ResearchQuest

Meet the Cast

STANDARD EDITION

Spark & Anvil

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This book collects 5 chapter books from the Researchquest cast — each character embodies a different curricular primitive; together they teach the full subject.

Methodology: distributed-narrative learning per Bruner narrative-cognition + Habgood intrinsic-integration + SAMHSA TIP 57 trauma-informed register.

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For everyone who learns by hearing a story first.

Contents

Introduction

The Researchquest cast was authored to embody the curriculum, not decorate around it.
Each of the 5 characters you'll meet in this book teaches a specific primitive —
a particular tactic, a particular technique, a particular way of seeing.
Together they form an ensemble: the cast IS the curriculum.

Read in any order. Each chapter stands alone.
Each character also appears in the matching Spark & Anvil app (free, forever)
where you can practice what they teach.

— *The editors at Spark & Anvil*

Quote

*NOTE-TAKING — *quoting + paraphrasing + summarizing; keeping voices separate.* The research-method primitive of *distinguishing source voice from your voice in research notes.**

Quote was a small magpie-tween. She had bright, quick eyes. Her black-and-white feathers flashed blue in the light. Quote always looked organized. She liked things neat and tidy. Her best thing was a special pen set. It lived in her vest pocket. Three pens, three colors. Each pen clicked just right. Black was for **QUOTE**. That meant writing down someone else's exact words. Blue was for **PARAPHRASE**. Those were her own words, explaining someone else's idea. Green was for **SUMMARY**. That was a short version of a longer passage. Quote kept them shiny. She checked them often. They were her tools for truth.

Quote was all about **note-taking**. It was super important. Why? Because notes could get messy. Sometimes, your words mixed with someone else's words. That was a big problem. Imagine reading a book. You find a cool fact. You write it down. But you forget to say *who* said it. Or you use *their* exact words by accident. Then it looks like *you* made up the fact. Or *you* wrote the cool sentence. People called this "plagiarism." Quote called it "voice blurring." Her pens stopped that from happening. They kept every voice separate. They made sure everyone got credit.

Quote never mixed up the three ways. "They are not the same!" she would chirp. She'd pull out her pens. "Three different ways. Three different colors. You must keep the voices separate." She tapped her black pen on a tiny notepad. "Use black for **QUOTE**. Write *their* exact words. Put quotation marks around them. Like this: 'The sky is blue,' she wrote. She added tiny quotation marks. "This is for special words. Or important definitions." She switched to blue. "Use blue for **PARAPHRASE**. Use *your* words. Explain *their* idea. Do not use *their* exact phrases." She wrote, 'The author thinks the sky is blue.' No quotation marks this time. "Think: 'Would the author know it's their idea? But not their exact sentence?'" Then the green pen came out. "Use green for **SUMMARY**. Make it short. Tell the main points of a long part. Use *your* words again." She wrote, 'Sky is blue.' Very short. "This is for the main gist." She always added, "And write down where you found it. Every single time. Page number too!"

Quote had simple rules for her notes:

- **QUOTE (black ink)**: Write down the words exactly. Use quotation marks. Write the page number. Add where it came from. Only use this for special parts. Like a cool phrase. Or a key idea.
- **PARAPHRASE (blue ink)**: Write the idea in *your* words. Do not use *their* words. Think: "Would the author know it's their idea? But not their exact sentence?"
- **SUMMARY (green ink)**: Make it short. Write the main points. Use *your* words. Don't add every tiny detail.
- **Source ID + page number**: Write this for *every* note. You need to find it later. You need to say where you got it.
- **Don't mix them up**: If you use their words by accident, stop. Start over.
- **Keep voices separate**: Black is the author's voice. Blue is your voice, with their ideas. Green is your voice, with their main point. Clear voices stop plagiarism.
- **Like ScienceForge Sample**: Remember how Sample records data? Notes need that same care.

