

OHIO

HISTORY DAY

Navigating National History Day 2026

**A quick guide to almost everything you need to know
to kick off your History Day adventure!**

Student Name

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Getting Started

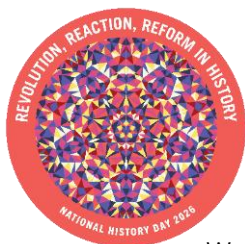
What is National History Day?

History Day is not your normal class project. History Day lets you do the work of a real historian. You choose your topic, study primary sources, think about what you've found, and come up with your own conclusions. The best part about History Day? You decide how you want to show your research through a paper, website, documentary, performance, or exhibit.

The Annual History Day Theme

Every History Day Project must follow a theme. NHD picks a new theme each year. Following the theme helps you focus your research. Topics can be about something local or worldwide. They can be about something far in the past or more recent. You get to choose!

2026 Theme – Revolution, Reaction, Reform in History



This year's National History Day theme allows you to look at topics from all over the world and in many areas of study. As you dive deeper into your research, you'll find that this is a complex and thought-provoking theme. We've broken down this year's theme to help you choose a topic and begin your research.

What is a revolution?

We can think of a revolution as **the forcible overthrow of a government or social order, in favor of a new system, or a dramatic and wide-reaching change in the way something works, is organized, or in people's ideas about it.**

Sometimes, revolutions involve a change in government, like the American Revolution. Other revolutions are about changing the way society views certain people, practices or social norms. And some revolutions are about changing the way society, or a specific group of people, do something, like the mechanization of production during the Industrial Revolution or the Scientific Revolution that led to new knowledge about our natural world.

What is a reform?

The effort to change to a better state or form; to improve by alteration, substitution, or abolition (removal). Reform is all about changing the way something works.

Reform can include change to the way we do things, like the invention of the oral Polio vaccine. It can also be about substituting or swapping something out, like when the Founding Fathers wrote the U.S. Constitution to replace the Articles of Confederation. Reform can also be about the outright removal or end of something, like the abolition of slavery.

What is a reaction?

An action performed or a feeling experienced in response to a situation or event; or the resistance or opposition to a force or movement. Reaction is all about how people respond to something that happens.

Reaction can take many forms. Sometimes reactions are limited to verbal or written responses, like a newspaper opinion piece against something. Other times, reactions take on a more active or organized role, like staging a protest or organizing a letter writing campaign.

There is always a reaction to a revolution or reform. People will always have a response to change. Reaction can also lead to revolution and reform.

Selecting a Topic

The key to an effective History Day entry is the combination of a good topic with good research. Here are some things to think about in selecting a topic for History Day.

- **Interest.** You will spend a lot of time researching, thinking, and writing about your topic, so make sure it's something you are interested in and want to learn more about! If you're working in a group, all members should agree on the topic.
- **Theme Connection.** Your topic needs to have a connection to the History Day theme. If nothing comes to mind at first, you can start researching your interests and see where you find a connection.
- **Available Information.** For some topics, it can be difficult to find primary sources. This can be especially true of really old topics, little-known topics, or topics where most of the information is in a different language. Make sure you can gather enough information to make an argument.
- **Your topic has historical significance.** In a successful History Day project, you'll need to be able to show how your topic was important in history. This doesn't mean you need to do your project on something world-famous. Even local topics can influence history. We do recommend that you pick a topic that happened at least 20 years ago. For anything earlier, it may be too soon to know what significance it has had in history.

WORKSHEET: TOPIC BRAINSTORM

Topics can come from many different places. They can come from something you learned in class, a hobby or interests, or even a piece of family history. Use the list below to come up with some ideas. Then, think of which topics you can connect to this year's theme. From those you can pick your favorite to start researching.

Who are some historical figures you admire or are fascinated by (ex. Amelia Earhart, Hellen Keller, Jesse Owens)?

Do you have any interests or hobbies you want to find out the history of (ex. music, art, sports)?

What Era of History have you always wanted to know more about (ex. The Great Depression, Reconstruction, the 1960s)?

What movements would you like to know more about (ex. Women's Suffrage, Civil Rights, Worker's Rights)?

