

Student Research Paper Creative Activity

The videos will walk you through this entire process. This is just if you want straightforward written directions.

1. **The inspiration:** Read the [O'Brien story "On the Rainy River"](#) from *The Things They Carried*
 - a. The novel is inspired by his real life experiences in the Vietnam War, but the events are fictional. In this story, the main character is on a fishing boat on a river that marks the border between Canada and the U.S. He considers jumping out of the boat and swimming to Canada to avoid being drafted into the war.
 - b. The people he sees are different voices/influences that play into his decision then or reflecting on it later.
 - c. In research, you have to look at different perspectives and consider them fairly without ignoring the ones you don't agree with.
2. **The Task:** Pick a personal decision you made (or perhaps will make soon--about college, majors, a job, etc.) and write about the different "voices" relating to that decision.
 - a. If you're stuck or don't want to write something personal, perhaps pick a moment in a book, movie, or TV show when a character has to make an important decision.
3. **The Steps:**
 - a. Create a Google Doc or get a fresh sheet of paper.
 - b. Brainstorm Concrete Details: Where were you (or where do you wish you were) when you made/will make the decision?
 - i. Take **3 minutes** to write down concrete sensory details about this setting (taste, touch, smell, hear, see)
 - c. You will have at least 10 people/characters involved in making this decision (like the characters who cheer for one side or the other in O'Brien's story). Brainstorm which people or characters who are for or against your decision; you must have a few on each side (or even a few in the middle). **(3-5 min.)**
 - i. These characters can be real or fictional, but we want you to include at least one historical figure/celebrity who might have relevant experience/opinions.
 1. E.g. If I'm writing about a teaching decision, I might include the most recent national Teacher of the Year and the famous Greek philosopher Aristotle.
 - ii. It is okay to include real people, like your family, or people you imagine in your future.
 - iii. Feel free to look at the sample story in the folder. It will show you the whole process.
 - d. Research your historical figure/celebrity to find out what advice they would give you in making this decision. **(15-20 min.)**

- i. You only need one source, but you should find something better than *Wikipedia*. Write down the name of the web site and the author's name (if there is one).
 - ii. Good search terms are the person's name with a word/phrase related to the topic of your choice OR something like "making difficult decisions."
 - iii. Take a few notes relevant to how the figure would make their decision. Only take down what you need to. You don't have to take notes on their full biography. Interviews are really helpful.
4. Write the story of your decision, modeled after O'Brien's story or the sample. **(15-20 min.)**
 - a. Yours does not have to be exactly the same--feel free to innovate.
 - b. In this version, we want some characters to talk, including your historical/celebrity figure. They should argue for what decision you should make, and their opinion should be based on what you learned from your research.
 - c. You do not have to reveal what decision you (or the main character) made/makes.
5. This connects to research papers because
 - a. You researched what certain people believe about a topic and inferred (reached a conclusion on) how they would feel about your decision based on that evidence.
 - b. You included the perspectives of multiple people in your decision. When you research an issue, you want to make sure you consider multiple perspectives, not just the people who agree with you on the subject.