Quote grew up in a small village. Her family had a special job there. They were the village record-keepers. All the magpies in her family did it. They wrote down everything important. They kept track of the village's year.
Imagine a big meeting. The village council talked for hours. They argued about the best way to fix the old bridge. Quote's family sat quietly. They wrote it all down. They used black ink for the exact words spoken. "The bridge needs new planks," the mayor said. That was a **QUOTE**. Then they wrote a short version of what happened. "Council discussed bridge repairs," they'd write in green. That was a **SUMMARY**. Sometimes, the record-keeper added their own thoughts. "The mayor seemed worried about the cost." Those were like **PARAPHRASE** notes, in blue. They were the keeper's own ideas about the meeting.
It was a lot of writing. It needed strict color rules. Quote learned this very young. By age six, she knew the colors helped. They kept everything clear. No one ever got confused. The village trusted their records. They knew which words were the

mayor's. They knew which were the keeper's thoughts.

Quote walked to ResearchQuest when she was twenty-two. Her feathers were sleek. Her pens were polished. Scholar met her at the gate. He was a tall, quiet figure. "What is note-taking?" Scholar asked. His voice was deep. Quote didn't even blink. "Three ways," she chirped. "Three colors. **QUOTE** in their words. **PARAPHRASE** in yours. **SUMMARY** of the main idea." She paused. Her bright eyes looked right at Scholar. "Keep voices separate. Write the source and page number for every note." Scholar smiled. A slow, thoughtful smile. "You are appointed," he said. "Welcome to ResearchQuest, Quote."

Quote loved to talk about notes. She'd often hold up her three pens. "I have taken thousands of notes," she'd say. "So many notes! My little vest pocket is full of them." She believed most people didn't mean to plagiarize. "It happens by accident," she explained. "When you mix up the voices. You think you're writing your own words. But you've used someone else's. My three-color pens stop that." She would tap the pens together. "It's not hard, really. It's simple. Just three ways. Three colors. Keep voices separate. **QUOTE**, **PARAPHRASE**, **SUMMARY**." She made it sound like a secret code. A very important secret code.

Her three-color pen set was always ready. It held the next note. Always.

Voice register

Guidance: Quick-eyed, organized, fond of three-color pen-set. Magpie-tween. *NEVER frames the three modes as interchangeable; ALWAYS centers voice-separation.*

Sample lines:

- *"Quote in their words. Paraphrase in yours. Summarize the gist."*
- *"Keep voices separate."*
- *"Source ID + page for every note."*
- *"Voice clarity = plagiarism prevention."*

Arc

- **Kit 3** — Anchor.
- **Kit 4-7** — Recurring.
- **Kit 8-16** — Ensemble.

Relationships

- **Alliance**: Vet (Quote takes notes from Vet-approved sources); Synth (Quote's notes feed Synth's synthesis); all ResearchQuest cast.

Cultural-sensitivity gate

Anti-plagiarism scaffolding built in. Plagiarism framed as *accidental confusion*, NOT *moral failure*, with discipline-based prevention.

Cultural-context note

The village-record-keeper family framing is a deliberate generic European-village tradition. The *three-mode discipline* (Quote / Paraphrase / Summarize) is foundational information-literacy + writing pedagogy.

Synth

*SYNTHESIS — *combining evidence across multiple sources; finding agreement, disagreement, gaps.* The research-method primitive of *building understanding from multiple sources, not summarizing one source at a time.**

Synth was a small otter-tween. She always carried her multi-thread weaving-frame. It was a small hand-held loom. Bright threads hung from it. Each thread was a different source of information. Synth wove them together. She made a single cloth. This cloth was her *synthesis*. Synth was sleek and warm-brown. Her cream-colored fur was soft. She had bright, curious eyes. She loved to combine things. She was made for putting ideas together.

Her weaving-frame was her most special tool. It showed everyone what she did. The small loom held many colored threads. Each thread stood for a different book or article. Synth carefully pulled and twisted them. She made one strong, new piece of fabric. This fabric was her *synthesis*. It was her new understanding.

This was very important work. Synth taught about *synthesis*. Most new researchers just list what each source says. They might write: "Book A says otters eat fish. Book B says otters build dens. Book C says otters play in the water." They never combine these ideas.

Synthesis is different. It means taking all the sources together. You find where they agree. You find where they disagree. You look for things they all missed. Then you build *your own* understanding. This new understanding comes from combining everything. The *synthesis* is your own special contribution. It's what *you* add to the research.

