The following are some key terms that will help you as you conduct your research:

**Heredity**: The process of transferring genetic information from one generation to another.

**Gene**: A unit of heredity; also, a region of DNA that is transcribed as a unit.

**Allele**: One of several forms of a gene; different alleles can be responsible for different forms of a trait. (example: variation in hair color)

**Genotype**: The genetic information carried by the cells of a living organism.

**Phenotype**: The observable characteristics that come from a given genotype.

**Natural Selection**: Differential survival and reproduction of some individuals over others in a population based on their phenotypic differences.

**Polymorphism**: Phenotypic or genetic variation in a population. The variation can either be neutral (natural selection does not favor one form or another), or it can be a variation that natural selection can operate on.

**Evolution**: Phenotypic or genotypic changes in a lineage of organisms over successive generations.

**Adaptation**: The process by which a species evolves traits that make it more suited to surviving in its habitat.

**Population**: A group of organisms of the same species inhabiting the same area.