

The Power Of *Stories*

Honors Program Guide

January 1, 2024 – December 31, 2025



The Phi Theta Kappa Experience:
Honoring Scholars, Building Leaders



HONORS IN ACTION



PHI THETA KAPPA
HONOR SOCIETY

ABOUT PHI THETA KAPPA

Phi Theta Kappa is the premier honor society recognizing college students’ academic achievement and helping them grow as scholars and leaders. The Society is made up of more than 3.8 million members and nearly 1,300 chapters in 11 nations.

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Phi Theta Kappa *Honors in Action*

Our Honors Program: *Honors in Action*

Phi Theta Kappa features a remarkable program called Honors in Action, designed to engage students in informed, intentional action meant to foster student success and help the organization fulfill its mission of providing college students opportunities to grow as scholars and leaders.

Engaging in the academic research process from the beginning, setting research objectives, developing a research question, compiling academic research into the Honors Study Topic, and presenting the project to a wider audience via the Hallmark Award entry process, students gain valuable research and service-learning experience. Students' engagement does not stop at academic investigation. Through the Honors in Action process, they will take lessons gleaned from the analysis of their research to create an action-oriented project element to provide tangible support to their communities.

Through these experiences, students build practical and academic skills. By working closely with both their peers as well as campus and community leaders, students will learn not only how to research an issue but also how to utilize resources and build professional relationships.

Honors in Action LEARNING OUTCOMES

Participation in Honors in Action (HIA) contributes to personal, academic, and career development. It allows students to impact their campuses and communities by addressing challenges related to their Honors Study Topic research. Members who participate in the development and implementation of an Honors in Action Project will be able to:

- 1** create awareness of the importance of seeking out multiple perspectives to augment understanding of a real-world, complex, interdisciplinary topic and improve decision-making,
- 2** demonstrate analytical and critical thinking skills to draw research conclusions,
- 3** initiate real-world problem-solving by developing an in-depth, action-oriented solution to make a difference in a challenge related to their Honors Study Topic research,
- 4** plan and set goals for each Honors in Action process step,
- 5** develop capacities to lead, manage, and motivate self and others, perform in complicated environments, and accomplish goals,
- 6** collaborate and create effective teams to enhance project impact, and
- 7** cultivate reflective skills and aptitudes to assess progress, adjust to circumstances, and measure results quantitatively and qualitatively.

Achievement of these learning outcomes builds the analytic and collaborative problem-solving and leadership skills necessary and valued in advanced academic pursuits, workplaces, and communities.

How to Use This *Honors Program Guide*

Explore the Guide to Gain an Understanding of the 2024/2025 Honors Study Topic and its Themes:

- Read the Honors Study Topic essay for an overview of the 2024/2025 topic. **(pages 8-11)**
- Check out the eight Honors Study Topic Themes for more detail about each Theme. **(pages 12-27)**
 - Read the overarching question located below the Theme title to help guide your selection of an Honors Study Topic Theme.
 - Read the introduction to the Theme.
 - Check out the "Discover More About..." sources.
 - Check out the Glossary of Terms related to the Theme introductions. **(pages 28-29)**

Discover How to Develop a Research Question (page 30)

- After you set research objectives and select one of the eight Honors Study Topic Themes, your HIA team will develop a research question. Learn the steps to take to ensure that you have a robust question guiding your research.

Examine How to Identify and Analyze Credible Sources (pages 32-33)

- Investigating sources related to the Honors Study Topic is the cornerstone of Honors in Action. Learn how to determine whether a source is a credible one.

Learn How to Create Your Team's HIA Journal (pages 34-35)

- Not sure how to create an effective HIA Journal? Explore the suggestions, including questions to ask yourselves, about how to create your team's journal.

Honors in Action *At-a-Glance*

Introduction

Honors in Action Projects require substantive investigation of a theme related to the Society's current Honors Study Topic. The theme you select should be the lens through which you explore the Honors Study Topic, and it should directly connect to and provide supporting evidence for the development of the action component of your project. Honors in Action Projects require you to address a community need discovered through your research and analysis of the Society's current Honors Study Topic.

1 Investigate and Analyze

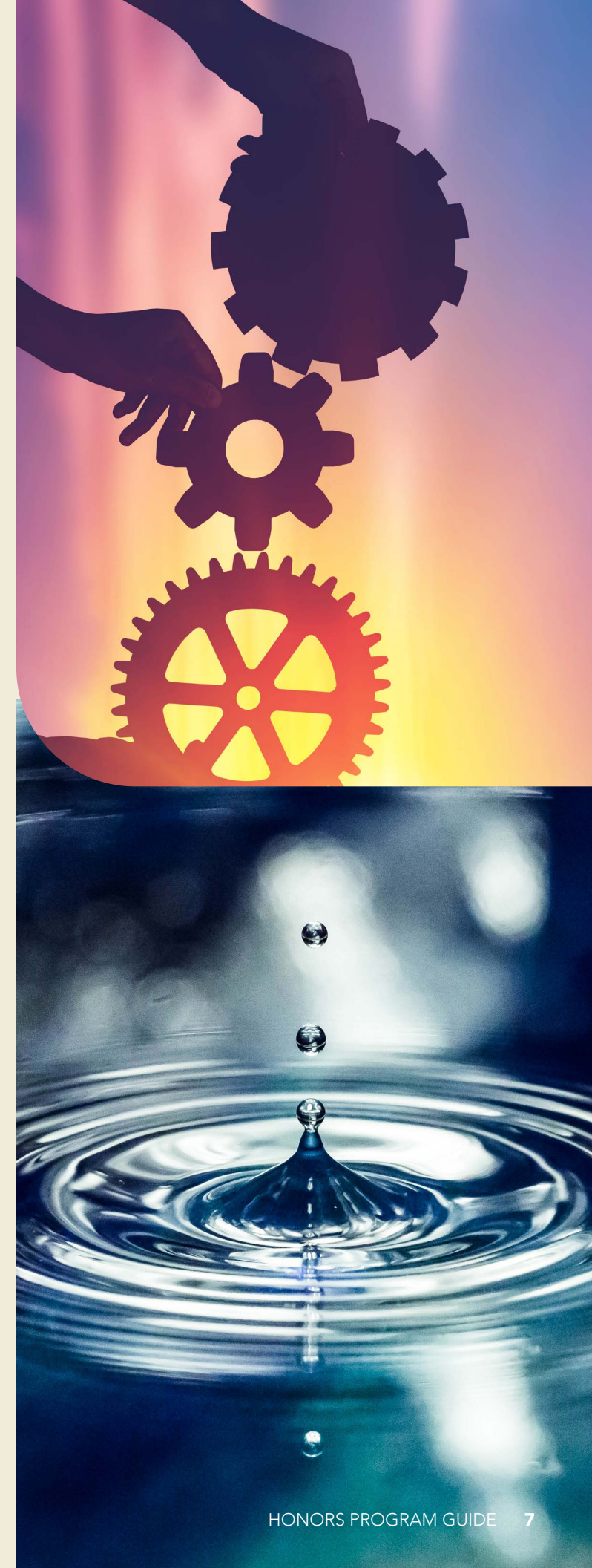
- Set research objectives.
- Review the Honors Program Guide and develop research objectives to guide your research into a specific theme related to the current Honors Study Topic.
- Develop a research question to guide your Honors Study Topic investigation.
- Investigate sources with varied viewpoints related to your research question.
- Reflect on and analyze your research to develop research conclusions.

2 Act and Collaborate

- Consider how your research findings manifest locally, identify a real-world problem related to your academic research that requires action, and brainstorm possible solutions to the problem.
- Develop action objectives to address the local problem your Honors Study Topic research findings identified.
- Set collaboration objectives and develop a communication plan that includes members of your Honors in Action team and your collaborators.
- Identify collaborators on campus or in your community.
- Execute your plan of action and your communication plans.

3 Assess and Reflect

- Reflect on and evaluate your research, action, and project collaboration.
- Assess teamwork and how members grew as scholars and leaders throughout the Honors in Action process.
- Check the HIA Planning Rubric to be sure you address all components of the Honors in Action Hallmark Award entry.
- Write, edit, and submit your team's Honors in Action Hallmark Award entry.
- Celebrate your success!



The Power of *Stories*



By Dr. Susan Edwards, Senior Director of Honors Programs, Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society

“Story, it turns out, was crucial to our evolution—more so than opposable thumbs. Opposable thumbs let us hang on; story told us what to hang on to.”

—Lisa Cron, Wired for Story

Stories are powerful and essential to the human experience. Throughout history, people have used stories to share information and explain the world, including the creation of the universe. Author Tony Allan points out that varied and different cultures “imagined a time of primeval darkness, alternatively seen as a shifting mass of water, a cloud or a featureless wasteland.” For example, the cosmic egg motif appears in creation stories in India, Egypt, China, Finland, Tibet, and parts of Africa and Polynesia. The egg split in two to become the Earth and the heavens or nurtured beings who, once hatched, would populate the world. Other creation stories focused on the birth of gods and humans, described the gifts of cultural heroes, discussed a spirit-filled cosmos, or told the tales of heroes and tricksters. The epic poem *Gilgamesh* and the Book of

Genesis may have their origins in prehistory. Both detail a flood that created havoc in the world. According to author David Robson, the flood stories may “tap into lingering cultural memories of real, geological events in the Middle East from the end of the last Ice Age.” Sharing these stories helps people make meaning of life and understand our place in the world.

Stories have been essential to people in every society. Dr. Pamela Rutledge argues that stories affect people mentally. They temporarily transport them into the story’s world in ways that help people lose themselves by identifying with and taking on the characters’ perspectives in the story. Neuroscientists have discovered that identifying with and taking on the characters’ perspectives in stories helps people develop empathy and feel less lonely. Jonathan Gottschall, author of *The Storytelling Animal*, notes that losing oneself in a story takes people to “a magical place of imagination and mystery, which is often a lot more interesting than the monotony of daily life and work.” Stories stimulate dopamine and enhance learning and motivation. Stories can even improve longevity. Experts at the Yale University School of Public Health studied the impact on people reading and found that being a bookworm increases longevity by as much as 23%.

