English 10 Honors

Sophomore Research Project

Objectives:

• To become familiar with effective research strategies and documentation practices
• To research and write a brief biographical summary of a selected British author’s life
• To read a major work or set of minor works by your chosen author
• To write a brief summary of this work or works
• To compile and review secondary source articles related to your primary source, leading to the creation of a working thesis
• To write an analytical essay of approximately six to eight pages exploring an aspect of the primary source you have read, incorporating both illustrative primary source evidence and supporting secondary source quotations

Introduction
Welcome to the sophomore research project! This project will ask you to draw on a number of skills we have been working on this year, from secondary source research to critical reading and writing, and it will culminate in a six- to eight-page analytical essay.

Helpful Resources
All assignments and due dates will be available in the “Sophomore Research Project” folder on Schoology. Additionally, you should make frequent and liberal use of our class’s LibGuide, lovingly created and maintained by our school librarians. There you will find a range of resources, including links to searchable online databases, tutorials, and guides for citing sources.

Assignment

Step One: select an author from Great Britain or the British Commonwealth (a list of suggestions has been included with this handout).

Step Two: Using our library’s resources, research the author’s life and write a brief (two pages maximum) biographical summary of the author. As you research, pay close attention to important events that may have impacted or influenced that author’s life, as well as any political or historical movements in which your author participated. This biographical sketch must include in-text MLA documentation for all quoted and paraphrased information, as well as a Works Cited page. We will spend some time reviewing and practicing both paraphrasing and documentation skills.

Step Three: In consultation with your teacher, choose and read one of the author’s major works or a set of minor works. As you read, take notes on and mark important passages, note patterns of symbolism and imagery, and be attuned to the potential themes of the work. It is recommended that you purchase a copy of your primary source so that you may annotate the text. Most of the sources can be easily found at Half-Price Books or inexpensively through Amazon.com. The focus of your final paper may not be clear until you begin your secondary source research and preliminary writing, so try to approach your work from a number of different angles. You will be expected to write and submit a one-page summary of your chosen work.

Step Four: Locate and review secondary sources (critical essays, literary reviews, etc.) that pertain to your author and/or the work(s) you have chosen. You will be using some, and perhaps all of the
secondary sources you consult as support for your own discussion. These sources will need to be
documented, so be sure to keep track of bibliographic information. You will complete an explanatory
bibliography of these sources, in which you summarize their content and potential usefulness to your
paper.

**Step Five:** Craft an outline or précis summarizing your paper’s argument, progression, and evidence.
Based on this preparatory work, write a six- to eight-page critical analysis of the work you read. You
will develop your own thesis for this paper, and it should draw on one or more of the unifying
elements you discovered in your reading of and research about the primary source. You will be
expected to include support from your secondary sources within your analysis and to document them
according to MLA format.

**Some Ideas for Topics**
Below is a list of potential authors and sources on which you may base your research. The list is not
definitive; in other words, you may come up with a viable author and source that is not on this list.
The virtue of the following sources is that you will be able to find plenty of secondary source
material on them. If you would like to propose your own author not included on the list below, please
consult with your teacher. Your proposal will be evaluated on the basis of whether or not a sufficient
amount of secondary source material is available for your desired author and primary source.

Topic Guidelines: Your topic must:
• be literary
• be British (or from the United Kingdom)
• promise a sufficient amount of secondary source material

**Some Topic Suggestions:**

1. **William Shakespeare:** You’ve read or will read *Romeo and Juliet* and *Macbeth*, now sink your
teeth into *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, or *Othello*. Or how about a comedy like *Taming of the Shrew*?
2. **Samuel Taylor Coleridge:** brilliant poet, plagiarist, or opium addict? Or all three?
3. **William Wordsworth:** poet of nature and early environmentalist.
4. **Oscar Wilde:** brilliant thinker, novelist, and playwright or the perpetrator of "gross
indecencies"?
5. **Geoffrey Chaucer**, author of *The Canterbury Tales*: explore a new tale or dig deeper into one we
studied.
7. **Lord Byron:** 19th century poet and ladies’ man--"mad, bad, and dangerous to know."
8. **Emily Bronte**, author of *Wuthering Heights*: a gothic novel featuring intense passion, ghosts and
demons, dogs, windy moors, nightmares, and a hero/villain named Heathcliff.
9. Strange laughter, locked doors, a mysterious Mr. Rochester, and a gypsy telling fortunes
ultimately lead to romance for a modest, yet spunky governess. "Dear Reader, I married him," writes
*Charlotte Bronte* in *Jane Eyre*.
10. "It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must
be in want of a wife," opens *Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice*. Austen is also author of *Sense
and Sensibility* and *Emma* (the novel on which “Clueless” was based)
11. **Lewis Carroll**: Brilliant, bizarre creator of "The Jabberwocky" and *Alice in Wonderland*.
12. **Elizabeth Barrett Browning**: creator of the famous lines of poetry, "How do I love thee, let me
count the ways."
13. **William Blake**: Visionary poet and artist, famous for claiming to converse with God, angels, and people long dead.