What famous invention have you wondered about (ex. the printing press, the telegraph, the airplane)?

What specific historical events are you interested in (ex. the Civil War, the sinking of the Titanic, the Moon landing)?

What place or region in the world do you want to visit?

Is there a piece of family or local history you'd like to explore?

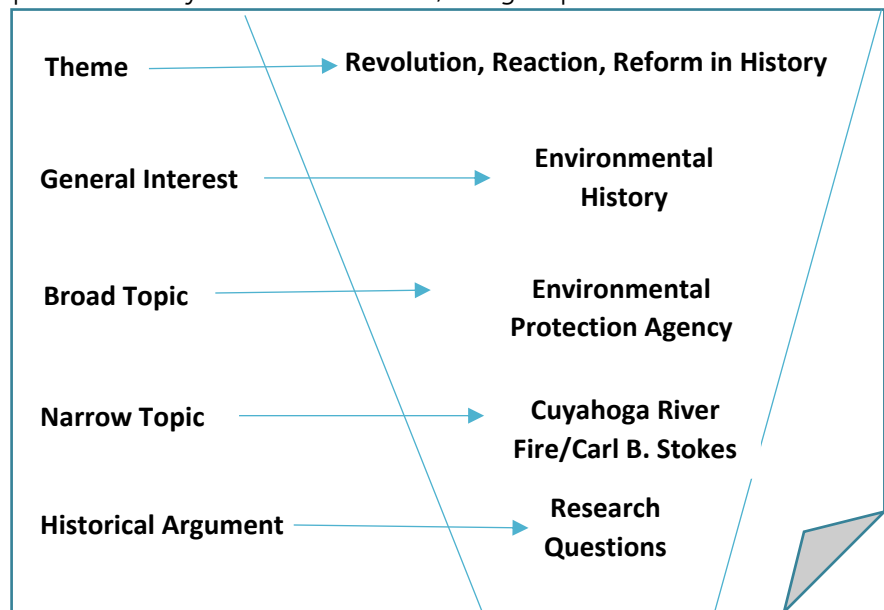
Narrowing your Topic

Once you know your topic of interest, the next step is to narrow it down. As you begin your research, you might find that there's a ton of information on a topic. All History Day projects have a word or time limit. This means you need to focus your project to fit everything in. This will also help you make a strong historical argument.

Here's an example. In your group, there is a **General Interest** in Environmental History, but you realize this is too large of a topic. To focus your research more, the group decides to look at the history of the

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). This is still a very **Broad Topic**, as you have not identified the "where" and "when" for your study.

After some initial research, the team decides to **narrow the Topic** to the Cuyahoga River Fire, specifically Carl B. Stokes, the mayor of Cleveland at the time. This event is said to have jump started the creation of the EPA. This is a good start, but History Day projects are more than reporting the facts. The group now needs to make an argument about how this topic made an impact on history.



To do so, you'll need to come up with research questions, like these: How did the reaction to the Cuyahoga River Fire influence the creation of the environmental agency? How did Carl B. Stokes' reaction to the river fire lead to environmental reform? What was revolutionary about viewing the Cuyahoga River Fire as an environmental injustice issue? We'll cover this more in the **Historical Argument** section.

WORKSHEET: THE TOPIC NARROWING FUNNEL

Using the funnels below, try narrowing down two of your general interests into more focused topics.

Revolution, Reaction, Reform in History	Revolution, Reaction, Reform in History
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Conducting Research

Time to Become a Detective!

Before diving into your initial research, it is important to understand the difference between primary and secondary sources. This section will cover those definitions and provide some examples, while giving you some places to start your research.

Primary & Secondary Sources

When historians study a topic, they try to gather a wide variety of sources. Historians use sources like a detective uses evidence. Both need information to “make their case”. But not all sources are the same. Historians divide their sources into two groups: **Primary** and **Secondary**. You are going to need to use both types of sources for a good History Day project.

Secondary Sources

Secondary sources are written by someone who did not see or take part in an event. Most books, encyclopedias, and websites are secondary sources. Secondary sources are useful because they can give background about your topic. The footnotes and bibliographies of secondary sources can also lead you to primary sources.

