

Sample Exercise for Project 3: Research Summary

For Instructors

This exercise is designed to help students “define the problem,” a task they are required to do as part of their research summary memo. This exercise can be assigned as a homework assignment or an in-class collaborative activity. The purpose of this exercise is to help students understand that they must use a variety of data in order to fully describe how/why something is an issue worth paying attention to.

For Students

Recently Tampa Bay has been buzzing about the appearance of the lionfish, an invasive species of marine wildlife. Local officials are unsure of what to do or even how to begin conceiving of the problem. You work for a consulting firm that has been hired to investigate this issue and inform the local government of feasible courses of action. Your job is to research lionfish in Tampa Bay and create a brief summary of how exactly these fish are affecting the local ecosystem and what this could mean for the future of the bay. Be sure to cite specific sources when making claims about how lionfish are problematic.

Write a paragraph that defines the lionfish problem for Tampa Bay using at least two sources of different types as evidence (i.e., newspaper articles, government reports, scientific papers, etc.). When you have finished, you will work with a partner or two. Read each other’s summaries and compare sources. Answer the following questions:

1. How did the sources you chose inform the way you described the problem?
2. Was any specific source particularly effective in helping you to define the problem? Why and in what way?
3. Looking at your partners’ summaries, is there any information that would have made your summary more complete? What sources provided this information?

When you have completed your analysis of each other’s work, share what you have learned with the class.