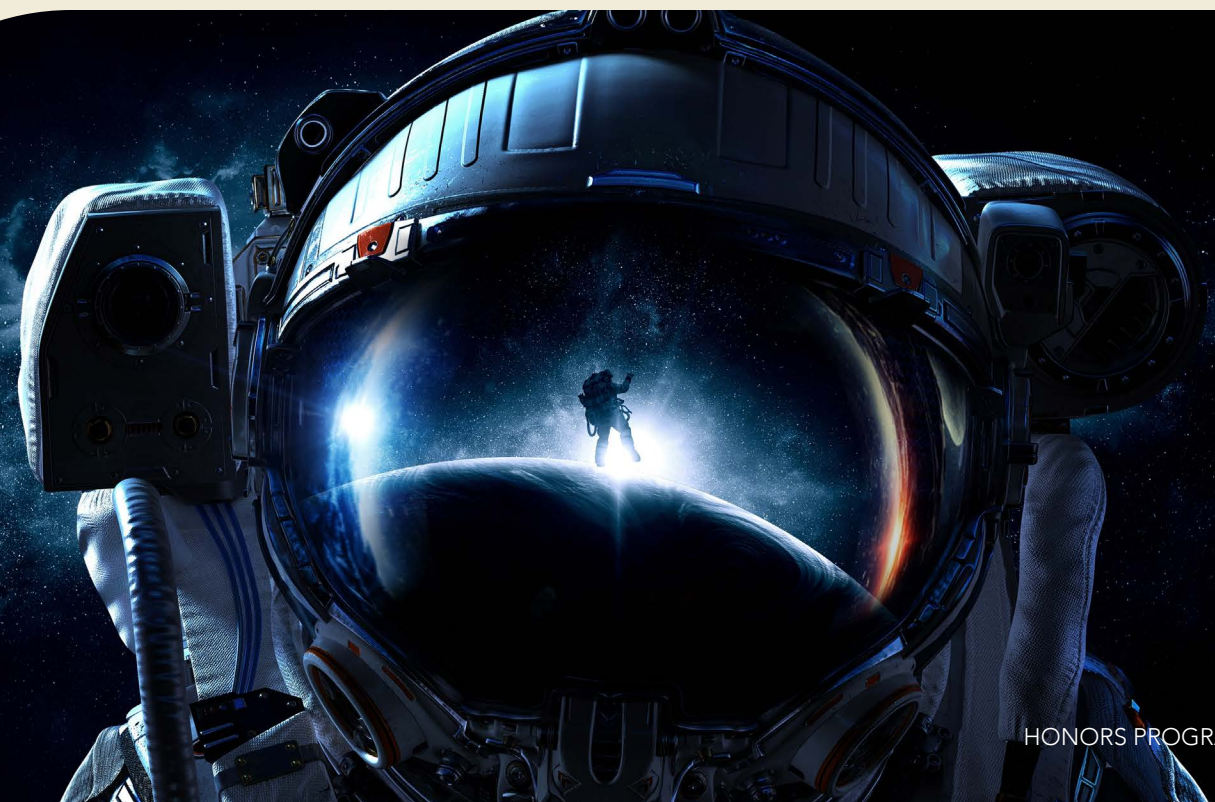
Journalist Bryan G. Peters writes that according to Pixar, great storytelling has six rules. Great stories are universal; have a clear structure and purpose; have a character, particularly an underdog, to root for; appeal to our deepest emotions; are surprising and unexpected; and are simple and focused. Steven Spielberg suggests,

“The most amazing thing for me is that every single person who sees a movie, not necessarily one of my movies, brings a whole set of unique experiences, but through careful manipulation and good storytelling, you can get everybody to clap at the same time, to laugh at the same time hopefully, and to be afraid at the same time.” J. K. Rowling encouraged millions to read and watch the adventures of Harry Potter. Her stories were universal, structured, surprising, and unexpected, featuring characters to root for or sometimes against. Canadian author Louise Penny’s stories are universal. Set in a small Quebec town, Three Pines, there are multiple characters to root for, including Penny’s protagonist Inspector Armand Gamache. Gamache’s mentor taught him to think before speaking to understand whether what he was about to say was true, kind, and necessary to say. Akira Kurosawa directed films like “Dreams” and “Rashomon” that told great stories. Plato told the story of Atlantis in *Timaeus* and *Critias*, a Socratic dialogue in two parts, to warn people of society’s hubris. Though Plato perhaps invented the tale of Atlantis, it is enduring. Explorers still search for the lost society and speculate it was located on the islands of Santorini, Sardinia, Cyprus, or between Morocco and Spain.

People tell stories in many ways. P!nk constructs personal stories that resonate and sings about her relationship with her husband Corey Hart in her songs “So What,” “Please Don’t Leave Me,” and “True Love.” Through his National Geographic project Photo Ark, Joel Sartore tells the story of animals and insects through beautiful photographs. In his latest book, *Photo Ark Insects*, Sartore discusses how humans “take inspiration from ... [insects] ... industry, artfulness, and engineering” but often take them for granted even when they are crucial to the survival of other

species. Emily Wilson, professor of classical studies at the University of Pennsylvania and the first woman to translate *The Odyssey*, translated Homer’s *The Iliad* in 2023. Her translation was met with glowing reviews because Wilson captured Homer’s poetry with a contemporary sensibility that opened the classic work to new audiences.

Jay Z is considered by *Billboard* and *Vibe* magazines the greatest rapper-storyteller of the early 21st century. Taylor Swift’s fans crashed the Ticketmaster website trying to get tickets to the singer-songwriter’s Eras Tour, which tells the story of her career so far. TikTok influencer Victoria Leandra argues that Bad Bunny is loved by everyone right now, but his music is particularly meaningful to people in the Puerto Rican diaspora because it connects them to their home. Jimmy Buffett was known for his island sensibilities but also his ballads. “He Went to Paris” tells the story of an 86-year-old man who says, “Jimmy, some of it’s magic, some of it’s tragic, but I had a good life all the way.” John Adams and Alice Goodman told the story of *Nixon in China* in a three-act opera. Vern Yip tells stories through design and maintains people should collect pieces over time to tell their stories properly. Masai women and men use body modification, such as piercing and stretching their earlobes, to tell their stories. The *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, two chapters in an epic story, are often told using puppets. The Roman Catholic Church used stained glass to tell the story of Jesus of Nazareth. Chinese and Mexican cultures use altars to honor and tell the stories of their ancestors. Alaska Natives tell stories with totems. Cinco Paul and Ken Daurio told the story of the classic musical *Brigadoon* as a comedic television version titled *Schmigadoon!* Misty Copeland tells stories through dance. Women of Gee’s Bend in Alabama tell their stories through quilts.





How do untold, silenced, suppressed, or stolen stories impact society, and why does representation of these stories matter? According to author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, “Many stories matter. Stories have been used to dispossess and to malign. But stories can also be used to empower, and to humanize. Stories can break the dignity of a people. But stories can also repair that broken dignity.” Nobel Laureate and economist Claudia Goldin tells the story of women in the workforce, especially, according to journalist Jeanna Smialek, “the evolution of women’s participation in the labor market and the causes of the gender wage gap” over time. Author Margaret Renki reported on how leaders in 19th century New Orleans doctored photographs, long before AI, to attract

people to live in the hot and humid city and to hide the reality of life in the city for African Americans. In a 2022 *New Yorker* article, Peter C. Baker tells the story of having his manuscript for his first novel stolen. “Fictional worlds,” Baker wrote, “can be conjured from nothing, and they can vanish in an instant.” For Baker and for others whose stories are suppressed, silenced, or stolen, the experience can be demoralizing. Author Francesca Lia Block put it this way, “Think about the word destroy. Do you know what it is? De-story. Destroy. Destory. You see. And restore. That’s re-story. . . . Telling your story is touching. It sets you free.”

Explorer Ann Bancroft led a 1993 women’s expedition to the South Pole. Bancroft and three other women traveled more than 1,000 kilometers on skis in 67 days. Seven years earlier, she had been the first woman to reach the North Pole, and she became the first woman to travel to both poles. In 2001, Bancroft and Liv Arnesen became the first women to sail and ski across Antarctica. Bancroft founded the Ann Bancroft Foundation to support an educational mission to share her story of persistence, resistance, and healing with people worldwide and to connect girls with opportunities to explore beyond their everyday worlds.

Stories can serve as avenues of information, misinformation, and disinformation and can take the form of propaganda, clickbait, yellow journalism, and tabloid journalism. Thinking the stories about the Cuban Revolution of 1895 would be good for his newspaper’s circulation, William Randolph Hearst sent illustrator Frederick Remington to Cuba to cover the revolution. Hoping to incite U.S. intervention in Cuba, legend has it that Hearst told Remington, “You furnish the pictures. I’ll



furnish the war.” Central Washington University created a website to spot misinformation and disinformation in news stories. One story featured on the website was that Disney World was suing to lower the drinking age at the park to 18. The story was shared on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok and then picked up by ABC 10 News. The fact-checking site Snopes had labeled the story false, and when Central Washington University checked court records, none existed. In a 2022 article, Ecker, Lewandowsky, Cook, et al. argued, “Not only can belief in misinformation lead to poor judgements and decision-making, it also exerts a lingering influence on people’s reasoning after it has been corrected — an effect known as the continued influence effect.” They identify the drivers of false belief as a lack of analytical thinking, cognitive failures, illusory truth, source cues, emotion, and personal worldviews. There are ways to counter misinformation and disinformation that are preemptive and reactive, including offering factual information, information interventions, and repeating and reinforcing factual information.