Examples of Secondary Sources

- Biographies
- Encyclopedias
- History Textbooks
- Media Documentaries
- Books about the Topic
- Interviews with scholars/ experts**
- Articles about the topic
- Websites

Primary Sources

Primary Sources are items that give first-hand information about a person or event. A primary source might be something written or made during the time you are studying. It could also be a written or recorded interview with a person who lived through a historical event.

Examples of Primary Sources

- Historic Objects
- Manuscript Collections
- Interview with Eyewitnesses
- Autobiographies
- Government Records
- Newspapers from the Era
- Letters
- Photographs
- Music of the Era
- Original Film Footage

Be Sure to Consult the NHD Rule Book

For more tips and examples of primary and secondary sources, check out pages 9-11 in the new [NHD Rule Book](#).

** Interviewing a person who was involved in an event is called “oral history.” It is a type of primary source research. Interviewing an expert who was not involved in the event is a form of secondary source research. Interviews with experts are not required for NHD projects. Students should NOT interview historians. Refer to page 10 of the NHD Rule Book for more information.

Research Strategy & Finding Sources

In order to be able to use your research later, you need to decide on a way to organize it. You should think about the following:

1. How and where you're going to look for information.
2. What you'll do to record what you find.

Where should I start?

A good place to start is in your school library. The librarian there can help you find trustworthy sources to help get you on the right track. Here are some other places to check out:

- **City, County, or College Libraries.** These libraries have more resources than school libraries. They are especially helpful because they may have primary sources, such as old newspapers.
- **Historical Societies.** If your topic is on Ohio history, a historical society may be helpful. State and local historical societies focus on collecting information about Ohio. Some historical societies and archives also have special collections that relate to national topics.
- **Historical Sites.** If your topic is local, you may be able to visit the place where it happened. Historical sites let you see what it was like during the time period. You may also be able to see objects and pictures from the time which can help you understand historical context.
- **Interviews.** If people connected to your topic are still living, you can conduct oral history interviews with them. Contact your interview subject to set up a time and place to meet. Write your questions beforehand and be prepared to take notes or record the interview. If you cannot meet in person, you can send those questions in the mail, by e-mail, over the phone, or by video chat. Make sure to send a thank you note to them after the interview.
 - Keep in mind, interviews are not required for History Day projects.
 - **Important Rules Consideration:** You may be tempted to interview a professional historian about your topic. Do not. Your job as a researcher is to read that historian's work. Historians generally do not interview other historians. Instead, consider using or conducting an oral history, if possible. Learn more at [nhd.org/guidelines-conducting-interviews](https://www.nhd.org/guidelines-conducting-interviews). <https://www.nhd.org/guidelines-conducting-interviews>

Using the Internet for History Day Research

The internet is a valuable tool for beginning your History Day research. You can use the internet to gather general information, narrow your topic, and locate some primary source materials.

Sites such as the Library of Congress, the Digital Public Library, and Ohio Memory are good examples of trustworthy websites that have a lot of primary source materials. You can also use the internet to take a look at library and archive collections before you visit.

Be Careful!

There are a lot of websites that do not have good information. You should check anything you read on a website against at least one other source.

Here are some questions you can ask yourself about websites:

- What is this site about?
- Who made the site?
- Where did they get their information from?
- When was this site made?
- How accurate is this page?

Research Plan & Staying Organized

Information is only useful if you can find and use it later. One way to organize your research is to use note cards. Use one set of cards to record notes and quotes that you find in your sources. Use a different set of cards to write the citation for the source. Here are examples of index cards for a citation and research notes about journalist Nellie Bly.

Groppo, Martha. "Uncovering Nellie Bly."

Kaleidoscope 10.41 (2012): 1-12. Print.

This source is a peer-reviewed article published in the University of Kentucky journal, *Kaleidoscope*. This is a biography about Nellie and specifically mentions information about her detractors. I will use this source to talk about her detractors in my paper.

Nellie Bly's career as an investigative reporter

Nellie Bly was one of the first female investigative reporters and went to great strides to make her case to the reader.