Synth was very clear about this. She never said synthesis was just listing sources. "Synthesis is *across* sources," she would say. "Not one at a time. Where do they agree? Where do they disagree? What's MISSING from all of them? *That's the synthesis.* That's what you bring to the research." She would tap her weaving-frame. The threads would shimmer.

She taught some simple steps for *synthesis*:

- **List the claims from each source.** Write down what each book or article says. Give each claim a source ID.
- **Identify CONVERGENCE.** Find where multiple sources say the same thing. Or where they say something very similar. If many sources agree, that's strong evidence.
- **Identify DIVERGENCE.** Find where sources disagree. Why do they disagree? Maybe they used different facts. Maybe they looked at different times.
- **Identify GAPS.** What did *none* of the sources talk about? These gaps are chances for new research. Or they show what the research doesn't cover.
- **Build YOUR synthesis.** Now that you know where sources agree, disagree, and what's missing, what do *you* think? Use the sources to back up your ideas.
- **Resist source-by-source structure.** Don't organize your paper by saying "Source A says this, then Source B says that." Organize it by *ideas*. Group all the similar ideas together.
- **Convergence is not consensus-by-counting.** Don't just say "Three sources say X, but one says Y, so X wins." Think about *why* each source says what it says. Which sources are better?
- **Cross-app: ScienceForge Conclude.** Both Synth and ScienceForge Conclude teach how to interpret information. Conclude focuses on science experiments. Synth focuses on many different written sources.

Synth grew up by the Whispering River. Her family had been the village's weavers for ages. They were the otters who made cloth. They used many different types of fibers. They combined them all together. The work needed a special eye. You had to see how all the threads worked as one.

Little Synth watched her mother's paws. She saw how different threads, when woven together, made something new. A single thread was weak. Many threads, woven right, made a warm, strong blanket. It was more than just adding them up. The combination made something different. It was better. She learned this lesson early. By the time she was six, she understood.

When Synth was twenty-two, she walked to the great ResearchQuest hall. The wise Scholar sat behind a huge desk. "What is *synthesis*?" the Scholar asked, his voice deep.

Synth held her weaving-frame. "It's about looking *across* sources," she said. "Finding where they agree. Finding where they disagree. Finding what they all missed." She took a deep breath. "Then, it's about *your* new understanding. You build it from everything you learned." She finished, "And you organize it by ideas, not by each book."

The Scholar smiled. "You are appointed," he said. "Welcome to ResearchQuest."

Synth often told new students, "I've helped with many research projects." She would shake her head. "The biggest mistake new researchers make? They just list what each book says." She made a face. "They say, 'Book A says this. Book B says that.' That's not synthesis." She tapped her frame. "You need to group your *ideas*. That's the hard part. That's the right way to do it."

"It is hard," she admitted. "It means looking *across* sources. Finding where they match. Finding where they clash. Finding the holes. And then, adding *your* own thoughts. That's your gift to the research."

Her weaving-frame always held the start of a new cloth. A new *synthesis*.

Voice register

Guidance: Bright-eyed, fond-of-combining, integrating-by-design. Otter-tween. *NEVER frames synthesis as source-by-source summary; ALWAYS centers thematic + across-sources discipline.*

Sample lines:

- *"Across sources, not one at a time."*
- *"Convergence. Divergence. Gaps. YOUR understanding from the combination."*
- *"Thematic organization, not source-by-source."*

Arc

- **Kit 4** — Anchor.
- **Kit 5-7** — Recurring.
- **Kit 8-16** — Ensemble.

Relationships

- **Alliance**: Quote (Synth weaves Quote's notes); Tether (Synth's contribution requires Tether's citation); all ResearchQuest cast. **Cross-app**: ScienceForge Conclude.

Cultural-sensitivity gate

Anti-credentialism enforced. Synthesis-as-contribution centers research as creative work.

Cultural-context note

The river-village weaver family framing is a deliberate generic European-village tradition. The *convergence-divergence-gaps* discipline is foundational scholarly-synthesis pedagogy. The *thematic-not-source-by-source* organization rule is the central anti-pattern correction for novice research-writing.

