

## Framing Questions in Historical Research

### Approach 1: Straight Narrative History

An example of this would be “looking at” the US role in Spanish-American war, without asking any specific question. In this case, one would simply describe what the Secretary of State did, what the President did, what the military did, what Congress did etc, at various points before, during, and after the US entry into the war.

### Approach 2: Asking a “Why?” Question

One could look at the US role in the Spanish-American war, and focus the analysis around investigating *why* the US initiated the war; what was the US *motive* in initiating the war.

### Approach 3: Asking a “What effect did it have?” Question

One could investigate the longterm effects that the 1898 war had on the basic course of US foreign and military policy.

### Approach 4: Asking a “What actually happened? Question

This type of question seeks to use the available sources to establish what actually happened in some key historical event, in cases where the record of events is unclear or subject to controversy. An example with regard to the Spanish-American war: a paper that investigates the circumstances of the *USS Maine* sinking, and whether this resulted from an accident or a deliberate attack by Spanish forces.