14. **Charles Dickens**: prolific Victorian novelist who spent a portion of his childhood living with his parents in a debtors' prison. *Great Expectations*, *A Tale of Two Cities*, *David Copperfield*, and *Hard Times* are some of his well-known novels.

15. **Bram Stoker**, author of *Dracula*: Find out about the man who created the famous bloodsucker, public health threat, and biohazard.

16. **Percy Bysshe Shelley**: brilliant thinker and poet, revolutionary, outside agitator, ladies' man, vegetarian, and husband of the author of *Frankenstein*.

17. **Tom Stoppard**, contemporary British playwright, who takes minor characters from *Hamlet*--Rosencrantz and Guildenstern--and creates a play called *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*.

18. **Dylan Thomas**--the hard-living and hard-drinking poet.


20. **William Golding** -- 20th century author of *Lord of the Flies* and *The Spire*.

21. **Christopher Marlowe**: an English playwright and poet who lived in Shakespeare's shadow. *The Tragical History of Dr. Faustus* is his famous work.

22. **Evelyn Waugh**: important 20th century satirist and comic novelist.

23. **D.H. Lawrence**: a man who had issues with his mother and thereby every woman he met.

24. **Virginia Woolf**: an important 20th century writer interested in women's issues. Her life and work inspired *The Hours* (both the book and the movie).

25. **George Eliot**: find out the real identity of this author and read *Silas Marner* or *Middlemarch*.

26. **Thomas Hardy**, author of *Far From the Madding Crowd*, and other soap-opera-like books.

27. **Joseph Conrad**: discover his *Heart of Darkness*.

28. **E.M. Forster**, author of *Howard's End* and *A Passage to India*: an esteemed member of the Bloomsbury Group.

29. **Seamus Heaney**: you enjoyed his translation of *Beowulf*, now read original poetry by this Irish bard.

30. **James Joyce**, the Irish author who wrote *Finnegan's Wake* and *Dubliners*: scholars agree, "Joyce's facility with language equals that of William Shakespeare and John Milton."

31. **Muriel Spark**, author of *The Prime of Miss Jane Brodie*, a novel about an all-girls' school in Edinburgh, Scotland, the hometown of Ms. Spark.

32. **George Bernard Shaw**: "He is a perpetual protester against orthodoxies of all sorts," said one critic of this nineteenth century Irish playwright whose most famous work was *Pygmalion*.

33. **Margaret Atwood**, considered a contemporary English novelist (though she lives in Canada) and a "scintillating wordsmith," writes primarily about women's issues. Read her dystopian novel, *The Handmaid's Tale*, or *Cat's Eye*, a novel whose troubled protagonist is a successful artist whose adult life has been adversely affected by memories of her teenage years and the girlfriends she had then.

34. **Nadine Gordimer**: The daughter of Jewish immigrants from London, this South African author and 1991 Nobel Prize winner for literature presents a contemporary look at Anglo-Arab relations in the modern world in her novel titled *The Pickup*.

35. **Ian McEwan**, 21st century author of *Atonement* and *Saturday*. Weigh in on the discussion of whether or not he is one of the most brilliant writers of our day.

36. **Sir Thomas Malory**: Delve into his version of the tales and adventures of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table.

37. **Ann Radcliffe**, the first female gothic novelist: Read about maidens in nightgowns escaping from hooded villains, exploring subterranean passages, and being rescued—not by the hero, who
is invariably locked up in some dungeon – but by her own courage and ingenuity and a lucky break – usually a locket or a birthmark!

38. **Harold Pinter**: Winner of the 2005 Nobel Prize for Literature and “Britain’s most significant playwright since Bernard Shaw.” *The Caretaker, The Birthday Party* and *The Homecoming* are a few of his most famous.

39. **Fay Weldon**, contemporary novelist known for satire with a strong feminist twist. Read the ultimate subversion of the fairytale formula – *The Life and Loves of a She-Devil*.

40. **Rudyard Kipling**, poet and novelist best known for *The Jungle Book*.

41. **Katherine Mansfield**: “New Zealand’s most famous writer … [Her] creative years were burdened with loneliness, illness, jealousy, alienation – all this reflected in her work with the bitter depiction of marital and family relationships of her middle class characters.”

42. **Beatrix Potter**, author and illustrator of the beloved *Peter Rabbit* series.

43. **Jonathan Swift**: Born in Ireland to English parents in the latter half of the 17th century, this satirist wrote prose and poetry that “shock[s] us with its hard look at the facts of life and the body.” *Gulliver's Travels* is his most widely read work.

44. **Alexander Pope**: Tuberculosis of the spine in his childhood dwarfed and crippled this English poet and satirist (and pal of Jonathan Swift); to make matters worse, he was a Catholic living in Protestant England during a time when blatant intolerance of Roman Catholics predominated. His determination to educate himself led to his being one of the most famous (and feared) English satirists. He once wrote about himself in a poem: “Yes, I am proud; I must be proud to see / Men not afraid of God, afraid of me.” His mock epic, “The Rape of the Lock,” is both fun and shocking.


46. **Bernard MacLaverty**, a contemporary Irish writer who, in his novel *Cal*, tells the story of Cal, a young Irish man involved in the IRA. This novel has everything from violence to love to politics.