Fables, folklore, and fairytales offer messages that influence and reflect cultures worldwide. Poet and playwright W. B. Yeats collected and published Irish folklore and fairytales and wrote that stories reflect “birth, love, pain, and death.” Yeats collected tales of Irish fairies, leprechauns, animals, witches, and a demon cat and shared them with the world. Jacob and Wilhelm, the Grimm Brothers, collected 170 stories published in three volumes beginning in 1812. The stories were initially criticized as not being suitable for children. For example, in the first editions of the stories “Snow White” and “Hänsel and Grethel,” the mother was wicked. The Grimm Brothers changed the wicked mother to a wicked stepmother in both stories in later editions, making the stories more palatable for readers, though not doing much for the resulting stereotype of stepmothers. The African folktale “The Tortoise and the Hare” teaches the lesson that slow and steady wins the race. The Chinese fairytale of Sun Wukong, a monkey born of stone whose supernatural powers are acquired from 72 Earthly transformations, was famously told in the 16th-century novel *Journey to the West*. It is a tale about how Sun Wukong, the monkey

king, helps a monk Xuan Sanzang on his journey to India to bring Buddhist holy books to China in exchange for the monkey’s freedom. The story illuminates the fivefold philosophy that explains the cosmos. Dr. Martin Shaw wrote that mythology “represents the world’s original database of story.” Joseph Campbell, author of *The Power of Myth*, encouraged people to read myths from different religions. Doing so helps people to see the messages of the myths truly.

Humans preserve stories to capture history and memory. Editor and designer Dawn M. Roode notes that stories help us connect with people we love. They make us laugh, cry, heal, and remember. Archivist and historian Lynn Cowles highlights her Potawatomi heritage through stories. She observes, “We all have our own stories, and those stories are . . . history. And it’s important to remember them.” Stories tell us who we are as people and societies. They pass down cultural knowledge and traditions. They belong to our collective memory. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), “Our cultural and natural heritage are both irreplaceable sources of life and inspiration.” Joseph Campbell implored us, “If you’re going to have a story, have a big story. . . .” Stories can change the world. What stories will fascinate and inspire you and help you advocate for those things that matter to you?





THEME
1

Why We Tell Stories

Overarching Question: Why are stories essential to the human experience?

By Prof. Mathew Herrman, Dr. Kari Kahler, Prof. Kismet Loftin-Bell, and Dr. Diego Tibaquirá
Honors Program Council, Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society



Stories mesmerize humans of all ages. In efforts to put off bedtime or while engaging in play, stories help us understand the world. Stories let us know that we aren't alone and help us explore deep and complex emotions. We tell stories to escape the world in which we live or to imagine worlds that do not yet exist. Stories shape our perspectives of what is and explore different sides of complex emotions, issues, or decisions (Scott, 2011). Stories serve a valuable role in the human experience, shaping and reflecting our reality.

In religious contexts, common threads exist among creation stories. Robert Alter (2011) explains that the Judeo-Christian tradition showcases not one, but two stories of how the world we know came to be. Scientific theory, too, tells its own story that overviews how the universe originated, and in his groundbreaking text *A Brief History of Time*, Stephen Hawking (1998) explores the deep questions of the human experience that stem from the universe's origin story.

Across nearly every culture and community exists some form of a flood narrative. These stories recount the way in which an epic flood (think Noah or Gilgamesh) swept the land, causing mass destruction and leading to rebirth and renewal. A host of First Nations tribes and Mayan, Aztec, and Incan cultures share common themes of this natural disaster. Nearly every country in Europe and Asia provides its own legend of the same tale. These explain how and why floods happen, as well as shape our belief systems shaping our experience of the world.

Audiovisual media, too, demonstrates its own microcosm of the overarching human experience. Recent major film releases, adaptations from Disney, and both the Marvel and DC comic book universes demonstrate a desire not solely to witness heroic feats of bravery. Humans long to understand how villains derive through movies such as *Maleficent* (2014) and *Cruella* (2021) and the film adaptation of *Wicked: The Musical* (2024). These stories explore subtlety, complexity, and the nuance of life and lived experiences.

Television offers the ability to witness the anti-hero's rise during the early 2000s. Series like *Dexter*, *Nurse Jackie*, *Mad Men*, *The Sopranos*, and *Breaking Bad*, and its spinoff *Better Call Saul* cast individuals who are not wholly good at the forefront. Nevertheless, audiences root for their success and hope the projected goodness from the outsiders' view becomes more prominent in their character.

In her PTK Catalyst 2023 keynote address, actress Geena Davis explained how she leveraged her acting career to explore women's roles portrayed in the media. This began with the realization about the shows her child was watching, where there were few, and sometimes no, women in an entire series. Even when present, women served as the doting mother watching out for her little ones. That sparked intentional efforts in Davis's selection of roles and allowed her to start conversations: If the world Hollywood is writing is fiction, Davis argued, then the world that Hollywood creates should be one we aspire to, not just reflect, the existing inequities and limitations without critical reflection.

Journalists know that making stories enticing requires finding the human aspect of each event. Who did what to whom, how, where, and when, and why does it matter? Humanization ensures that the story of a person living on the edge of financial despair resonates with the audience. These stories often end with a call to action, encouraging viewers to reduce the strain on others. Often, when these stories gain traction and are picked up by affiliates or syndicated, a corresponding spike in donations to agencies soon follows. Like these heroes, villains, and anti-heroes, our own lives are shaped by and reflect the reality projected through our favorite works. We aspire to be more witty, snarky, thoughtful, and caring—just better than we are. We hope to change the world with some small act that reverberates, resonates, and ripples beyond our deed. Stories, then, help us to be more authentically ourselves, and ultimately, become the individuals we long to be.



Discover More About Why We Tell Stories

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Perspectives Shape Stories

Overarching Question: In what ways do perspectives shape stories people share?

By Prof. Gigi Delk, Dr. Kelly Kennedy, Dr. Jo Marshall, Dr. Ryan Ruckel, and Prof. Amy Winters
Honors Program Council, Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society



There are many sides to every story. Understanding can be influenced by the skill of the orator, the artist's craft, or the scientist's discoveries. However, individual perspectives, shaped by life experiences, will change the message received. Based on his childhood love for fairytales and the power of words, American novelist Gregory Maguire crafted the blockbuster *Wicked* (1995). This foundational backstory to L. Frank Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (1900), is written from the perspective of Elphaba, a misunderstood, green-skinned girl whose life experiences molded her into the Wicked Witch of the West. The triumphant success of both the novel and the Broadway musical based on *Wicked* attests to people's fascination with hearing a familiar story from a different perspective. Post-traditional members might remember radio personality Paul Harvey famously sharing "the rest of the story." No listener wanted to miss those final plot twists, which were often capable of bringing one to tears.

The parable of The Blind Men and an Elephant has been shared in multiple versions dating back to circa 500 BCE and originating in India. A group of blind men came upon an elephant, a fantastic beast never heard of before. Each man determines what the elephant must be like by feeling the body part closest to them, but only that one part, like a leg, trunk, or tusk. No two descriptions are alike, as each man attempts to

describe the animal based on their limited perspective. In some versions of the story, the men argue over the different explanations to the point that they refuse to communicate with one another, while in more positive versions the men collaborate on their descriptions, coming to "view" the elephant through a shared perspective. Some versions of this story highlight the importance of context, the limits of perception, and getting the "rest" of the story. Multiple medical journals use this parable to describe the growing crisis in aligning multi-national efforts to address global health issues, including response to pandemics, global rise of non-communicable diseases, and potential cuts in funding. Each country views this crisis from the part of the elephant that is closest to them.

In Plato's allegory of the cave, Plato described a group of prisoners who lived their entire lives tightly chained facing a cave wall. Their only view of the world came from shadows projected on the wall from objects passing in front of a fire behind them. The shadows were the prisoners' reality but were inaccurate representations of their real world. One man leaves the cave and overcomes his fear to admire the brightness of the actual world. He returns to the cave to persuade his friends to leave by describing all he has seen. The others become terrified by the differences between real life and their perceptions, so much so that they refuse to leave their prison, where things are familiar. The prisoners are so scared by real life that they choose bondage in the cave because that is what they know. Those who suffer from Imposter Syndrome incorrectly perceive that they are not smart enough or do not deserve the success that they have worked for. A person suffering from this syndrome will give up or flee back to the comfort of their previous existence because from their perspective they do not deserve the fruits of their labor, just like the prisoners from the cave.

Finally, the Rashomon effect is a storytelling and writing method in cinema in which an event is given contradictory interpretations or descriptions by the individuals involved, thereby providing different perspectives and points of view of the same incident. The term, derived from the 1950 Japanese film *Rashomon*, is used to describe the phenomenon of the unreliability of eyewitnesses. In the movie, a murder is described in four contradictory ways by four witnesses and goes on to show the motives, subjectivity, memory, self-interest, and bias that shades each witness's story. The 1992 comedy *My Cousin Vinny* maintains popularity due to the hilarious clash of perspectives between brash New Yorkers and reserved southern Georgia townsfolk. Marisa Tomei won an Academy Award for Best Supporting Actress for her portrayal of Mona Lisa Vito, whose automotive knowledge wins the day while smashing female stereotypes. The controversial 2004 Best Picture *Crash* with Sandra Bullock, Michael Pena, and Terrance Howard similarly explored varying perspectives colored by racism and power struggles. Promoting only one version or one side of the story is the basis for propaganda disseminated during wars, false advertising, and fraudulent weight-loss claims. Stories are always shaped by the perspectives of the sender and receivers.



Discover More About Perspectives of the Narrative

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THEME 3

Ways Stories Are Told

Assyrian kings, or the Normans' Bayeux Tapestry, people have found - perhaps have felt compelled to find - powerful ways to share their stories as well as to interpret and re-tell the stories of others. What about being human leads us to story as a way of communicating?

