**EPQ: Writing the Literature Review**

**(c. 2000-3000 words)**

The purpose of the literature review is to provide the background context for a non specialist reader. It is expected that, as the author, you will have immersed yourself in a wide range of reading and research in order to fully understand the subtleties of your research question. It would take a very long time for an individual who knows nothing about your topic to do the same. Therefore, by reading the literature review but gather the same level of knowledge as you. Therefore, reading the literature review should provide them with all the knowledge a non-specialist reader needs to understand the main discussion. However, it should not just summarise what you have read.

**The literature review should:**

* **Summarise the information you have read but go further than this to:**
* Highlight its relevance to your question.
* Explore what you think about this information.
* Discuss and question its validity / relevance in relation to your topic.
* Identify areas for debate in the main discussion.
* **Show that you engaging with the subtleties of your topic:**
* Go beyond the most obvious points; identify more interesting areas.
* **Be structured in a logical and helpful way:**
* Divide your background reading into sections and subsections. Use these as headings / subheadings .
* **Be geared towards a non specialist reader:**
* Expression must be accessible and not make too many assumptions.
* **Include detailed footnotes:**
* The footnotes should question the validity of sources referred to, eg position of the author, previous work, any “vested interests” or funding for websites.

**The literature review should not:**

* **Simply list the texts you have read** and describe what you found out from them.