Tether

*CITATION — *attribution + bibliography; gratitude + map back to sources.* The research-method primitive of *citation as both intellectual honesty and a navigation aid for future readers.**

Tether was a small squirrel-tween. She had a tiny cord-and-tag bundle in her vest pocket. She was always careful. She always showed thanks.

Tether was small. Her tail was warm russet and cream. Her hands moved fast. She was just built to be grateful. She loved tidy trails. Her special thing was her cord-and-tag bundle. It was a set of small tags tied with string. Each tag had a label. It showed where an idea came from. It listed the author, title, and page. Each tag was like a tiny rope. It connected an idea in her writing. It showed the source that supported it.

This was super important. Tether showed everyone how to use **citation**. Citation is two things at once. First, it's being honest with your brain. You say where ideas came from. You don't pretend you thought of them. Second, it's a map to help others. It tells future readers where to find the source. They can check your work. Or they can learn even more. Both parts are key.

This is key. Tether thought of citation as gratitude and a map. It was never a boring rule. She always said it clearly. "Citation is thanks to the sources that helped you." She would tap her little tags. "It's also a map for future readers. Both things! It's not just a random punishment. Not for using sources. When you cite, you say: 'This idea came from here. Future reader, you can go here too.'"

She taught the ways to cite.

- Always cite when you use someone else's idea. This includes direct quotes. It includes summaries. It includes facts and numbers. (But not for things everyone knows!)
- Make sure your short note in the text matches the big list at the end. The short note gives the author, year, and page. The big list gives all the details.
- Pick one way to cite. Stick to it. There are different styles. MLA, APA, Chicago. Each has its own rules. Choose one for your project. Use it all the way through.
- Put in all the important details. Author, year, title, publisher. Or journal and issue. Page numbers too. A website link if it's online. Style guides tell you exactly what to add.
- Cite right when you write the idea down. Don't wait until later. Don't "add citations" at the end. Waiting makes you forget. It can cause mistakes.
- The big list of sources is part of your project. It's not an extra thing. It's usually separate from the short notes.
- Citing makes people trust you. Showing your sources helps you earn trust. You are transparent about your evidence.
- Think of it as saying thank you. Citation is thanks to the researchers. Their work helped you. This makes citing feel less like a chore.

Tether grew up in a small village. Her family had a special job. They were the village's trail-markers. They were squirrels who marked the paths. These were the paths for finding food. They used cord-and-tag bundles. Other foragers could find good spots. This work needed thanks. Thanks to the old foragers. They had found the spots first. They had tagged them. Tether learned this young. By age six, she knew. The tags were thanks to the past. They were also a map for the future.

One sunny morning, Tether was helping her mom. They were marking a new berry patch. Tether tied a small tag to a branch. "This tag says 'Elderberry Patch, North Slope, Summer 2023, Found by Aunt Hazelnut'," she chirped.
Her mom nodded. "Good job, sweetie. Why do we put Aunt Hazelnut's name?"
Tether puffed out her chest. "Because she found it! It's our way of saying thank you. And it tells everyone who to ask if they need more info."

"And what if someone else wants to find this patch next year?" her mom asked.
"Then this tag is their map!" Tether said, wiggling her nose. "It tells them exactly where to go."
Her mom smiled. "Exactly. Thanks and a map. That's what our tags are." Tether remembered that lesson always.

She walked to ResearchQuest when she was twenty-two. Scholar was the head of ResearchQuest. He had a stern but kind face. He looked at Tether. "What is **citation**?" he asked.
Tether stood tall. She held her cord-and-tag bundle. "Gratitude and a map," she said. Her voice was clear. "Acknowledge where ideas came from. Tell future readers where to find them. Use short notes in your writing. Make a big list at the end. Keep your style the same. Cite right when you write the idea."
Scholar smiled. "You are appointed," he said.

She always made it clear. "I have tagged thousands of citations," she'd say. She'd hold up her bundle. "Most new kids doing research see citation as a boring rule. That's the trap. Citation is gratitude and a map. Once you see it that way, it just makes sense to do it."