In *Poetics*, the Greek philosopher Aristotle observed that we communicated powerfully with one another through mimesis, or the imitation of life in a way that sparked the imagination and a kind of co-creation on the part of the audience at a drama or the reader of a poem. He also argued that all stories had identifiable elements in common, such as a beginning, middle, and end, pity, fear, and catharsis. The Russian philologist Vladimir Propp pointed out how the characters of Russian folk tales served more than thirty functions of plot, establishing a narrative structure upon which all the tales were built in common. Propp's work founded the "structuralist" intellectual movement and led sociologists such as Roland Barthes and Claude Levi-Strauss to argue that all cultural interactions are built on a common set of structures that make all culture a form of narrative, storytelling, and enterprise. Joseph Campbell examined the world's myths and argued that all myths share a common "monomyth," the story of the hero. In what ways could the analysis of the story apply to other ways of sharing stories through art, music, dance, and more? To what extent do we all tell stories in the same way? How might understanding differences in the storytelling nature of diverse cultures inform our ways of relating to one another? Providing social services to a non-native community? Sharing pictures from our recent vacation? Building a blended family?

Discover More About Ways Stories Are Told

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Overarching Question: What means do people use to tell stories and why?

By Dr. Jo Marshall, Prof. Julie Rancilio, and Dr. Ryan Ruckel
Honors Program Council, Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society



Nearly forty thousand years ago, people stenciled their hands onto the wall of an Indonesian cave. Thirty thousand years later, people in Argentina did the same thing, with both art installations eerily resembling modern graffiti or a "hands stencil." Thirty thousand years ago in the rock-art site *Tadrart Acacus* of western Libya, someone poignantly told a story of the preparation for a wedding, complete with a ritual familiar to us all: washing and preparing the bride's hair. These people, long separated by time and space, had something to say, and they shared that story without words, or sometimes with words and pictures, as in the Japanese hand scroll, *The Tale of the Monkeys*, which features speech bubbles and laid a foundation for the modern storytelling form and global trend, manga. From ancient cave art to the Sistine Chapel to urban murals such as "Nobody Likes Me," or from Chinese and Sanskrit opera and Greek drama to rock operas such as *Jesus Christ Superstar* and *Rocky Horror Picture Show*, as well as in the plastic arts, such as the bas reliefs of the



THEME 4

Preserving Stories



Overarching Question: What Factors Inform or Influence the Preservation of Stories?

By Dr. Jo Marshall, Prof. Julie Rancilio, and Dr. Ryan Ruckel
Honors Program Council, Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society



Did your grandma, meemaw, nana, or tutu ever tell you a story about her life or your family's experiences? Oral storytelling is the most timeless form of passing down history – through folktales, ballads, and grandma's story time. Oral storytelling can easily be lost forever. Designating a site as a world-historic landmark does not necessarily guarantee preservation either. Even important places that we might assume to be "safe" can encounter peril — through myriad human-made and natural disasters. The preservation of stories is a constant struggle. For example, January 25, 2011, known in Egypt as the "Day of Revolt," was the beginning of the Arab Spring. Protests erupted against the government and some of the "stories" of ancient Egypt, which had endured for millennia, were lost. Historic sites were vandalized, and several buildings were destroyed. Nine Mile Canyon in eastern Utah is a petroglyph, an archaeological goldmine, containing a wealth of significant ancient American Indian rock artifacts dating back nearly 1,700 years. Through this corridor runs a heavily trafficked road, heightening concerns about the preservation of the American Indian story. These examples raise questions about the factors that inform or influence the preservation of stories: personal perspective, cultural norms, legal, economic, environmental, or technological issues.

Libraries and other repositories have served to preserve our stories. We lose treasures, however, through environmental issues, fire, flood, willful destruction, or simple neglect. Many believe invaders or religious zealots destroyed the famed Library of Alexandria. The reality is far more tragic. Most likely it just rotted away, a victim of neglect and indifference, whose remnants were picked apart stone by stone, parchment by parchment.

Stories have the power to transform, provide identity, and divide both on a societal and individual level. At some point, American children learned that Christopher Columbus "sailed the ocean blue." His "discovery" of the "New World," led to a national holiday that honors his achievement. What if that event had been initially preserved by the indigenous peoples whose lands he occupied? Would the story have been one of slavery, disease, and violence, one not worthy of honor?

When contesting memories and competing narratives leads to controversy, whose interpretation of the story is preserved? In 1994, an argument erupted over a planned World War II exhibit focused on the atomic bombings of Japan and centered around the restored Enola Gay, the airplane from which the United States dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima. Veterans, members of Congress, historians, and others argued over whether the story that accompanied the plane depicted the Japanese as victims, and it raised the moral question behind President Truman's decision. Ultimately, no agreement could be reached, and the exhibit was canceled. Only the fuselage was displayed, accompanied by basic facts and information about the plane's restoration. In other words, there was no story, historical or cultural context, or analysis of the events.

Cultural attitudes, such as political correctness, raise the question of what is preserved, in what form, and by whom. Recent debates over contested monuments, place names, and historical records open new possibilities for discussion and debate. Technological advancements are revolutionizing preservation efforts. Using lasers and drones, geologists in Guatemala discovered an ancient Mayan site that spans 650 square miles. What will the future look like if Artificial Intelligence (AI) can harness the power of storytelling, writing and preserving human narratives?

Stories help us connect with others; they unite, divide, and shape us. They inspire us, make us laugh, remember, and cry. Preserving stories is saving the past: who we were, what we did, and how we did it. But, who tells the story, and who preserves it? Economic inequality, for instance, means that opportunities for storytelling and preservation are unevenly distributed. Issues surrounding the preservation of stories are important ones that societies have and will continue to grapple with. What is the future of preservation? What challenges are there and how will they be overcome?



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Representation Through Stories

Overarching Question: How do untold, silenced, suppressed, or stolen stories impact society, and why does representation of these stories matter?

By Prof. Mathew Herrman, Dr. Kari Kahler, Prof. Kismet Loftin-Bell, and Dr. Diego Tibaquirá
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Stories explore identity and problem-solving, and they investigate deep questions. Stories may be shared or disseminated without consideration of their effects. However, the representation of others' experiences may be less clear. Many stories are unrepresented; they may be untold, silenced, suppressed, or stolen.

While we know of the heroic work of Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, and Rosa Parks, these stories do not represent the totality of those in the civil rights movement. The Stonewall riots were one manifestation of the movement to achieve LGBTQIA+ equality across society. We hear or read about individuals' attempts to immigrate as isolated examples of how a system is broken, but stories of the successful efforts to relocate entire families go untold.

Some stories are silenced; their stories go unshared due to norms, lack of acceptance, or fear of isolation. In pre-World War II Berlin, Germany, an institute explicitly studied gender constructs and human sexuality; when fascist regimes gained power, they seized the institute and destroyed its records. Those outside of Arkansas might not know its deep history of drag queens: Arkansas has been home to various drag pageants since the 1930s. An Arkansas private, religious college has held an annual drag competition since

1949 and remains one of the college's largest events. In the European-based Western world, gender identity often sparks debate; however, over 30 cultures worldwide accept, celebrate, and revere variant gender expressions.

Some adjust their public presentation by changing the natural qualities of their hair through styling products, colors, or wigs. Others reduce an accent, identifying their geographic origin. Others modify their name to be less difficult for others to pronounce. Martin Sheen changed his name to land more acting roles. His surname, Estévez, was not getting callbacks, and his career took off with Sheen. Two of his sons followed in his footsteps as actors: Emilio kept Estévez, and Charlie chose to keep Sheen. Both have led successful careers.

From the early 1800s to the 1960s, American Indian children were sent to Native Boarding Schools, often hundreds of miles from their homes, intending to assimilate children to American culture. They were discouraged from, even punished for, speaking their Native language. In May 2022, the US Interior Department released a 100-page report about its investigation of the Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative, describing rampant physical, sexual, and emotional abuse. These stories remained untold until recent years, and many will probably never surface, as American Indians are often still ashamed of what they endured and will not discuss experiences, even with family members.

In the wake of the #MeToo movement, many suppressed stories came to public view. Stories of women who had been attacked, harassed, and assaulted were purchased by newspapers for the sole purpose of not being published. Known as "catch and kill," this policy is used to protect public-facing personas of celebrities, friends, and officials who support the news agency.

Stolen stories operate by taking the story of one person or group and adopting it as their own symbol or identity. Plagiarism operates from deceit; students have largely been warned that taking the work of another is wrong, but it happens across people and cultures worldwide. Alex Haley, author of the Pulitzer Prize-winning book turned television series, *Roots*, was discovered in 1978 to have plagiarized significant parts of his chronicle of the life of enslaved person Kunta Kinte.

Cultural appropriation, too, exists across all forms of art, dance, jewelry, clothing, food, and personal expression. Fashion designers may gain inspiration from a culture, but not consider the ethics or significance of some elements. For example, using tribal headdresses for costuming purposes ignores the religious and ceremonial significance of the headdress.

To assimilate, fit in, be accepted (not ridiculed or put in danger), and feel part of a group, people will suppress their identity, reality, and background, surrendering their selfhood, personality, and distinctiveness to conform. Representation in stories matters to humans, in part, because when we see ourselves in others, we relate, connect, and further develop our own identities. Bringing untold, silenced, suppressed, and stolen stories to light encourages others to state their own ideas, share their experiences, and inspire others.

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Stories of Persistence, Resilience, Healing, and Sorrow



Overarching Question: To what extent do stories of persistence, resilience, healing, or loss provoke and inspire?

By Prof. Mathew Herrman, Dr. Kari Kahler, Prof. Kismet Loftin-Bell, and Dr. Diego Tibaquirá

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Do humans become more resilient and determined through loss and healing? In an effort of self-preservation, continuation, and progress, mourning a loss followed by some form of healing helps individuals and communities become resilient. It allows individuals the opportunity to continue discovering, telling, and creating their stories. We are inspired by the stories those overcoming obstacles, life-changing difficulties, and trauma. Finding a way to mourn a loss and achieve healing requires different stages and times for every person. Sharing stories helps build strength and allows the person to heal and progress.

