



**Ohio Standards**

**Connections:**

Social Studies Skills  
and Methods

4<sup>th</sup> Grade

Benchmark D: Use  
problem-solving skills  
to make decisions  
individually and in  
groups.

Indicator 10: Use a  
problem-  
solving/decision-  
making process, which  
includes: a.

Identifying a problem;

b. Gathering  
information; c. Listing  
and considering  
options; d.

Considering  
advantages and  
disadvantages of

options; e. Choosing  
and implementing a  
solution; f. Developing  
criteria for judging its  
effectiveness.

5<sup>th</sup> Grade

Benchmark D: Use  
problem-solving skills  
to make decisions  
individually and in  
groups.

Indicator 10: Use a  
problem-  
solving/decision-  
making process, which  
includes: a.

Identifying a problem;

**Introducing National History Day in Ohio**

**4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Lesson One**

The purpose of this lesson is to introduce History Day in the classroom and brainstorm topics related to the annual theme. Students will decide whether to work individually or in a group and will identify the difference between broad and narrow topics.

**Estimated Duration:**

One or two class periods

**Commentary:** This lesson is designed for students new to the program. Activities can be used as a kick-off for a required class History Day project. This is the first in a series of four lessons. National History Day is designed for grades 6-12. National History Day in Ohio (NHD-OH) has adapted the program to include the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grades with exhibits and performances at the state level ONLY.

**Pre-Assessment:**

Ask the class two questions:

What is history? How is history made or created?

There are two ways to look at history:

1. The study and interpretation of the past.
2. Everything that has happened until right now. The entire past.

History can be all the events that have happened before the present moment, but we only have evidence of a fraction of the past. The study of history is the understanding or interpretation of the past.

We may not know exactly how a historic figure lived or what he or she believed, but clues (or sources) are used to decipher or interpret how he or she lived.

Historians can only study parts of the past that there is something left



b. Gathering information; c. Listing and considering options; d. Considering advantages and disadvantages of options; e. Choosing and implementing a solution; f. Developing criteria for judging its effectiveness.  
g. Evaluating the effectiveness of the solution.

of. If there is an event with no sources- newspaper articles, personal accounts, books, artifacts, diaries, journals, then historians cannot write or study the event.

Public historians take the past and the evidence (or sources) of the past and make it available to the general public by creating books, documentaries, exhibits, working in libraries or in archives.

History Day asks students to become public historians, study an event, come to a conclusion about why that event was important, and present it to the public.

Ask students to think of examples of public history they are familiar with (possible responses: museums, libraries, documentaries, books, archaeology, local history)

**Scoring Guidelines:**

Checklist:

\_\_ Students can repeat the definition of “history”

\_\_ Students can repeat the definition of “past”

\_\_ Students can come up with an example of the difference between history and the past.



**Post-Assessment:**

The “Topic Selection Sheet” can be assigned for homework and used to assess the understanding of the activities as a group or individually.

**Scoring Guidelines:**

Points	Criteria
1	Correctly listed the annual theme
1	Identified a general topic that relates to the annual theme.
1	Identified the time period of the topics
2	Gathered at least two geographic locations associated with the topic
2	Listed at least two names of people associated with the topic
1	Listed a few questions that need to be answered about the topic
2	Chose a narrow topic related to the annual theme.

**Instructional Procedures:**

Introduction:

Provide students an overview of the project they are about to undertake. Pass out “Introducing National History Day: Youth Division Special Guide” for use in the classroom to take home to parents.

The National History Day in Ohio Youth Division is for grades 4-5. Students will create exhibits (40 inches wide, 30 inches deep and 36 inches tall) or performances (up to 7 minutes) using primary and secondary sources. Students can select any topic in history that relates to the annual theme (unless teachers would like to give them parameters for topic selection)

Each project will also have an annotated bibliography (more in lesson three) and process paper. The process paper is 200-300 words that describes:

- How the topic was selected

A local or Ohio topic can be a great choice because there are more primary sources in and around your community that students can put their hands on!



- How the research was done
- How the project was created
- How the project related to the annual theme

### Activity 1: Topic Brainstorming

This activity will help start the discussion about topics that relate to the History Day theme. National History Day in Ohio publishes a list of Ohio-related topics and National History Day publishes a general list of suggested topics. The “Topic Narrowing Chart” can also be a useful tool for assisting the students in understanding how to select a narrow topic.

