**TIPS TO WRITE A GREAT ESSAY**

1. **Gather your research materials.** There are many great resources: museums, government archives, non-profit organizations that specialize in the particular group, branches of the military, military veterans service organizations, speeches by political leaders about the event, perhaps friends and relatives that lived during the time of the event, books, and old newspaper articles and radio broadcasts. Also consider movies and documentaries about the events. Movies won’t necessarily be totally accurate, but can give you a sense of the people and places and motivations behind events.
2. **Capture the source citation information as you take notes.** A bibliography is the list of all the sources actually quoted or referred to specifically (cited) in the essay. For purposes of the ABMF Essay Contest, you may choose to disclose some or all of the sources you used for research, but call this list “Research Materials” rather than a “Bibliography.”

Citations for a bibliography are presented in a specific format, depending upon the source. For purposes of presenting Research Materials, you would generally include:

* the complete name of the author, producer, person interviewed, point of contact, etc.
* the name of the organization; or,
* the title of the article, book, movie, etc.
* the date of publication, interview, release date, etc.
* a URL link to material found online, or name of publisher /producer

The point of citing sources is to allow the reader to be able to go to that material to learn more or to determine if the conclusions drawn from the source material are accurate or reasonable.

1. **Once you’ve read/ listened/ watched your source material, think about what you want to say about the topic.** Write down a few words that answer the questions in the key elements: what, who, when, where, how, and, always importantly, why. Having these key elements allows you to then be creative in how you will present the material. Of all the research you did, and of all the key elements you’ve identified, what aspects interest you most? What aspect of the research and key elements excites you enough to explain it to a friend, a family member, and your adult editor? Generally, you’ll do your best work if you’re writing about something that you genuinely find of interest. If you’re not at this point, repeat Step 1.
2. **Read** [**the essays of previous winners**](https://abmf.org/past-is-prologue-essay-contest/)**.** You’ll get some great ideas from your peers.
3. **Draft the essay as a separate document. Don’t write it on the ABMF upload site. That’s where you’ll submit your FINAL version. Keep in mind the minimum and maximum word count.** Think about the two mandatory questions. Talk with your adult editor about them. Answers to those are included in the word count.
4. **Put it away and sleep on it.** Good writing takes effort. Don’t be afraid to change some copy if the logic stream doesn’t make sense. Read your essay out loud. Does the order of the words make sense?
5. **Ask your adult editor to review your work for correct spelling, grammar and punctuation.**
6. **Upload your essay using your unique Participant ID number.** Good luck – and thanks for making the 2024 ABMF Past is Prologue Essay Contest a possibility with your participation!