The COVID-19 pandemic catalyzed a cultural and global mind-shift of self-care in various healthcare and helping professions. To persist, heal, and develop a sense of resilience, one must be able to identify and understand their own needs. Researchers Charlott Selberg, Martin Viktorelius, and A. Camilla Wiig proposed that caring for ourselves enables us to be more able to bridge scientific research and best practices to individuals' actions that, in turn, benefit society at large. In simplest terms: We must be able to care for ourselves to benefit others. The self-care story is rooted in loss, healing, persistence, and resilience.

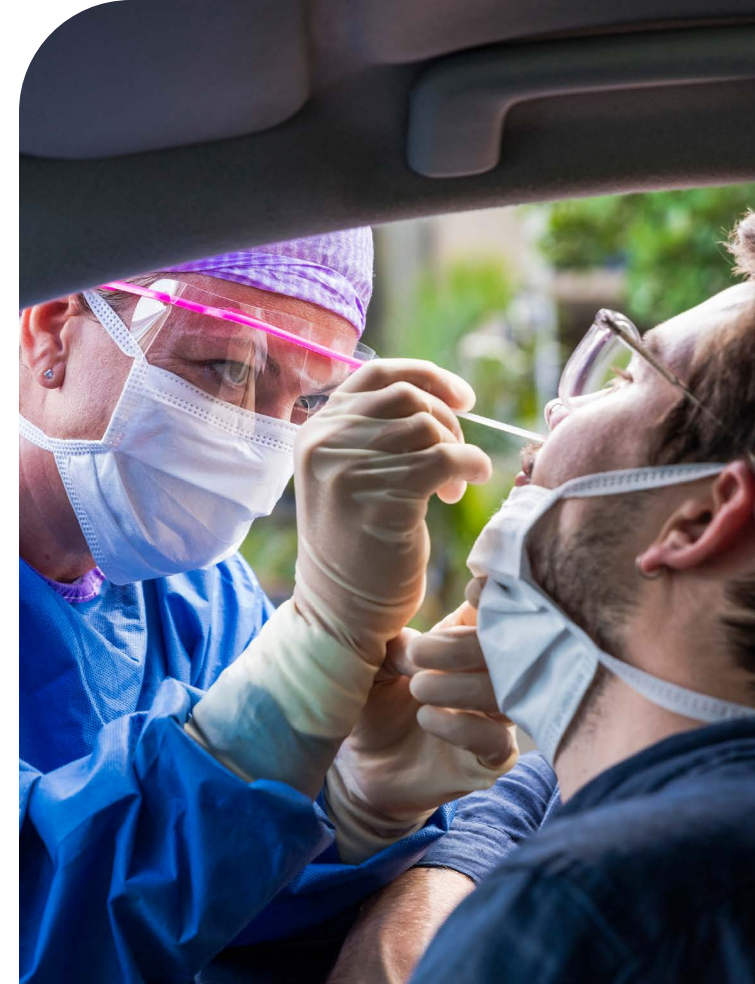
One's resilience and ability to rebound from setbacks is critical to successful leadership, fostering teams, generating collaboration, and igniting organizations (McArthur-Blair & Cockell, 2018). Appreciative inquiry can be an invaluable tool for building resilience and flexibility. Appreciative inquiry explores the effective things in a situation, rather than viewing the existing problems and barriers. Participants then lean on those "good things" to promote and produce growth. Appreciative inquiry suggests we can develop best practices and benefit all involved through collaboration. Such a perspective aids storytelling by encouraging a consistent focus on the good choices made and how those promote further growth and development.

Life experiences lead to turning points. While Clarence Thomas benefited from affirmative action, after being ostracized at Yale Law School, he made it his mission to dismantle affirmative action due to his negative experience. Further, Oprah Winfrey, a media mogul, who survived sexual assault and extreme poverty, made it her mission to overcome both. Despite being told she was not cut out for television; she found her niche and created a talk show style that no one has been able to replicate.

Success often results from persistence and resilience. Failure is a great teacher, as Carol Dweck found in her research on mindset. Humans who perceive challenges as achievable and obstacles as temporary are more likely to attain success. Abraham Lincoln had numerous failures and losses on his path to the presidency of the United States. Wilma Mankiller faced discrimination for being a woman as she assumed the role of the first woman Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation. Michael Jordan missed over 9000 shots, including 26 that were to be game-winning shots, yet he became one the greatest basketball players of all time.

Loss, too, provides opportunities to recall stories of what happened, what might have been, and the contributions of others to our lives. Obituaries serve as an abbreviated story of a person's life, and provide comfort for those mourning; however, some cultures believe in the taboo of naming the dead. In parts of Australia, India, Africa, and Siberia, it is considered inappropriate to discuss those who recently passed during the designated period of mourning. This is rooted in the belief that the deceased's spirit needs to be encouraged to enter the spirit world; to speak their name may confuse the spirit to return to the world of the living.

The passing of family values and experiences to new generations helps provide resilience. Stories of past loss, healing, and persistence are shared to motivate success through struggle. How are cultural practices providing symbolic value to achieve success? In many instances, past stories of sacrifices and oppressive experiences can ignite an individual's passion for resilience and overcoming obstacles to succeed. Janet Rocha stated that using these stories and advice passed down and shared in family circles can be an important venue for resilience.



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Stories as Information, Misinformation, and Disinformation



Overarching Question: How do stories serve as avenues of information, misinformation, or disinformation?

By Prof. Gigi Delk, Prof. Mathew Herrman, Dr. Kari Kahler, Dr. Kelly Kennedy, Prof. Kismet Loftin-Bell, Dr. Jo Marshall, Prof. Julie Rancilio, Dr. Ryan Ruckel, and Prof. Amy Winters

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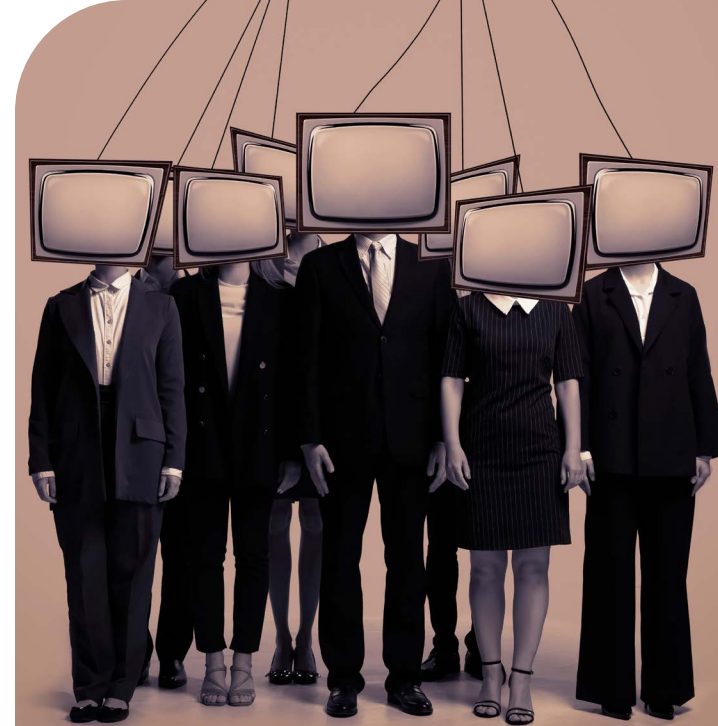
Daily news broadcasts frequently highlight a different scam, swindle, or fraud, often aided and abetted by misinformation or disinformation to persuade the reader to become embroiled in the latest “get rich quick” scheme or political scandal. Are human beings wired to be taken in by “fake news?” Are we biased, lazy, and given to a herd mentality, or, as studies show, given the right conditions, more than capable of discerning the truth? The City University of New York Graduate School of Journalism defines “information” as “knowledge obtained from investigation, study, or instruction; intelligence, facts, or data.” They define “misinformation” as the sharing of inaccurate and misleading information in an unintentional way. “Disinformation” is the deliberate dissemination of false or inaccurate information to mislead, whether in a positive or negative manner. Misinformation and disinformation are biased forms of “information” that can twist, change, omit, or damage the truth. Stories often serve as avenues of information, misinformation, or disinformation.

People may create stories to convey information or enhance teaching and learning effectiveness. “King Henry Does Usually Drink Chocolate Milk” creates a mnemonic

“story,” complete with character, plot, and action, so that students can remember a useful key for metric conversions. Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) scans reveal that listening to stories can cause a physiological change in brainwaves, synchronizing those of the listener with those of the storyteller. The same research suggests that people are more likely to make a positive lifestyle change when they identify with a character from a story. “Human brains are literally wired for stories...at their most simplistic, stories are the basis of knowledge acquisition and social interaction. Stories are how we make sense out of any experience.”

Unfortunately, people also use stories to spread misinformation and disinformation, and the exponential increase in the volume of information makes it more difficult to discern truth from falsehood. Information Technology experts have identified that the global information space doubles every eighteen months, a rate like Moore’s Law of Miniaturization, with some 328.77 million terabytes of information being produced daily. Gathering data may have been a problem in the past, but today the overwhelming amount of data creates an even greater challenge in making sense of what we have gathered. The sheer volume of information lends itself to ambiguity and misinformation, or, as writer Emily Dickinson said, “Tell all the truth, but tell it slant.” Social media giants, online retail behemoths, “big tech,” and government agencies alone may have the means to gather, process, and manipulate such vast amounts of information, leaving the rest of us at their mercy. As of January 2021, planet Earth played host to 4.95 billion active social media users, roughly 71% of the world’s population. “Social media has been highly effective in spreading stories due to the ease of access and speed of information diffusion. That means disinformation can quickly spread and correcting misinformation or disinformation is difficult.”

