

Stases Worksheet

The Stases are an ancient system of questioning that have been adapted in order to help you determine a researchable question. In the table below, look in the column labeled Stasis to see the six key questions that you need to ask yourself about your research question. And then look at our samples (A, B and C) to see how the Stases help this student's question to evolve.

Stasis	Sample A: childhood obesity in the U.S.	Sample B: Is the BMI an accurate way to determine "obesity"?	Sample C: does advertising aimed at children cause childhood obesity?
Existence: Does a problem exist?	Are US children obese?	Is BMI used to determine obesity?	Are advertisers of junk food targeting children?
Definition: How do we characterize the problem?	What counts as "obese" versus "pudgy," "overweight," or "baby fat"? Is Body Mass Index (or BMI) an important indicator?	What is the BMI?	What is "junk food"?
Cause: What caused the problem?	Why are US children obese? Is it video games? Fast food? Neglectful parents? Vending machines in schools? The cookie monster? Advertising aimed at children? Etc.	Why is the BMI used?	Why are they targeting children? Are they causing obesity?
Value: Is it good or bad? Moral/immoral? Effective/ineffective?	Are methods to combat obesity effective, such as more exercise? Or is the real problem "fat shaming"?	Does the BMI accurately measure obesity? Does it accurately measure health and risk factors?	Is it moral for them to target children with these ads? Are these ads effective in making children want junk food?
Action: What should we do about the problem?	How should we solve childhood obesity? Ban vending machines in schools? Limit television? Ban sugary snacks in schools? Tax soda and cookies? Make the cookie monster change his song? Ban advertising towards children? Sue fast food companies?	Should we use the BMI as an indicator of unhealthy risky factors?	Should the government ban advertising of junk food towards children or make them take the toys out of Happy Meals?
Jurisdiction: Who should decide what we do about the problem?	Should the government be mandating, should the schools be making rules, or should parents be responsible for helping children avoid obesity?	Should doctors use the BMI to counsel patients on weight loss? Should health insurers use the BMI? Should I use the BMI to determine my target weight?	Is it the government's responsibility to mandate companies to stop advertising towards children, the company's responsibility to make a moral choice, or parents' responsibility to say "no" and stop buying junk food?

As you can see in Sample A above, there are multiple answers in some stases, which shows that we need to further narrow the topic. For example, one writer might decide that children are not obese because the Body Mass Index is an inaccurate way to judge obesity (See Sample B) or say that we are shaming children who might otherwise be healthy for being somewhat overweight. In Sample A, we are finding the most answers to the Cause question, so we might want to restart our process from there by picking one cause and coming up with new questions about it. Now, take a look at Sample C, where we focus on advertising aimed at children as a cause of childhood obesity.

In Sample C, we have a more narrow focus. Using these questions as a focus in the beginning stages of research can often help us find more interesting angles on a topic as well. Writers going through this method might find that they have a sufficient research topic by the time they get to question #3. That is, they find so many different answers that they don't need to address value, action, or jurisdiction in their paper, and they might be effective in doing so.

Once a writer's questions are finalized, they can be used as a reading tool in research. That is, when we find an answer to one of the questions in a source, we can highlight it in the source and even keep a document that collects data answering each of the questions. They could also lead to color-coding this research. Once we have our research, we can then use the questions to find agreements and disagreements or to find what the most contentious issues are in the conversation on the topic. We can then enter the conversation where it matters most. Finally, when writing our final papers, we can use the stases as an organizing tool, which helps us present a logical, coherent argument.

You can give this process a try, using the form below.

Stasis	Your turn
Existence: Does a problem exist?	
Definition: How do we characterize the problem?	
Cause: What caused the problem?	
Value: Is it good or bad? Moral/immoral? Effective/ineffective?	
Action: What should we do about the problem?	
Jurisdiction: Who should decide what we do about the problem?	



Are you finding multiple answers to questions? Do you need to narrow the focus further? Pick the stasis that seems to have the most answers, then come up with a new set of questions based on one of those answers (see Sample C):

Stasis	Your turn
Existence: Does a problem exist?	
Definition: How do we characterize the problem?	
Cause: What caused the problem?	
Value: Is it good or bad? Moral/immoral? Effective/ineffective?	
Action: What should we do about the problem?	
Jurisdiction: Who should decide what we do about the problem?	