"Bly's investigative journalism captured the minds and hearts of her readers" (Stevens)

Note Cards track your notes, ideas, and quotes.

Bibliography Cards track the sources you used. Fill these out as you use each source. It will make your life easier when you create your bibliography later.

Note: This is only one way to organize information. If you have another way that works for you (NoodleTools, Google Docs, a notebook etc.) that's great! As long as you choose a strategy and stick to it so that when it comes time to put your project together, you have all the information you need.

Developing a Historical Argument

For a History Day project to be successful, you need to do more than report facts. You need to dive a little deeper into your research and create a historical argument. A historical argument is an informed opinion on your topic. It should be supported with evidence from your sources. Your argument should also say why your topic is historically significant. Why is your topic important? In what ways did it affect people at the time? How did it change history? In other words, so what?

Writing Research Questions

Successful research involves more than just finding all the information out there about a topic. You will never be able to find—or read—all this information. Having a narrow topic will help you to keep your project to a manageable size, but you can focus your research and project even more by developing research questions.

Like any good detective, you have to have the right questions to guide your research. Good historical research questions will allow you to investigate issues of cause and effect, change over time, differences in perspective, etc. What were the causes of past events? What were the effects? How did past decisions or actions affect future choices? What has changed?

- **Research questions are different than information-seeking questions.** Information-seeking questions help you to understand the basic facts about your topic. When was the 19th amendment passed? Who was the first president of the United States? How does a bill become a law? You will likely answer these questions just by reading an encyclopedia article about your topic.
- **Ask questions as you research.** As you begin examining sources, write down any questions that come to mind. For instance, once you learn the basic facts related to the 19th amendment, you might still be curious about certain things. Why was the 19th amendment passed in 1919 and not earlier? How was women's role in society viewed at the time, and where did that view come from? What effects did the 19th amendment have on American politics, society, and culture? Did the passing of the 19th amendment impact all women? These open-ended questions will guide further research and may give you an idea of what primary sources to look for.
- **Develop your historical argument from your research questions.** As you find sources that relate to your research questions, carefully think about what the information is telling you. Then, after careful analysis, try to come up with **your own** answers to your question based on that evidence. This will be the basis for your historical argument.
- **Research is an ongoing process.** Research doesn't stop as soon as you have a historical argument. As you find more information, develop your argument, and revise your project, you may change your research questions or develop new ones.

WORKSHEET: WRITING RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Brainstorm a variety of questions about your topic. Try selecting the most interesting two or three questions to guide your research.

Part of Project	Sample: Cuyahoga River Fire and Carl B. Stokes	Your Topic
Long Before <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ What outside people, ideas or events were going on to influence your topic? ➤ What other information does your viewer need to know to understand the background of your topic? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ What was happening in Ohio politically, socially, and economically during the 20th C.? ➤ What were the economic businesses and industries in Cleveland, Ohio in the 20th C? ➤ What political and social tensions were at play during this time? 	
Right Before <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ What outside people, ideas or events were going on to influence your topic? ➤ What other information does your viewer need to know to understand the background of your topic? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ What environmental policies were in place at the state and national level in the 1960s? ➤ What major events led to people focusing on the environment? ➤ What environmental problems were prevalent in the 1960s? ➤ What were the perspectives of residents, government officials, and industries on the Cuyahoga River in the 1960s? 	
Main Event <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ What happened? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ What caused the Cuyahoga River Fire of 1969? ➤ How did people react to the fire? ➤ What actions did Carl B. Stokes take that were revolutionary after the Cuyahoga River Fire of 1969? 	
Right After (Short-term Impact) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ What are some of the reactions to the main event? Include both positive and negative. ➤ Did anything change right away? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ What criticisms or opposition did Stokes face from those who thought environmentalism would harm the industry and economy of the city? ➤ Were there any immediate changes in the local or national environmental movement after the river fire in 1969? 	
Long After (Long-term Impact) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ How are things different because of the topic? ➤ Did this topic influence other historical events? ➤ Why is this topic more important in history? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ When was the EPA created? ➤ In what ways did Stokes' environmental activism lead to long term reform and revolution/the creation of the EPA? ➤ How did Stokes' actions shape the environmental movement in Ohio and beyond, and what impact did his actions have on the region? 	

