The idea for my project came from a conflict about the separation of church and state in the town neighboring mine. This disagreement between Catholics, Atheists, and the state of Massachusetts fascinated me, and inspired me to base my topic on religion in the United States of America.

At first, I directed my research towards the religion part of first amendment of the Constitution and its effect on the structure of American life and government. Although I found many sources on the construction and framers of the Constitution, after discussing my original topic with Mr. Sunderland and realizing that it was too broad a topic to research. I then changed my topic to the effect of Thomas Jefferson’s views of religion on the people of the United States of America. Many of the books that I had found prior to changing my topic were very helpful even after changing it. With the help of several books, articles, and scholarly journals, I learned a lot about Thomas Jefferson, the separation of church and state, and Jefferson’s effect on Americans. After another conference with Mr. Sunderland, I altered my topic so that its focus would be easier to answer. Instead of “What was the effect of Thomas Jefferson’s views of religion on the people of the U.S.A.,” I changed my topic to focus on the effect of Jefferson’s thoughts and actions. This topic is more practical than the other one because Thomas Jefferson’s views were always changing, but his thoughts and actions, which are two very different things, are easier to research because of his journal entries and his life in the public eye. From then on, the research for my topic went very smoothly. I have been able to find many reliable sources that have an abundance of speeches, writings, and observations of or about Thomas Jefferson. Furthermore, my research was very successful, and it helped me design my research paper.

My research led me to form my thesis statement for my topic. The question of “What was the effect of Thomas Jefferson’s thoughts and actions about the right religious freedom on the people of the United States of America?”