- Introduce the annual theme. Give students guidelines about the theme as outlined in the annual theme sheet.
- Ask students to come up with historical topics they think are related to the annual theme.
- Write the students’ ideas on the board in two columns. Divide them into broad and narrow topics. For example:

*World War II*  
*Slavery*  
*Civil War*

*The Battle of Iwojima*  
*Harriett Tubman*

- After the students have finished brainstorming ask them why you wrote their responses in two columns. Explain that narrow topics make better History Day projects (or research projects in general) because it makes research easier. A topic can be narrowed by time, geography and the people affected or individuals involved. Example: The Civil War is a broad topic. Think about all the parts involved. For example, General Sherman’s role in the Civil War is a narrower topic.

### Activity 2: Group Work vs. Individual Work

Deciding whom to work with can be a very important first step in the History Day project. Because of this, taking some time with the students to decide can be beneficial.

- Show the “Group Work vs. Individual Work” overhead or pass it out in class
- Explain that History Day projects can be completed in groups up to 3 people, but group work may not be the best choice for everyone. All students in the group are responsible for the end product.



- Discuss the overhead/handout with the class.
- Ask if anyone has stories about positive or negative experiences working in a group. What can be learned from that experience?
- Hand out the “Group Work Contract” and give students time to gather in potential groups, or work individually and brainstorm topics.
- Assign the “Topic Selection Sheet” for homework.

### **Extension**

Visit the school or community library or a local historical society and have a librarian or archivists speak about research topics available in the local community.

Have the students list local resources for research like community libraries, city libraries, local historical societies, archives, and colleges nearby where research can be conducted. A planned research trip to one of these institutions can help students find non-internet sources. Think of these research destinations as part of the topic selection process. Choosing a topic where there are local resources available can be more rewarding for the students.

Activity- Who? Where? When?

To help students better understand narrow topics have students complete the “Who? Where? When?” worksheet. Students can fill out these worksheets individually, in groups, or use as a class to examine different suggested topics.

### **Homework Options and Home Connections**

- Topic Selection Sheet can be assigned as homework.
- Send home the “Introducing History Day” for parents to understand the project.
- Ask students to talk to family members to see if there is any family history or story that could be used to create a History Day topic.

### **Interdisciplinary Connections**

English Language Arts  
4<sup>th</sup> Grade:  
Writing Process



1. Generate writing ideas through discussion with others and from printed material

5<sup>th</sup> Grade

Research

1. Generate a topic, assigned or personal interest, and open-ended question for research and develop a plan for gathering information.

**Materials and Resources:**

*For teachers*            Group Work vs. Individual Work Chart, Annual Theme Sheet, Contest Rulebook

*For students*            Topic Selection Sheet, Group Work Contract, Self Questioning Worksheet, paper, pencils

**Key Vocabulary**

Broad Topic

Narrow Topic

History

Past

Public Historian

**General Tips**

History Day can be managed several ways as a classroom project. To help facilitate the process, some teachers generate a list of topics that students must select their topics from. This can also ensure that the topic falls into the history standards for their grade.

A teacher may also choose to put students into groups or only allow students to participate as individuals.

The “Group Work Contract” can help the students understand that each one is accountable for the end product and try to create a structure to deal with conflict.

The “Self Questioning” sheet may also be a useful tool in helping the students think critically about who he or she wants to work with.

Choosing a good topic can be critical to the process of creating a History Day project. Make sure students consider the available research resources. While a local topic may not seem as interesting as a national or international topic, a student can use it as an opportunity to look at a smaller topic reflect back on the larger event.



For example, the Civil War, World War I, and World War II will probably be popular events to draw topics from this year. But students may want to look at their own community to see how those National and international events affected the people that lived in the same houses or on the same streets.

People from the community that participated in the National events and can be a good lens for examining such an event.

Make the students aware of the list of Ohio topics on the National History Day in Ohio website ([www.ohiohistory.org/historyday](http://www.ohiohistory.org/historyday)) and check with your local historical organization or public library for help with local or regional topics related to the theme.

Caution against topics that are too modern. 9/11 or Hurricane Katrina may be appealing, but remind the student to choose something more than 20 years old.

The topic selection sheet will be a helpful tool in developing the process paper after most of the project creation has been completed.

### **Attachments**

Topic Selection Worksheet

Topic Narrowing Chart

Group Work Contract

Self Questionnaire

Group Work vs. Individual Work