



Short Research Projects

FREE SAMPLE

A complete reading selection, one focused task, and matching teacher guidance.

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Complete source reading selection
- Focused task with response space
- Teacher guidance and source notes
- Published Saint Pierre license

2017 NC ELA SCOS | In use for 2026-27

Supplemental practice for the named skill. Print-ready PDF.

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FICTIONAL SCENARIO | READING PRACTICE

A Question Worth Investigating

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Read and annotate the complete selection. Then complete the included focused task.

1. Pickup traffic crowded the plaza and residents disagreed about its effect on air quality. Officials proposed permanently closing the pickup gate and moving all collection to a farther road. Some families supported the move; others wanted evidence before changing the route. Before choosing a side, Zoe wrote a notebook question: "What would people need to know to make a responsible decision?"
2. Families met at the plaza, exchanged school information, and helped neighbors arrange shared journeys. One resident called the cramped space outdated; another called it the heart of the neighborhood. These uses explained its value without resolving the traffic question. Zoe wanted a decision that recognized both community history and present needs.
3. Zoe and a friend observed from the school-approved pedestrian area. They recorded queue lengths, blocked walking routes and visible idling vehicles. Traffic counts described use and obstacles; they were not measurements of pollutants and could not settle the air-quality claim. Zoe crossed out "obviously" in the notes because the available observations did not justify certainty.
4. A volunteer supplied dated school-gate observation logs and volunteer transport notes. Earlier entries documented how families organized shared pickups when construction blocked another entrance. The records gave a history of responses to access problems. Zoe asked where the materials came from and copied a dated detail. The volunteer distinguished personal recollections from documentation; an appealing account still needed support.
5. At a planning session, science teachers explained that families needed safe access and reliable evidence about traffic and air quality. Zoe listened, then restated the concern to check understanding. One speaker replied, "That is exactly the problem we keep describing." They recognized a shared problem without agreeing on a solution.

A Question Worth Investigating | continued

6. Back home, Zoe sorted the notes into direct observations, reported statements and questions still needing investigation. The dated record supplied historical context, not a prediction of future costs or outcomes. Zoe changed "This plan will work" to "This approach is worth testing." The new claim was more defensible because it matched the limited evidence.

7. Zoe's draft began with the present difficulty, then gave observations and dated evidence. It proposed a school-approved trial of staggered pickup times before permanently moving the gate. The plan called for checking queues, walking access and qualified air-quality measurements at comparable times, plus costs and public review. The trial was a proposal for gathering information, not a claim that a permanent solution had already succeeded. Zoe's research question was whether a staggered schedule would change queueing and measured pollution near the gate. Answering it would require appropriate measurements, not traffic opinions alone.

8. One classmate thought the draft gave history too much space; another feared that numbers alone would erase residents' experiences. Zoe placed an account from science teachers beside a direct observation. The revision explained that the account could clarify concerns and the observation could describe one period, but neither established future effectiveness or complete costs.

9. At the final meeting, participants asked what the trial would cost and how well it would improve access. Zoe cited useful observations and openly identified missing estimates and other research needs. A supporter of permanent relocation of pickup still agreed that the public should see trial results. An official suggested a progress report and a volunteer offered to gather more observations.

10. The group voted to collect more evidence before making an irreversible change. No permanent plan was approved. Passing the school-gate plaza in Silverfield afterward, Zoe saw that the practical problem and disagreement remained. Yet the group had agreed to test claims, listen to one another and return to the decision with better information.

WRITER'S NOTE: The first outline listed facts in the order they were discovered. The revised outline placed the problem first, then a clear claim or purpose, selected evidence, an acknowledgment of limitations, and a reasoned conclusion. The writer checked the sources before drafting, used original wording except for brief attributed quotations, and invited peer feedback. A digital version used descriptive headings and a meaningful caption rather than decoration that distracted from the argument.

W.7.5 | Focused lesson

Investigate a focused question using several sources and identify next questions.

Completed model

Broad topic: public spaces. Focused question: What evidence should a town collect before deciding whether a proposed access change works? A focused question suggests sources and measures.

Scope note: The packet supplies the inquiry scaffold and fictional starting case. Learners obtain additional sources to conduct the project; they are not supplied or pre-vetted by this packet.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper has a slight shadow on the right side, suggesting it's resting on a surface.

W.7.5 | Sample teacher guidance

Task 1

A question should be narrow enough for a short inquiry and should not assume the plan already works. Distinguish fictional scenario evidence from real-world findings.

The full packet includes retained comprehension questions and keys, all three focused tasks, and further teacher guidance.

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