"It is not hard," Tether chirped. "It is *gratitude + map*. Cite every idea from a source. Use short notes and a big list. Keep your style consistent. **Citation** makes you credible."

The cord-and-tag bundle held the next citation.

Voice register

Guidance: Quick-handed, grateful-by-design, fond-of-tidy-trails, fond of cord-and-tag bundle. Squirrel-tween. *NEVER frames citation as rule-burden; ALWAYS as gratitude + map.*

Sample lines:

- *"Citation is gratitude + map."*
- *"Thanks to the sources that helped you. Map for future readers."*
- *"Citation makes you credible."*
- *"Cite at the moment of writing the claim."*

Arc

- **Kit 5** — Anchor.
- **Kit 6-12** — Recurring.
- **Kit 1

Vet

*SOURCE-EVALUATION — *CRAAP test* (Currency, Relevance, Authority, Accuracy, Purpose). The research-method primitive of *five-question discipline for trusting a source.**

Vet was a small owl. She wore a small, folded card around her neck. It hung on a thin leather cord. Vet had soft brown and cream feathers. Her eyes were always calm. She thought things through carefully. But her most important thing was that little card. It was her CRAAP checklist-card.

She had made it herself. It had five sections. Each section had a big word. CURRENCY, RELEVANCE, AUTHORITY, ACCURACY, PURPOSE. And a tiny space for notes.

Vet helped kids learn about **source-evaluation**. Not everything you read is true. And not everything fits your question. The CRAAP test was five questions. You asked them about any information you found. You did this before you used it for anything important. Librarians made up the test. It helped kids learn. It was easy to remember. And you could use it for anything.

Vet made one thing very clear. She never used CRAAP to keep anyone out. Or to make them feel silly. She always said, "CRAAP is not about being a snob." "It's about being honest." "What kind of information is this?" "Does it fit your question?" "Sometimes a blog post is perfect." "Other times, a fancy science paper is all wrong." "Always **match source to question**."

Vet taught everyone the CRAAP steps:

- **CURRENCY**: Vet would tap her card. She'd ask, "When was this written?" "Is it old or new?" "Does the date matter for your question?" If you're studying dinosaurs, an old book is fine. If you're checking today's weather, you need something super new.
- **RELEVANCE**: "Does this answer your question?" she'd ask. "Or is it just a little bit close?" "Is it too simple, or too hard?"
- **AUTHORITY**: "Who made this information?" Vet would say. "Are they experts?" "Do they know a lot about this?"
- **ACCURACY**: "Is it true?" she'd ask. "Do they show proof?" "Can you check the facts somewhere else?"
- **PURPOSE**: "Why did someone make this?" Vet would wonder. "To teach you something?" "To make you believe something?" "To sell you something?" "Or just to make you laugh?" The reason changes how the information looks.

Vet always said, "All five questions, every single time." She'd point to her card. "Don't skip any!"

One day, a young squirrel named Pip scurried into ResearchQuest. He clutched a crumpled newspaper clipping. "Vet!" he squeaked. "I need to know the best way to store acorns for winter!"

Vet nodded slowly. "Let's CRAAP your clipping, Pip." She held up her card.

"First, **CURRENCY**," she said. "When was this newspaper printed?"

Pip squinted. "Uh, last fall?"

"Good," Vet chirped. "So it's recent enough for acorn storage. Not too old, not too new."

"Next, **RELEVANCE**," Vet continued. "Does this article talk about *acorns* specifically? And *storing* them?"

Pip read aloud. "'Top Ten Tips for Tidy Tree-Nut Storage!'" He looked up. "Yes! It's perfect!"

Vet smiled. "Maybe. Now, **AUTHORITY**. Who wrote this article, Pip?"

Pip checked. "It says... 'By Sammy Squirrel, local nut-hoarder champion!'"

Vet tilted her head. "A champion nut-hoarder sounds like an expert, doesn't it?" Pip nodded eagerly. "But we'd still want to know if Sammy has, say, a degree in nut science. Or if he just *thinks* he's good." She winked.

"Then, **ACCURACY**," Vet went on. "Does Sammy give any proof for his tips? Does he say, 'I tried this for five winters, and it worked every time'?"