Tips for a Strong Historical Argument (Your Thesis)

Keep it Short and Sweet. In your intro, make sure you don't give more detail than you need. You want to include just enough for the reader to make sense of your argument, but not distract from it.

Connect to the Theme. The theme is a large part of how your History Day project will be judged. It is important to clearly state your connection to the theme right away. It is often a good idea to use words from the year's theme in the argument itself, if it makes sense.

Use Your Own Voice. Your historical argument should be unique to you. It is okay to get ideas from your sources, but your argument should show your own thoughts and ideas. We want to hear what **you** have to say!

Don't be Afraid to Change. As you do more research and find more information, your ideas on your topic might change. Your historical argument should change to show this. Remember, your argument needs to be supported by the historical evidence!

Example:

1. "Carl B. Stokes played an important role in the environmental movement after the Cuyahoga River Fire of 1969."
➤ This introduces the topic to the reader but does not make an argument as to why the topic is historically significant.
2. "Carl B. Stokes felt that reform was needed to environmental policy and advocated for environmental justice after the Cuyahoga River Fire of 1969."
➤ This makes an argument, but it still does not show historical significance. It does not show how Stokes' reaction led to reform and revolution.
3. "Carl B. Stokes brought national attention to water pollution issues not only in Cleveland, but nationally. His strong reaction to the Cuyahoga River Fire in 1969 led to environmental reform focused on environmental injustices and eventually influenced the creation of the Environmental Protection Agency."
➤ This thesis makes an argument for why this topic is historically significant. It can be supported by evidence from primary and secondary sources. It also more clearly states the connection to the theme by using words from the theme itself.

OHD Hot Tip!

For this year's theme, you do not have to address all three theme terms. However, if your topic does involve revolution, reaction, and reform you should be sure to include all three. Your thesis will be your guide!

Remember to Include the Historical Context. Nothing in history happened in isolation. Every topic was influenced by people, ideas, or events that came before it. The impacts of every topic went on to influence other people, ideas, and events. This relationship of a topic to the environment surrounding it is called historical context.

Creating Your Entry

The last thing you will do for your History Day project is to decide on how to display your research. You can choose from these five categories:

- PAPER (Research or Creative Writing based on Research)
- EXHIBIT
- DOCUMENTARY
- PERFORMANCE
- WEBSITE

Working On Your Own or in a Group

Exhibits, documentaries, performances, and websites can be done by a single person or by a group. Only one person can write a paper. Below we've outlined some things to consider when deciding to work individually or with a group.

Working On Your Own

There are some advantages to taking your History Day journey on your own. Working alone is less complicated and presents fewer potential distractions than you might encounter in a group. There is no confusion over who is responsible for meeting deadlines. With no one else to depend on, the success or failure of your History Day project is your own.

Working in a Group

Becoming part of a group has some distinct advantages. You and your fellow group members can share the work. Each member will bring a different set of skills and interests to the group. From deciding who will do what and agreeing on the interpretation of your research, to big-picture design decisions, your History Day journey will be one of compromise.

Ask your teachers for rules about how many members you can have in a group. Be careful when choosing who you will team up with. Remember, working with your best friend is not always the best idea. When selecting group members, ask yourself the following questions:

- What type of people do I like to work with?
- What skills will each group member bring to the project?
- What qualities make someone a good group member?
- What traits in people do I want to avoid when picking my partners?
- If you need to work outside of class, will you be able to get together?

Choosing a Category

When picking a category, make sure to think about these:

- Which category best fits your interests and skills?
- Will you have everything you need to make your project?
- Does your research fit one category better than another? For example, do you have enough pictures for an exhibit? Can your argument be told through a performance or would a different category fit better?

