US I Research Paper Topics

The following is a list of possible research paper topics. A research paper is not a report.

Instead, it must deal with a specific issue, and should prove a specific thesis. The following

topics provide ideas for the focus of a paper, but they are not thesis statements. Remember to be

as specific as possible when writing your thesis.

\* Denotes topics that may be more challenging to research and/or organize.

**1. \*African Americans after the Civil War**: How were they affected by Reconstruction

policies? How were they affected after the return of white supremacy? Discuss social,

legal, and economic factors.

**2. \*New York draft riots during the Civil War:** What were the causes? What were the

effects?

**3. Transcontinental railroad:** What was its impact on westward expansion?

**4. Native American conflicts in the West:** Specify tribe(s) and conflict. (e.g.: The Battle of

the Little Bighorn, Wounded Knee Massacre, etc.); What were the causes and effects?

**5. United States and Native American policy:** What was the impact of the Dawes Act

and/or other pieces of legislation? What was the impact of the reservation policy?

**6. Electric power and related inventors:** Analyze the impact of the harnessing of electric

power and/or discuss the competition among the inventors who played a role (e.g.: Edison,

Tesla, Westinghouse)

**7. Inventors/inventions of the 19th Century:** Choose a significant inventor or invention and

examine the challenges of developing the item or the impact of the invention on the

American society/economy.

**8. Wealthy industrialists in the late 1800s:** “Robber Barons” or “Captains of Industry”?

**9. The Gilded Age:** Discuss the origin of the term and why it is an appropriate metaphor for

the United States in the late 1800s.

**10. Labor unions in the 1800s:** What economic, social, and philosophical factors

contributed to their formation?

**11. Labor conflicts/strikes in the late 1800s:** What was the federal government’s attitude

toward organized labor, and how and when did it change?

**12. Haymarket Riot:** What were the causes and effects?

**13. Pullman Strike:** What were the causes and effects?

**14. Immigration in the late 1800s:** What were the difficulties faced by immigrants, and how

did they adjust to life in America? Select one subtopic: causes of early Immigration to the United States, Irish, Russian, Italian, Eastern European, Japanese, Mexican, Arab, Immigration from Central & South America, Ellis Island, Angel Island

**15. Immigration in the late 1800s:** Discuss the “melting pot” vs. “salad bowl” metaphors. Was America a “melting pot” or a “salad bowl”?

**16. Chinese immigrants:** Why did they come to the U.S.? What discrimination did they face?

(Chinese Exclusion Act)

**17. The Great Chicago Fire of 1871:** Why was it so severe? What was the impact on the city

(especially architecture)?

**18. Urban political machines in the late 1800s:** What were the reasons for their

development? Why were they successful? What is their legacy?

**19. The political cartoons of Thomas Nast:** What was their influence on public opinion?

How did they contribute to the downfall of Boss Tweed?

**20. Settlement house movement of the late 1800s:** What prompted the development of the

movement? What was its impact on urban neighborhoods? Specify area (e.g.: Chicago’s

Hull House)

**21. Child labor in the late 1800s/ early 1900s:** What was the impact on society? How were

reforms made?

**22. Galveston hurricane of 1900:** What were the effects on the city? How did city

government change after the hurricane?

**23. The San Francisco earthquake and fire of 1906:** What were the effects on the city,

especially on the Chinese residents?

**24. Muckrakers:** What was the impact of this journalism on progressive reforms?

**25. \*The Springfield Race Riot of 1908:** What were the causes and/or effects?

**26. \*Imperialism in the late 19thand early 20th Century:** Was it justified? (Focus on one

region.)

**27. Yellow journalism:** What was its role in causing the Spanish-American War? (Hearst and

Pulitzer)

**28. Spanish-American War:** What were the causes and/or effects?

**29. \*The automobile:** What was its impact on America’s economy and society?

**30.** **\*Legend vs. reality in the West:** Focus on myths and realities surrounding a particular

figure (e.g.: Buffalo Bill, Wyatt Earp, George Custer, etc.) How accurate are figures in history represented?

**31.** World War I: What were the reasons for U.S. involvement?

**32.** \*Anti-German sentiment in the United States during World War I: What policies

were developed as a result? What was the impact on German-Americans?

**33**. Thirteenth Amendment: Although the Thirteenth Amendment freed the slaves, how

were African American still denied their freedom?

**34**. Fourteenth Amendment: How did the Black Codes, Jim Crow laws, and Plessy v.

Ferguson take away the rights guaranteed to African Americans by the Fourteenth

Amendment?

**35**. Fifteenth Amendment: Although the Fifteenth Amendment was supposed to

guarantee African Americans the right to vote, what obstacles were put in the way to

keep them from voting for 100 years?

**36**. Why have critics called Indian reservations “America’s concentration camps?”

**38**. Choose three “rebels in petticoats,” women who went against the conventions of

their times, and explain the impact of their actions. (Possible choices: Susan B.

Anthony, Prudence Crandall, Elizabeth Blackwell, Alice Paul, Cary Nation, Sojourner

Truth, Mary Church Terrell, Elizabeth Cady Stanton)