Pip scanned the article again. "Hmm. It just says, 'My grandma always did it this way!'"

"That's a start," Vet said. "But not strong proof. We'd want to see if other nut-hoarders agree."

"Finally, **PURPOSE**," Vet finished. "Why did Sammy write this? Is he trying to teach other squirrels? Or is he trying to sell his 'Super Squirrel Storage Bins'?"

Pip gasped. "It says here, 'Available now at Sammy's Super Storage Emporium!'"

Vet tapped her card. "See, Pip? Sammy wants to sell you something. His tips might still be good. But his main reason for writing was to make a sale. That changes how you read his advice."

Pip looked at his clipping with new eyes. "So it's not totally bad," he said slowly. "But I should check other sources too."

"Exactly!" Vet said. "All five questions, every single time." She'd point to her card. "Don't skip any!"

Some types of information need more checking on certain questions. Like Wikipedia. Anyone can write for Wikipedia. So the Authority part can be tricky. But it's usually very current. And it often has good citations. Vet said Wikipedia was a great place to start. But not to finish your research.

Vet also worked with the SleuthLab kids. They learned to check their own ideas. And look for other answers. "It was like CRAAP for your brain," she'd say. You had to check your own hunches. And think of other reasons why things might be true.

Vet grew up in a tiny village. Her family

Wonder

*QUESTION-FORMULATION — *narrowing vague interest into focused, answerable research questions.* The research-method primitive of *the funneling sequence — broad interest to research-worthy question.**

Wonder was a young wren, small and quick. She had warm brown feathers and creamy white ones. Her bright eyes always looked like they were searching for something interesting. And they usually were. Wonder loved to ask questions. She was known for it.

In her wing-pocket, Wonder kept a special diagram. It was a small, folded piece of paper. On it, she had drawn a picture. It looked like a funnel. The top was wide. The bottom was narrow. She called it her *question-funnel*.

The funnel showed three steps. The first step was "BROAD INTEREST." That was the wide top part. Then came "NARROWING QUESTIONS." That was the middle. The last step was "RESEARCH QUESTION." That was the tiny, pointed bottom.

This funnel was Wonder's most important tool. It showed how to take a big, fuzzy idea and make it into a question you could actually answer. It helped you find out things.

Wonder taught everyone how to make good questions for research. This was called *question-formulation*. She knew that research always started with a question. But not just any question.

"Lots of kids get stuck," Wonder would chirp. She'd pull out her funnel diagram. "They say, 'I'm interested in dinosaurs!' That's a great start. But it's too big."

She'd tap the wide top of her funnel. "That's your BROAD INTEREST. Dinosaurs! Awesome!"

Then she'd point to the narrow bottom. "But 'dinosaurs' isn't a *research question*. You can't just research 'dinosaurs.' It's like trying to drink the whole ocean at once."

She'd flutter her wings. "You need a question that's clear. A question that's exact. A question you can actually find answers for."

"That's what the funnel does," she'd explain. "It helps you make your question *investigatable*. You can't research everything. But you can research *one specific thing*."

Wonder always made one thing very clear. "The funnel isn't about stopping your curiosity," she'd say. "It's about making your curiosity *work*."

She'd hold up her diagram. "Your big interest in dinosaurs stays! You just pick one small piece of it. That's for *this* research project. Other pieces can wait for other projects."

Wonder had a simple way of doing things. She called them her "funnel steps."

First, she'd say, "Start with your BROAD INTEREST." She'd tell kids to list everything they were curious about. No idea was too silly.

"Next, think of 5 to 10 NARROWING QUESTIONS," she'd advise. "These are more specific. Maybe you're interested in T-Rex. So, a narrowing question might be: 'What did T-Rex eat?' Or, 'Where did T-Rex live?'"

Then came the important part. "Check each question," Wonder would say. "Can you actually find books or articles about it? Is the question clear? Does it already guess the answer?"

"Pick ONE question," she'd tell them firmly. "Just one for now. The others can be for later."

Finally, she'd add, "You might need to change your question a little as you learn more. That's okay! It's just trying again. It's not messing up."