“Pay no attention to that man behind the curtain,” says the Wizard of Oz. Another powerful form of storytelling twists information to lend credibility to an otherwise false story. Social engineering, financial schemes, political propaganda, divisive narratives, and the like require some degree of truthfulness to make the story believable. Amid negative stories, however, heroes can emerge. While they may not be heroes per se, whistleblowers, cult survivors, and counter-intelligence personnel allow us to see behind the curtain of falsity. In some cases, disinformation can even solve problems and save lives, as evidenced by the successful Allied disinformation campaign to convince Adolf Hitler the D-Day invasion would target Calais rather than Normandy. The present-day United Nations has called on world leaders to combat disinformation in the effort to protect human rights and freedoms: “People now possess the entirety of human knowledge in the palm of their hand, and news and information can ricochet around the world in seconds...including the much-accelerated rate at which misinformation, disinformation, and even hate speech spread.” The stories of the world may one day become our world’s story. What is our responsibility?



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Fables, Folklore, and Fairytales



Overarching Question: In what ways do messages shared through fables, folklore, and fairytales influence and reflect culture?

By Prof. Gigi Delk, Dr. Kelly Kennedy, Dr. Jo Marshall, Prof. Julie Rancilio, Dr. Ryan Ruckel, and Prof. Amy Winters

Honors Program Council, Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society



In a land far, far away named Mississippi, PTK Headquarters could be found. There was a beautiful castle where all the brilliant minds of the land gathered. Now, close your eyes. Think back to your childhood. What do you think happens next? Imagine a green ogre who learns about love the hard way, or maybe a boy who trades his cow for magic beans and learns about empowerment?

Throughout time, humans have accounted for facts and natural phenomena through folklore. Fables or *cuentos* convey moral lessons. Fairy tales share a message of magical realms. These stories teach us so much more in terms of tradition, the human experience, and culture.

FABLES

According to the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, a fable is a narrative form of storytelling featuring animals, mythical creatures, or natural phenomena that take on human qualities to highlight our weaknesses or strengths. Aesop was thought to be the father of this genre. A modern representation of the fable is George

Orwell's 1945 *Animal Farm*, which gives the world an inside look at Stalinist Russia. Fables such as Disney's *Encanto* (2021) teach the lesson of believing in your personal worth. These *cuentos* and *consejos* translate into valuable life lessons.

FOLKLORE

Folklore began as oral history, which meant telling children about a culture's traditions. Over time, these tales were written down and shared, leading to greater cultural understanding. A more recent example would include the boggart in *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* (1999), which morphed into a giant spider, a snake, or Professor Snape in a dress with a handbag and hat. Consider the infusion of folklore and mythology into video games where the player can take on the character of the game's namesake Hades to escape from Zeus. In *Shadow of the Tomb Raider*, the Hindu culture and Greek mythology are featured to envelop gamers into this world. Another modern take is attributed to the character of Slenderman as a new form of folklore. The negativity that surrounds this particular character and story clearly demonstrates the impact that folklore, fables, and fairytales can have.

FAIRYTALES

The myth of Cupid and Psyche is a precursor to the modern fairytale of "Beauty and the Beast." Compiled in the 1600s, the first compilation of European fairytales included "Cinderella," "Sleeping Beauty," "Rapunzel," "Snow White," and more. A version of "Cinderella" appears in many cultures: "Rhodopis" in Egypt, "Aschenputtel" in Germany, "Ashley Pelt" in Ireland, "Adelita" in Mexico, and "Cendrillon" in the Caribbean. These were passed down orally and had recognizable elements of magic, fantasy, a happy ending, and the ability to bring about hope. Many also have a darker element, such as in "Red Riding Hood" where Red and her grandmother get eaten by the wolf, and he lives happily ever after. If we are rooting for the wolf, then it might still be considered a happy ending.

As with many things in our society, adaptations of beloved classics can be fraught with controversy. While millions were enchanted with "The Little Mermaid" live-action 2023 version, according to *Forbes Magazine*, there has been racist backlash regarding Ariel's character being played by a Black actress. Ariel's sisters are all distinct in their skin color, representing the various colors reflected in life. A British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) article suggests some fairytales need to be rewritten due to their gender stereotyping and questionable morals. At which stage do we stop rewriting? As communities morph, cultural traditions change the fairytales, folklore, and fables being passed down from generation to generation. It is important to consider the theme's overarching question: "In what ways do messages shared through fables, folklore, or fairytales influence and reflect culture?" and what do we want that message to be? The End.



Discover More About Fables, Folklore, and Fairy Tales

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American Indian: American Indian and Native American are terms used to refer to peoples living within what is now the United States prior to European contact and are both acceptable and often used interchangeably in the United States; however, Native Peoples or First Nations have individual preferences on how they would like to be addressed. To find out which term is best, ask the person or group which term they prefer. Whenever possible, it is best to use the name of an individual’s particular Indigenous community, tribe, band, or nation of people. For more information, refer to The National Museum of the American Indian or the City of Vancouver Acknowledging the Unceded Territories websites.

Arab Spring: The Arab Spring was a series of protests, uprisings, and armed rebellions that spread across many of the Arab states in the early 2010s. It began in Tunisia and spread to Libya, Egypt, Yemen, Syria, and Bahrain.

Boggart: In the Harry Potter books, Boggart is a shape-shifting creature that takes on the image of which the person most fears.

Consejos: Consejos is a piece of advice often in the form of a story.

Cuentos: Cuentos is a Spanish word meaning story, tale, or yarn often seen as a fable.

Cultural Appropriation: Cultural appropriation is the adoption of others’ cultural beliefs, practices, and artifacts without acknowledging the ethical, spiritual, or propriety considerations of doing so.

Cultural Assimilation: Cultural assimilation is the process of encouraging or forcing immigrants or minority cultures to adapt to the customs and prevailing culture.

Cupid: The ancient Roman god of love, son to Mercury, the messenger, and Venus, the goddess of love.

Disinformation: False information deliberately and often covertly spread (as by the planting of rumors) to influence public opinion or obscure the truth (Merriam-Webster) is considered disinformation.

Fake news: Fake news is using false or misleading information and calling it news based on factual data.

Herd mentality: Herd mentality means following a large group or crowd to fit in, belong, or be accepted.

Handscroll: Handscroll is East Asian art created on a small scroll designed for intimate viewing with only a few people. The format lends itself to storytelling through images that are gradually revealed as the scroll is unrolled.

King Henry Does Usually Drink Chocolate Milk: This is a mnemonic used to help students remember the metric system prefixes that describe measurements.

King	Henry	Does (Doesn’t)	Usually	Drink	Chocolate	Milk
Kilo	Hecto	Deca	Unit (Meters)	Deci	Centi	Milli

Land Acknowledgment: Land acknowledgement is a formal statement that recognizes and respects Indigenous peoples as the traditional stewards of their lands and the enduring relationship that exists between Indigenous peoples and their traditional territories. It is an expression of gratitude to the indigenous people whose land we reside on and benefit from.

Manga: Manga are Japanese comics originating in Japan for purposes of education or entertainment. Manga chapters are published serially and then combined into a book. The name comes from Japanese man (whimsical) + ga (pictures).

Mimesis: Mimesis is a foundational concept in the theory of artistic expression. Greek philosophers Plato and Aristotle used mimesis (Greek for “imitation” or “re-presentation”) to discuss the ways in which any form of artistic creation imitates nature and life.

Misinformation: Misinformation is incorrect or misleading information [without intention] (Merriam-Webster).

Mnemonic: A mnemonic device or series of words, ideas, associations, or letters that assists in remembering something.

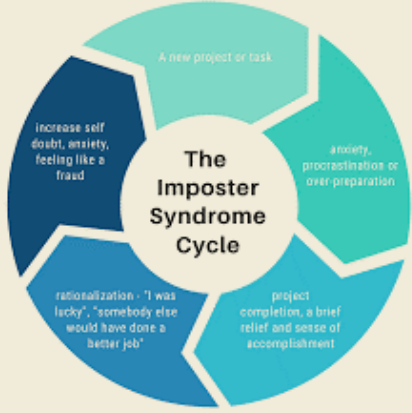
Moore’s Law of Miniaturization: Moore’s Law of Miniaturization is used to indicate the fast change in information systems. In 1965, American engineer Gordon Moore said that the number of transistors on computer chips will double every two years, the power and functioning of computers will continue to grow and the cost of the systems will continue to go down.

Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI): Magnetic resonance imaging is a medical imaging technique used in radiology to form pictures of the anatomy and the physiological processes of the body. MRI uses magnets and radio waves to produce images on a computer.

Hades: In Greek mythology, Hades is the god of the dead and king of the underworld. Hades is also commonly used as a name for the underworld as well as the name of a god.

Humanization: Humanization is the process of making a topic, idea, or story less unpleasant or more approachable for others.

Imposter Syndrome: Imposter Syndrome is the persistent inability to believe that one’s success is deserved or has been legitimately achieved because of one’s own efforts or skills.



Nine Mile Canyon: Nine Mile Canyon is a 40-mile canyon located in Carbon and Duchesne counties in eastern Utah.

Persistence: Persistence is continuing through a process despite challenges, difficulty, barriers, or opposition.

Petroglyph: Petroglyphs are rock carvings made by pecking directly on the rock surface using a stone chisel and hammerstone. Rock paintings are called pictographs.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is to kidnap someone’s ideas and present them, in part or wholly, as one’s own.

Psyche: Psyche is the goddess of the soul. She is represented as a beautiful woman with butterfly wings who is united in marriage to Cupid.

Resilience: Resilience is the ability to withstand or recover from difficulties.

Slenderman: Slenderman is a fictional supernatural character that started as a creepypasta Internet meme. He is depicted as thin, unnaturally tall, a featureless face, and wearing a black suit. Two 12-year-old Wisconsin girls blamed their killing of a classmate on the mythical Slenderman character.

