

Lesson Skill: Developing topic ideas to begin the research process

Strand Research

SOL 6.9

7.9

8.9

Materials

- Copies of the three attached handouts
- Markers

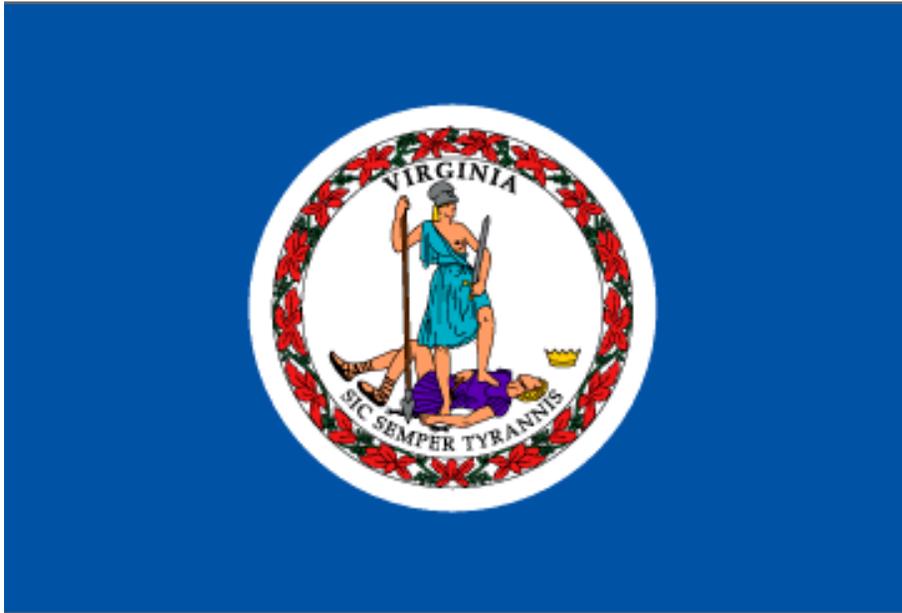
Lesson

1. Introduce the concept of deciding on a topic for a research project, including the idea of beginning with a broad topic (e.g., “America” or “Virginia”) and narrowing it down to something manageable.
2. Distribute copies of the two flag handouts, and have students use them as brainstorming sheets, using markers to jot down their ideas about America or Virginia. Encourage them to add to their sheets whatever comes to mind—key words, decorations, symbols, scenes. Use writing prompts, such as “What does it mean to be an American (Virginian)?” “What do you know about the America (Virginia)?” Give some examples, such as
 - America → “baseball” or “freedom”
 - Virginia → “historical remembrance” or “tourism.”Have students brainstorm ideas they can research online.
3. Instruct students to work towards creating a collage-like representation of 10 topics about America or Virginia. Once they have accomplished this, discuss narrowing the topics. Give examples, such as narrowing “baseball” to “baseball in the 1920s” or “Civil War” to “General Robert E. Lee during the Civil War.” Emphasize that this process is absolutely necessary with all broad topics, such as “cars,” “movies,” “technology,” “nature,” or “social issues.”
4. Have students share their flag collages with a partner and share suggestions with one another about further narrowing of a topic.
5. Finally, have students select a topic. You may wish to introduce the spider map (see attached Spider Map handout) as a tool for narrowing a topic. This will give students the opportunity to develop subtopics to research.

American Flag



Virginia Flag



Spider Map

