

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Period: \_\_\_\_\_

## Practice: Developing a Historical Question

**Directions:** For each item, read the italicized historical question, then the explanation of what is wrong with the question. Then, for each question, change the question to a historical question that would be acceptable for that topic.

### Qualities of a good historical question:

- Considers causes or effects
- Argumentative (different possible interpretations based on the evidence)
- Open-ended
- Appropriate specificity (think who, where, when)

1. *Was it moral to drop the atomic bomb on Japan at the end of World War II?* (This question is not a historical one. The researcher would only be looking to persuade the reader to agree with his moral judgment. Beyond that, the answer really comes down to a variation of Yes or No which is less open ended than is ideal.)

Better Historical Question:

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2. *How did Hitler's stupidity doom the German war effort?* (The researcher will look for evidence of Hitler's stupidity, rather than for all the reasons for the German loss, gaining an incomplete understanding of how the Germans lost. Hitler's stupidity might well be a reason, but there are probably other reasons that are important.)

Better Historical Question:

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3. *How has God affected the universe?* (This question is not a historical one. There is no direct evidence that everyone could accept as evidence, so there is no way to build an acceptable argument. The topic is also far too broad to handle in your research paper.)

Better Historical Question:

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Source: <http://teachinghistory.org/teaching-materials/teaching-guides/25516>

4. *How has music changed over time?* (Without a time frame, this topic is too broad to make a reasonable argument in your research paper. What usually happens, then, is that the writer describes music over time rather than explains how it changed.)

Better Historical Question:

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5. *How did Egyptian pyramid building influence the pyramids of the Aztecs?* (This question makes a big assumption without evidence, that the Egyptians did influence the Aztecs. The researcher will look for evidence of this link, rather than for all reasons for Aztec pyramids.)

Better Historical Question:

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6. *What events led to the rise of Alexander the Great?* (This question tends to lead to a paper that describes key events, rather than explaining how these events contributed to Alexander's rise. If the researcher only looks at events, he is very likely to fail to explain them.)

Better Historical Question:

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