Structuralism: Structuralism is a theory developed by cultural anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss, who argued that specific elements of cultural expression, including language, kinship, and folklore, could be better understood as being “built” upon more fundamental elements (the “structures”) of the human mind. Structuralists therefore explore the underlying commonalities across diverse cultures in search of universally human ways of thinking.

Terabyte: A terabyte is a unit of measurement that equals 1,000 gigabytes and/or 1 trillion bytes. See Data Measurement Chart.

Data Measurement Chart		
Data Measurement	Size	
Bit	Single Binary Digit (1 or 0)	1 or 0
Byte	8 bits	8 bits
Kilobyte (KB)	1,000* Bytes	1,000 bytes
Megabyte (MB)	1,000 Kilobytes	1,000,000 bytes
Gigabyte (GB)	1,000 Megabytes	1,000,000,000 bytes
Terabyte (TB)	1,000 Gigabytes	1,000,000,000,000 bytes
Petabyte (PB)	1,000 Terabytes	1,000,000,000,000,000 bytes
Exabyte (EB)	1,000 Petabytes	1,000,000,000,000,000,000 bytes

* Actual measurement is 1,024

Zealot: A zealot is anyone who is passionately devoted to a cause.

Zeus: Zeus is the Greek god of the sky, lightning, thunder, law, and order. He ruled over the other gods on Mount Olympus.

Steps to Developing a *Research Question*

- 1 Look at the Big Picture:**
Start with a broad examination of The Power of Stories
- 2 Get an Intro:**
Read and reflect on the introductory essay on pages 8-11.
- 3 Explore Each Theme:**
Take a closer look at the themes that trigger curiosity and passion among your group.
- 4 Note What Sparks Interest:**
Read and review the introductions to the eight themes beginning on page 12.
- 5 Dig Deeper:**
Discuss possible issues relevant to the themes that genuinely interest your team and consider how they relate to your campus and community.
- 6 Make Real-World Connections:**
Explore what's trending in national and international news, on your campus, and in your community. Building this contextual knowledge will help your team hone in on a theme and develop a question that will direct your initial research.

- From your contextual knowledge, use your observation to help lead your team to a research question.
- Explore issues within the themes. Remember, not all issues are specifically stated in the theme, as this is an intellectual framework and a guide to provoke discussion. As you choose a theme, consider which one seems most relevant to the intellectual curiosities of your members.
- Make sure the pursuit of your intellectual curiosity is interdisciplinary and global. Though your chapter will likely work at the local level, be sure to consider your theme through an international lens initially.

Questions to ask when developing your research question:

- What do we want to find out about our research topic?
- What research have authors or artists conducted already?
- What remains undiscovered about this topic? What are the relevant and credible sources, and how readily available are they?

It's Normal: When you answer research question(s), two important developments can occur:

- The scope and nature of your question can change.
- Your theme may change based on what your team finds.

Sample Research Question:

What are the varied ways photographers tell stories? How do photographers share their stories?

Inspiration Sources:

Inspiration sources are a pivotal part of a solid HIA project. Maybe your chapter could not stop talking about America Ferrera's two-minute monologue from the 2023 *Barbie* movie. This raises some fantastic questions about women, societal norms, gender equity, double standards, and other socially conscious topics. The film's script is not academic, but it can inspire your team to explore a concept more deeply. Your team could then find sources that have researched specific concepts in feminism or women's portrayal in movies or television. That can lead you to find other sources that present additional points of view.

Inspiration sources can serve as a foundation for an HIA project. You can come back to that inspiration source for new insights, topic spins, or other information to help your chapter achieve a great project.

Using the example above, if our chapter decided to use *Barbie* as an inspiration source, we might determine the goal of our project is how gender norms are reinforced through media. We then can search in an online library database (think EBSCOhost or ProQuest) or on Google using key words and phrases that help us find other sources on this topic. Those sources can be the basis for our Honors in Action investigation phase.

If we find ourselves struggling to find enough current sources on this concept, we might decide to go back to Ferrera's monologue and listen for other phrases or concepts that might be important for us to consider. This gets us back into databases with new concepts to search. Once we have our number of sources, we can analyze what these sources tell us about our topic.

Additional Resources:

Additional Honors in Action Resources, including an Honors in Action workbook, are available online at <https://www.ptk.org/benefits/honors-program/>

Interested in more Honors-related resources? Visit the following webpages:

Research Edge
<https://www.ptk.org/benefits/professional-development-courses/>

Civic Scholar: Phi Theta Kappa Journal of Undergraduate Research
<https://www.ptk.org/benefits/honors-program/civic-scholar-journal/>

Honors Case Study Challenge
<https://www.ptk.org/benefits/honors-program/honors-case-study-challenge/>

Leadership Development Studies
<https://www.ptk.org/benefits/leadership-development-studies/>

Identifying and Analyzing Credible Sources: *A Screening Process*

Phi Theta Kappans require an efficient and effective method for identifying great sources for informed action. Since not all sources are created equal, two preliminary searches and questions for identifying and evaluating sources for HIA Projects are a best practice for engaging in informed action.

PRELIMINARIES

After determining the chapter’s research question and Honors Study Topic Theme, the question may be organized into appropriate search terms and keywords.

Example: The sample research question on pg. 30 of the guide is the following:

Theme 5: Representation Through Stories

How do untold, silenced, suppressed, or stolen stories impact society, and why does representation of these stories matter?

Possible Initial Search Terms: silenced stories, the danger of the single story, banned books, blacklisted authors

These terms can be searched via your library’s databases and other available resources, such as Google Scholar. It is important to remember that the research librarians on your campus can assist you as you search for credible sources. In the example provided above, students might also look for specific stories and authors who have researched this phenomenon.

FIRST SEARCH: TYPE & RELEVANCY

The first search will use the initial search terms created above and can be reviewed for the types of texts found and their relevance. However, remember that you are seeking credible sources with various viewpoints. Credible sources are those that add to the body of knowledge. Usually, such sources have the following qualities:

- 1. Clear and accurate reference to and appropriate citation of the work of other authors and experts,
- 2. Published or posted online by a third party (not self-published),
- 3. Clear identification of the author as an expert.

Type of Sources

Within that definition, credible sources today can be primary or secondary and can be presented in different learning modes.

Primary sources may include interviews with the experts on a subject, poster presentations, or peer-reviewed published articles of research conducted, etc. In short, a primary source is one in which the author responsible for knowledge creation is presenting the research.

Secondary sources may include literature reviews on a given subject, discussions/analyses of research done by others, etc. In short, a secondary source is one in which the discussion concerns a secondhand review of others’ work.

What Is Multimodality?

Multimodality is a theory of communication and learning that organizes knowledge into five distinct learning modes (semiotic groups): textual (gestural), aural, linguistic, spatial, and visual. Multimodal educators and researchers may use two or more modes to conduct research, teach, and learn. Such use is more inclusive of worldwide cultural, linguistic, communicative, and technological diversity. As communication practices have changed drastically over the past 20 years, it is no longer possible to use only written materials for investigation purposes. Progressively, there is a need to compose and reference materials in formats accessible to all learning styles.

Textual	Written words as in books, articles, novels, advertisements
Aural	Speeches, podcasts, videos, audiobooks, music, storytelling
Linguistic	Interviews, focus groups, spoken word, speeches, books
Spatial	Dance, storytelling (gestures), graphic novels, posters
Visual	Images, media, maps, documentaries, live performances, animation

The remaining discussion below applies generally to all types of texts. We will state that explicitly when referring to specific considerations for specific texts.

Relevancy

“Data is inherently dumb,” proclaimed Peter Sondergaard, head of research at Gartner. “It doesn’t actually do anything unless you know how to use it; how to act with it...” (Oliver, 2015, para. 4). Aside from type, your first

search should review the sources found for relevance because breaking down the question into potential search terms may still not yield the most focused and useful results.

So, what are you looking for?

First, take time to determine which types of multimodal sources might be relevant to your project. For example, if you are researching the hidden voices of young adults in an urban setting, then perhaps spoken word performances may be an excellent multimodal research tool to consider. On the other hand, if your research is about incarceration rates in urban environments, it is highly likely that spoken word performances may not be credible nor reliable. As another example, you may have interesting conversations with a friend regarding the Korean War; however, these conversations would not be considered reliable research about the war. Interviewing a veteran with firsthand war experience through service would be much more credible and reliable.

Second, review your potential sources to see whether they are useful to you or not. That is, what information would the source provide you that you need? Examining titles and abstracts allows you to determine if the source will provide useful historical or theoretical information regarding your topic. Perhaps the source contains an answer to your research question with a rationale for that answer. Or perhaps your source surveys a number of potential responses to your question so that you can easily see how scholars have discussed your research question thus far.

Third, to the extent possible, determine the author’s purpose, overall project, or thesis so that you do not use the author’s work out of context or unfairly.

Last, once you have determined that a source is relevant, you should scan the references to see if there are seminal sources (works that are classic or essential to the field) listed and scan the document to see if there are any additional keywords that will support you in revising and focusing your search.

SECOND SEARCH: CURRENCY & CREDIBILITY/ETHOS

Currency

Your second search should utilize the more focused keywords and authors that you found in your first pass in your search. However, this time, do not review the list right away. Instead, filter it so that you only search within the last five to ten years, unless you are dealing with seminal works (works that are classic or essential to the field). Occasionally, you will encounter a topic or question that no one has researched, written about, or published in the last ten years. Then, of course, you want to find whatever is the most current material available and figure out why no one has worked on this topic in some time.

Credibility/Ethos

Once you have filtered your list for currency (see above), you can start to sort for credibility. The credibility of a source

depends on the type of source being used. While the section “Type” above elaborates on strategies for classifying the sources that you are using, you may want to consider the following rules of thumb:

Books

Generally speaking, self-published books are not considered as credible as books published by commercial publishers and/or university presses. Regarding credibility, university press-published books rank high in credibility because they tend to receive much more scrutiny from experts in a given field.

