13. FINDING SPECIFIC BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Sometimes in an article or a book, you will read about a person, place, event, idea, or other information that you do not know about. Here is what you can do to find out more about this "background information" (information you need to understand an article or book).

1. **Focus on the main idea of the article.** If you can understand the main idea, you may be able to guess what the person, place or other background information refers to.

2. **Use the websites below to find background information** if it is necessary for understanding the reading.

INFORMATION YOU NEED	WEBSITES WHERE YOU CAN FIND IT
Background Information ■ People, Places ■ History, Politics, Events ■ Ideas, Religions, Beliefs **Academic Subjects** ■ Humanities (*Art, Literature, Music*) ■ Social Sciences (*Sociology, Economics, Ethnic Studies*) ■ Natural Sciences (*Chemistry, Biology*) ■ Business, Law	**First Try** *Dictionary of Cultural Literacy* You can find short descriptions of important people, places, historical and political events, religions, literature, art, and ideas. ■ Go to: http://www.bartleby.com/59/ ■ Use the search box and enter the word(s) you want to learn more about (e.g., *Jesus*, *Vietnam War*, *multiculturalism*). ■ If you need to learn the meaning of a word used in the descriptions, go to: http://dictionary.cambridge.org and choose the *Advanced Learner's Dictionary*. **Then Use** *Encyclopedia Britannica Online* Use the encyclopedia if you cannot find information in the *Dictionary of Cultural Literacy* or to find more information. ■ Go to: http://libraries.cuny.edu/resource.htm ■ Click on: *Encyclopedia Britannica Online* in the green General/Reference Box.
Popular Culture (*Movies, TV Shows, Sports*)	***Wikipedia*** Articles are written by people who are interested in a topic. The information is helpful, but if you are going to include it in a paper, use encyclopedias or newspaper articles instead. ■ Go to: http://en.wikipedia.org ■ Use the search box on the bottom left.
Current Events (*News*)	**CNN, USA Today, Newsweek** Articles about current events written in easier-to-read language. ■ Go to: cnn.com; usatoday.com; newsweek.com

3. **Ask someone who knows about the topic.**
   ■ A student or tutor who was raised in the United States can tell you about American culture.
   ■ A professor can help you with information in the subject he is teaching.
   ■ A reference librarian can help you find information about any subject.
   (To find a reference librarian, go to the Reference Desk of the library.)