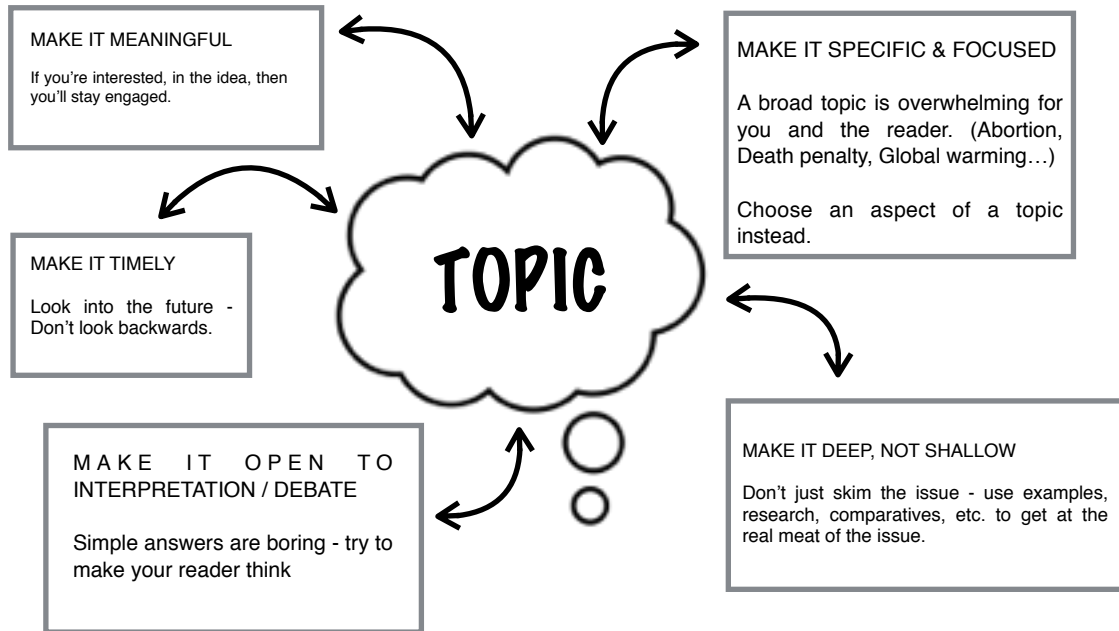
- Make a timeline of the person's life and zoom in on important moments
- Focus on details and show some meaning. For example: Why is he wearing a particular brand or style? Why does he speak in a certain way?
- A great group activity is to ask: how do we learn about people?
- Write "a typical day in the life of \_\_\_\_\_" (fill in person or place)
- Remember that the paper doesn't have to be positive. Maybe focus on finding the "truth" of the situation or even the negative.
- Personify the place: give it characteristics, a personality, a "face"
- Show the CHANGE in a person or place
- Define the person or place by what it is NOT

### **Response/Argument:**

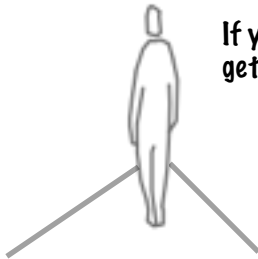
- Think about this: What makes you angry?
- Make outline of article's points. Do you agree/disagree with these points?
- What's your favorite or most hated part of the article?
- Remember you can make an argument local! Take a look at a newspaper for ideas.
- Think about what's debated in your major area.
- Write down issues other people feel strongly about—which you can explore.
- If in a group, play "The doubting/believing game:" ½ group make pro-arguments, other ½ make cons.
- (This also works in one-on-ones too: right now, let's think of pros/cons)
- "Argue within the argument:" ask lots of "Why's?" to reasons
- Play the perspective game—try to argue from *someone else's* perspective.

# BRAINSTORMING A TOPIC, THE CONTENT, OR YOUR ARGUMENT

Picking a topic can be really difficult - especially when you're allowed to start from anywhere!



If you're having a hard time starting a paper because the **GENRE** is getting in the way, here are a few tips to help you get started!



## THE NARRATIVE

- Draw a timeline of your life: what's important?
- Pretend to interview yourself: what would you ask as the interviewer?
- Draw your house. What rooms/items can you recall with the most detail? Why are they important?
- Who has had the biggest influence on your life and why?
- Remember the extreme emotions: when were you happiest?

## RESEARCH PAPER



- Check out a variety of news sites ([npr.org](http://npr.org), [news.google.com](http://news.google.com), etc.)
- Use GVSU's databases, such as Infotrac, Lexus Nexus, etc.
- Do you have any questions that you always wanted to know the answer to? These are great research questions.
- Fill in the blank: "Why do we need \_\_\_\_\_?" or "Why don't we need \_\_\_\_\_?"
- Talk to someone about your life - maybe there are some details worth investigating.



## ARGUMENTATIVE PAPER

- Think about this: What makes you angry?
- Make an outline of a piece of writing and its points. Do you agree/disagree with them?
- What is the most interesting or most frustrating aspect of the topic?
- Remember you can make an argument local! Take a look at a newspaper for ideas.
- Think about what's debated in your major area.
- Try to argue from someone else's perspective.

## PROFILES OF PEOPLE OR PLACES



- Make a timeline - what's important?
- Zoom in on details, then show some meaning.
- Write "a typical day in the life of \_\_\_\_\_"
- Personify the place: give it characteristics, a personality, a "face."
- Show the CHANGE in a person or place.
- Define the person or place by what it is not.
- Remember that the paper doesn't have to be positive. It could center on controversy or negative aspects.