Periodicals/Journals

We are entering an era when knowledge building is being increasingly democratized and digitized, which is great. Nevertheless, greater accessibility of information may belie its credibility. If you decide to use open-access resources, you should review them carefully to ensure that experts have properly vetted the information.

Internet Domains

Researchers are encouraged to stick closely to the domains of educational institutions (.edu) and the government (.gov) or the military (.mil). This does not mean that the other domains — .net, .com, .org — are useless. They, however, require more scrutiny and review, as discussed in the last section:

Further Review

After two distinct searches, you are now ready to read more deeply the works that are left before you. You are now looking for logical, grammatical, and intellectual errors that may reduce a writer’s credibility even if the work passed the tests for relevance and currency above. Some areas of review include the following:

- 1) Bias – We are all biased, but when does one’s bias override one’s credibility? One notorious example of this is a site about Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. that was hosted by NeoNazis (See Heldt, n.d. for further discussion of this.). Again, “data is dumb” (Oliver, 2015, para 4). While specific facts may be accurate, the overall interpretation may be misleading.
- 2) Logical Fallacies – You can find websites online that discuss common logical fallacies, such as ad hominem (to attack a person rather than the person’s argument) or straw man (to distort an argument so as to more easily rebut it). Your English instructor, a librarian, or a logician can easily assist you in sorting through articles for logical fallacies.
- 3) Grammatical Errors and Typos, etc. – If the author has not effectively edited the document, the argument(s) proposed may not be very sound. Researchers are encouraged to pay close attention to such details.
- 4) Factual Errors – If the author’s facts are incorrect, this may mean that their overall argument or thesis is also incorrect or ill-informed.

The discussion that follows applies generally to all types of texts. When there are references to specific considerations for specific texts, they are explicitly noted.

Keeping a journal throughout the HIA Project is an important tool to track what you learned, how you grew as scholars and leaders, and how you met your proposed project objectives. Reflection is a significant part of the HIA Project rubric.

- Everyone on the HIA team should keep a journal.
- Journaling can be accomplished on paper or online (check out Google Docs, Glimpses, Memento, etc.)
- Consider setting deadlines for reflections as part of your project timeline.

Get ready! Get set; go!

- Congratulations on being a part of your chapter's Honors in Action team! How did your chapter choose the team, and how do you think you might grow individually as a leader and a scholar during the process?
- What were your research objectives for the project?
- Which themes in the Honors Program Guide were most interesting to you and why?
- How did your group choose your theme related to the Honors Study Topic?
- Does the theme address a real-life issue in your community?
- What are your deadlines?

For good answers, ask the right questions and set the right objectives.

- What are your Honors Study Topic investigation objectives? How did you develop them?
- What is your research question? Is your question thoughtful and answerable?
- Is your question directly related to one of the themes AND the overall Honors Study Topic in this guide?
- By what process did you develop your research question?
- Who (faculty, advisors, librarians, experts) engaged in the development of your research question?
- What different disciplines can you connect to your theme as it relates to the Honors Study Topic?
- What are the varied perspectives and points of view to explore?
- What sources can you identify that represent the varied points of view about your theme as it relates to the Honors Study Topic?
- What are the details of your Honors Study Topic investigation plan (number and type of sources, deadlines for reporting, etc.)?

What did you learn? What conclusions did your team draw?

- What sources did each researcher team member consult? What were the three most meaningful things each team member learned from each source that informed your understanding of the chosen theme related to the Honors Study Topic?
- What are the APA 7th Edition citations for the 5 sources you will use for your Honors in Action Hallmark Award entry? Be specific and record your citations so you have them when the team writes its HIA Hallmark Award entry.
- What did you learn from analyzing and synthesizing your team's Honors Study Topic investigation?
- What are your Honors Study Topic investigation conclusions?
- What obstacles did you face while conducting the Honors Study Topic investigation? How did you overcome them?
- What are the quantitative and qualitative outcomes of your Honors Study Topic investigation?
- How were your critical thinking and research skills strengthened as a result of the chapter's Honors Study Topic investigation? How can you provide any evidence of this growth?

- How did your Honors Study Topic investigation help you better understand the world?
- How have you shared the Honors Study Topic investigation with chapter members, people on campus, and/or community members?
- What specific plan of action did your Honors Study Topic investigation conclusions lead you to choose? Explain how and why.

How did your answers change your questions?

- In what ways was your Honors in Action investigation personally challenging?
- How did your answers change your questions?
- What pre-conceived ideas held by your team members were challenged and/or changed through the Honors Study Topic investigation process?

What will you do with your newfound knowledge?

- What did you learn during the Honors Study Topic investigation phase of your HIA Project that led you to identify an action that tied directly to your team's investigation?
- Whom will you serve? (demographics, numbers, location, etc.)
- How will your project serve your campus? How will your project serve your community?
- What local organizations are engaged in actions (service, awareness, advocacy) similar to what you aim to do? What can you learn from their work?
- What organizations exist worldwide that are engaged in actions similar to what you aim to do? How does their work inform yours?
- What is the specific short-term impact you intend to make?
- What are the details of your strategies and plans?
- How are you going to measure the short-term impact (quantitative measures and qualitative measures)?

Reflect on how knowing more helped to change you, your members, your community, and the world.

- What are your Honors Study Topic investigation's specific results and impacts, growth as scholars and leaders, and the resulting action?
- What contributions did you make to understanding the Honors Study Topic by developing and implementing your Honors in Action Project?
- In what ways did your team emphasize intentional Honors Study Topic investigation?
- What are the reactions and feedback from the people or organizations you collaborated with?
- What contributions did your team make to understanding the importance of lifelong, intentional service?
- With whom did you collaborate to complete your project? 1) People on campus? 2) Community members? How and why did you select your collaborators? How did you communicate with them, and how did you collectively reflect on your HIA Project?
- Did you meet your chapter's initial objectives?
- How did you heighten awareness of self and community in relation to global issues because of your Honors in Action Project?
- In what ways did you increase your appreciation for the value of informed action as a lifelong endeavor because of your Honors in Action Project?

Established in 1968, Phi Theta Kappa’s Honors Study Topic is the cornerstone of Honors in Action and the Honors Case Study Challenge. The following is a list of past Honors Study Topics.

- 1968

Our Cultural Heritage: 1800-1860
- 1969

The Changing Nature of American Society: A Challenge to Government
- 1970

A Study of Twentieth-Century Drama
- 1971

Man, A Part of Nature/Man, Apart from Nature
- 1972

The State of Our Nation: Toward Responsible Contributory Citizenship
- 1973

Voices of Human Experience, I
- 1974

Voices of Human Experience, II
- 1975

Franklin and Jefferson: Apostles in '76
- 1976

William Faulkner: The Man, His Land, His Legend
- 1977

Music: The Listener’s Art
- 1978

Man Alive: Can He Survive?
- 1979

The Brilliant Future of Man: Problem Solving Time
- 1980

A Time for Truth
- 1981

Man in Crisis: A Quest for Values
- 1982

The Short Story: Mirror of Humanity
- 1983

Signed by the Masters
- 1984

America, A World-Class Citizen: Image and Reality
- 1985

Ethics and Today’s Media: An Endangered Alliance?
- 1986

The American Dream: Past, Present, and Future
- 1987

The U.S. Constitution: Assuring Continuity Through Controversy
- 1988

The Character and Climate of Leadership: Old Frontiers and New Frontiers
- 1989

The Americas: Distant Neighbors Building Bridges
- 1990

Civilization at Risk: Challenge of the 90s
- 1991

The Paradox of Freedom: A Global Dilemma
- 1992

1492-1992: The Dynamics of Discovery
- 1993

Our Complex World: Balancing Unity and Diversity
- 1994

Science, Humanity and Technology: Shaping a New Creation
- 1995

Rights, Privileges and Responsibilities: An Indelicate Balance
- 1996

The Arts: Landscape of Our Time
- 1997

Family: Myth, Metaphor and Reality
- 1998

The Pursuit of Happiness: Conflicting Visions and Values
- 1999

The New Millennium: The Past As Prologue
- 2000

In the Midst of Water: Origin and Destiny of Life
- 2001

Customs, Traditions, and Celebrations: The Human Drive for Community
- 2002/2003

Dimensions and Directions of Health: Choices in the Maze
- 2004/2005

Popular Culture: Shaping and Reflecting Who We Are
- 2006/2007

Gold, Gods, and Glory: The Global Dynamics of Power
- 2008/2009

The Paradox of Affluence: Choices, Challenges, and Consequences
- 2010/2011

The Democratization of Information: Power, Peril, and Promise
- 2012/2013

The Culture of Competition
- 2014/2015

Frontiers and the Spirit of Exploration
- 2016/2017

How the World Works: Global Perspectives
- 2018/2019

Transformations: Acknowledging, Assessing, and Achieving Change
- 2020/2021

To the Seventh Generation: Inheritance and Legacy
- 2022/2023

The Art and Science of Play
- 2024/2025

The Power of Stories

The Phi Theta Kappa Honors Program Council is responsible for making recommendations to Headquarters staff about the new Honors Study Topic and Honors in Action and assisting with writing and compiling the Honors Program Guide. The Council also serves on the Editorial Board of Civic Scholar: Phi Theta Kappa Journal of Undergraduate Research. Made up of Phi Theta Kappa chapter advisors, Headquarters staff, and consultants, the Honors Program Council is selected for its broad knowledge, its commitment to examining the Honors Study Topic, its dedication to Phi Theta Kappa’s integrated approach to scholarship, leadership, service, and scholarly fellowship, and its balance in academic disciplines.



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The City of Vancouver acknowledges that it is situated on the unceded traditional territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səlilwətaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.



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