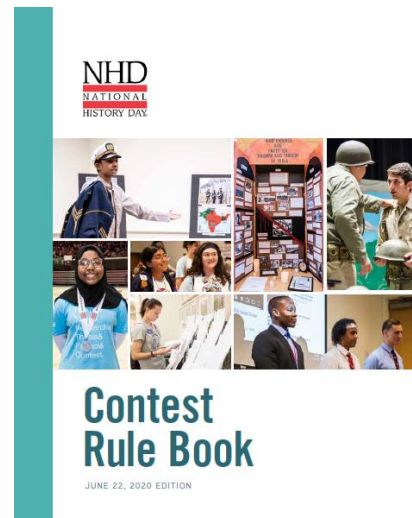
Once you have picked a category, try to look at examples created by other students. Go to <https://www.nhd.org/categories> to see examples from students all over the country. This may help you get ideas about the best way to present your topic. Your own thoughts and ideas will make your project stand out.

The History Day Contest Rule Book

After choosing your category, it is important to consult the History Day [Contest Rule Book](#) for complete information on the rules that relate to your entry. The Contest Rule Book also describes the judging criteria for evaluating all History Day entries. You can find the book located at https://www.nhd.org/sites/default/files/NHDRuleBook2021Digital_1.pdf.

The official History Day Contest Rule Book was revised and went into effect beginning June 2020! It is very important to review these changes BEFORE beginning any research! For a summary of changes and additions, please visit ohiohistoryday.org and click on “Contest Information.”

In addition to the new rules, the Contest Rule Book also updated how entries will be evaluated. The evaluation now looks similar to a rubric and has two sections: Historical Quality (80%) and Clarity of Presentation (20%). The new evaluation forms for each category are available at <https://www.nhd.org/categories>.



Materials Required for Each Category

History Day projects, regardless of the category you choose, require the same three (3) sets of documents: a title page, process paper, and annotated bibliography. Below we've detailed these a little further and pointed to specific rules in the Contest Rule Book.

- Title Page: This will be the first page of any written pages you turn in. It must include only the title of the project, your name(s), category, division, and required word counts.
 - **Rule 17 | Title Page (pp. 18-19)**
Added: Because the paper category now requires a process paper, the title page for papers must list the number of words in the process paper, in addition to the number of words in the paper itself.
- Process Paper: This is where you can describe how you picked your topic, did research, and made your project. You must also include your project's **historical argument**, theme connection, and significance in history.
 - **Rule 15 | Written Materials (p. 18)**
Modified: Process papers are now required in all categories, including papers.
 - **Rule 18 | Process Paper (p. 19)**
Modified: The questions to be addressed in the process paper have been updated, including a requirement to provide your historical argument.
Added: Your process paper must not include quotes, images, or captions.
- Annotated Bibliography: You must have a citation for every source you **used or consulted** when creating your project. For each citation you must include an annotation **no more than two or three sentences**. Annotations describe how you used the source and how it helped you learn about the topic. For more guidelines and sample bibliographies, visit: <https://www.nhd.org/annotated-bibliography>
 - **Rule 19 | Annotated Bibliography (pp. 19-20)**
Modified: You must list all sources that you consulted during the development of your entry.
Added: Each annotation must be no more than two or three sentences.

Language Requirements for Entry Submission

History Day allows you to focus on any topic that interests you, as long as you connect it to the annual theme. This means you can research and find your sources in another language, too, as long as translations are provided. However, when it comes time to prepare your category entry, your project must be submitted in English.

- **Rule 8 | English and Translations (p. 16)**
Added: All entries for competition must be submitted in English unless otherwise approved by your Contest Coordinator. Other languages may be used if translations in English are provided. When considering translated text for the purposes of word count, judges will count only the English translation.

Category: Exhibit

Exhibits combine text and visual items like photos. Many exhibits are displayed on three-sided boards, but you can create a 3D exhibit as well.

Rules to Remember:

- Size: Exhibits can be no larger than 40 inches wide, 30 inches deep, and 6 feet high. Measuring the exhibit does not include the table it rests on; however, it does include any stand you create and any table drapes.
- Word Limit: Only 500 student-composed words on the exhibit. Direct quotes or brief credits on photographs do not count against this limit.
 - This limit includes the text you write for titles, subtitles, captions, graphs, timelines, media devices (e.g., video or computer files), or supplemental materials (e.g., photo albums, scrapbooks, etc.) where you use your own words.
- Credit: All visual sources (photos, paintings, charts, graphs, etc.) need to be given a brief credit on the exhibit itself and a full citation in your annotated bibliography.



