The Exploratory Essay

What is it? How do I write one?
What makes them different?

- Many essay assignments require you to take and defend a position with effective argument.
- Some assignments are not argumentative, but rather, they are exploratory.
- Exploratory essays ask questions and gather information that may answer these questions.
  - The main point is not to find definite answers.
  - Instead, the main point is to conduct inquiry into a topic, gather information, and share that information with readers.
The Exploratory Essay

- Exploratory essays ask you to start **without** an end in mind
  - Convergent (thesis driven) vs. Divergent (question driven)
- When starting an exploratory essay, you don’t necessarily know how you feel about a subject or what you want to say about it
- Instead, you allow the research and your own direction to determine the outcome
- This is **writing to learn** rather than writing to prove what you know!
The Exploratory Essay

- The focus of an exploratory essay is an inquiry question, rather than a thesis statement.
- Whatever topic you choose, you should pick a subject you are actually interested in and want to know more about!
Exploratory Essay Outline

- **Introduction**
  - Build background about topic
  - State inquiry question

- **Body Paragraph (rinse and repeat!)**
  - Topic sentence
  - Data from source material
  - Commentary on source material in your own words
    - AVOID OPINIONS!
  - Data from source material
  - Commentary on source material
  - Transition

- **Conclusion**
  - Repeat inquiry question
  - Address question based on what you learned
Introduction
- Build background: Keeping track of time has been a social fascination for thousands of years. How a society keeps track of time has significantly changed.
- Inquiry question: How much have timepieces changed over the years?

Body Paragraph 1
- Topic sentence: Old watches
- Data: Quote or paraphrases about old watches
- Commentary: Comment about old watches
- Data: Quote or paraphrases about old watches
- Commentary: Comment about old watches
- Transition: Watches have evolved from sun dials to internet suppliers
Body Paragraph 2
- Topic sentence: New Watches
- Data/commentary about new watches, transition

Body Paragraph 3
- Topic sentence: Compare/contrast features and pricing of old versus new watches
- Data/commentary about features and pricing, transition

Conclusion
- Repeat inquiry question
- Address question based on what you learned
Group Essay

Using the four articles you annotated last class, write a five paragraph exploratory essay

Suggested Approach:
1. Brainstorm main points from each article
2. Develop an inquiry question
3. Create an outline that identifies the three body paragraph topics
4. Write collectively on one sheet or divide and conquer taping it all together when finished

DUE AT THE END OF THE PERIOD