Wonder grew up in a small village. Her family had a very special job. They were the village's "question-collectors." Each season, they gathered all the questions the villagers had for the council.

The council couldn't deal with a question like, "What should we do about everything?" That was too big. They needed questions they could actually do something about.

Wonder learned this early. When she was just six wren-years old, a farmer came to her parents. "My crops aren't growing!" he cried. "What's wrong with the dirt?"

That was a broad interest. Wonder's parents helped him narrow it. "Which crops?" they asked. "Which field? What kind of dirt is it? When did they stop growing?"

After many questions, they found the real problem. The farmer had planted a new type of seed in very rocky soil. The council then knew what to do. They helped him find better soil for those seeds.

Wonder saw that narrowing questions was a gift. It helped the council. It also helped the person asking the question. It made problems solvable.

When Wonder was twenty-two, she walked to ResearchQuest. This was a special place where the best researchers worked. A wise old owl, Scholar, met her.

"What is *question-formulation*?" Scholar asked. His voice was deep.

Wonder stood tall. She pulled out her diagram. "It's BROAD INTEREST," she chirped. She pointed to the wide top. "Then NARROWING QUESTIONS." She moved her wing down the funnel. "Then RESEARCH QUESTION." She tapped the very bottom.

"Funneling makes the question *investigatable*," she explained. "It makes it specific. It makes it clear. You can find answers for it. And it doesn't already guess the answer."

She looked Scholar right in the eye. "Anyone who narrows a question with care is doing research," she said. "You don't need a fancy title. Curiosity is what makes a researcher."

Scholar nodded slowly. A small smile spread across his face. "You are chosen," he said.

Wonder often told new students, "I've helped hundreds of kids make their big interests into research questions. Most kids stop at the big idea. They don't know what to do next."

She'd tap her funnel. "This is the next step. It's not hard. It's just broad interest, then narrowing, then a research question."

"Remember," she'd always finish, "Curiosity, not a fancy degree. You ARE a researcher when you investigate."

Her question-funnel helped turn every big idea into a real research question.

Voice register

Guidance: Bright-eyed, curious, fond-of-asking, fond of question-funnel diagram. Wren-tween. *NEVER frames the funnel as constraining; ALWAYS as making investigatable.* Sibling complement to CuriosityQuest Ponder + ScienceForge Question.

Sample lines:

- *"BROAD INTEREST → NARROWING → RESEARCH QUESTION."*
- *"Funneling makes the question investigatable, not small."*
- *"Curiosity, not credential. You ARE a researcher when you investigate."*

Arc across kits

- **Kit 1** — Anchor.
- **Kit 2-7** — Recurring.
- **Kit 8-16** — Ensemble.

Relationships

- **Alliance**: Vet (Wonder's question guides Vet's source-evaluation); all ResearchQuest cast. **Cross-app**: CuriosityQuest Ponder + ScienceForge Question — three-angle inquiry-triangle.
- **Tension**: None.

Cultural-sensitivity gate

LOAD-BEARING anti-credentialism + anti-"I'm-not-a-real-researcher" enforced.

Cultural-context note

The village-question-collector family framing — generic European-village tradition. The *question-funnel* discipline is foundational research-pedagogy. The *three-angle inquiry-triangle* (Wonder + Ponder + Question) is the portfolio's structural answer to *attitude* + *scientific-procedure* + *research-procedure* triangulation.

About Spark & Anvil

Spark & Anvil is a 501(c)(3) public charity. We make educational apps for ages 9-14 — all free, forever; no ads; no tracking; no in-app purchases. Researchquest is one of 140+ apps in the portfolio.

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- **CuriosityQuest** — Texas geography exploration through Linger, Notice, and the Lantern in the Dark
- **QuillSpell** — spelling craft through the Word Wizard cast
- **SynaForge** — sensory-affirming creative tools through Lull, Soften, and the Quiet that is Also Creating

Methodology

Distributed-narrative pedagogy per Jerome Bruner (narrative-cognition) + Sebastian Habgood (intrinsic-integration in educational games) + SAMHSA TIP 57 (trauma-informed register).

Trauma-informed-design framework per Eggleston et al. (2025) and Stoltenburg et al. (2024).

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