Exhibit Rule Changes – as of June 2020

- **Exhibit Media Time Limit** (D4, p. 31) – If used, media devices or electronics in an exhibit must not run for more than a total of two minutes and must not loop.
- **No Links to External Content** (D4, p. 31) – **Links to external content, such as QR codes, are prohibited.**

Planning Your Exhibit

A successful exhibit entry must be able to explain itself. The judges shouldn't need to depend on your interview to understand your argument. It is important that you design your exhibit in a way that your photographs, written materials, and illustrations are easy to understand and to follow.

- **Avoiding Clutter.** It is always tempting to try to get as much onto your exhibit as possible, but this usually makes for a cluttered and confusing display. Try to select only the most important items for your exhibit.
- **Plot it out in Advance.** It's important to plan out your exhibit in advance. Each section should be labeled. These labels for your title and main ideas are very important because they direct the viewer's eye around your exhibit. Figure out what you want in each section, including drafts or your text and ideas for quotes, photos, and other illustrations. Be sure to lay everything out BEFORE you glue it down.

Category: Documentary

In this category you will create a short film on your topic, like the ones on PBS or the History Channel. Make sure you have the equipment and programs needed to make a film. Whichever technology you choose, keep the following in mind:

- Make a storyboard of the types of images you want to use to explain your topic.
- Collect a large number of images to avoid too much repetition. You'll need about 100 images for a ten-minute documentary.
- Use appropriate music as an important addition to your recorded script.
- Write your script or narrative first and then add images.
- Make sure that the script fits with the image on the screen.
- Preview early and re-edit at least once.

Rules to Remember:

- Time Limit: 10 minutes
- Credits: You must include a list of brief credits for each of your sources at the end of the documentary. This is included within the 10-minute time limit.
- Production: Students must operate all equipment used in creating the documentary. Only you, or people you interview, can appear in the documentary. Only you are allowed to provide any narration as well.

Video Presentation

The availability of home video cameras and easy-to-use digital video editing computer software, such as iMovie or Windows MovieMaker, has made this type of documentary the most popular. Here are some suggestions for video presentations:

- Students must operate the camera and the editing equipment.
- Stay organized. Draw up a storyboard of the scenes you will be shooting.
- Present a variety of panning shots, interviews, original footage, and still photographs.
- Appropriate music is an effective addition to your soundtrack but remember that the music must match your presentation. Do not let it overshadow the verbal presentation.
- Watch professional documentaries for ideas.

Storyboards

Storyboards are a great tool to help you to combine the audio and visual elements of your project. Doing some advance planning will save you time when you go to create your final product.

You can make a storyboard form by creating a three-column table. Label the columns, Notes, Visual, and Audio. Use the Visual and Audio columns to match your narrative with the images you intend to use to illustrate your points. Use the Notes column to add any information about the section that will help you during the production stage.

Category: Paper

In a research paper you make and support your historical argument through writing. A paper allows you to present your argument, research, and ideas in much detail. Your research can be presented either as a traditional research paper or as a creative writing piece.

Rules to Remember:

- Word Limit: 1,500 to 2,500 words. This does not count words in the title page, process paper, annotated bibliography, or primary source material in appendices. It also does not count citations.
 - **Captions, quotes, and words in endnotes, footnotes, and internal documents other than the citation are included in the word count.**
- Citations: Citations must be given for both direct quotes and specific ideas from other sources. Endnotes, footnotes, or internal documentation must be used within your paper for citations.
- Paper: Papers must be printed double sided on plain white 8.15x11 inch paper. Text must be 12pt font, double spaced, with 1-inch margins on each side.
- Other Required Materials: All papers must have a title page, **process paper**, and bibliography.

Paper Rule Changes – as of June 2020

- **Paper Word Count** (A2, p. 23) – Captions and words in footnotes/endnotes other than the citation now count toward the paper word limit, in addition to student-composed words and quoted material.
- **Process Paper** (A4, p. 23) – A process paper is now required for papers. The Title Page must list both the process paper word count as well as the word count for the paper itself (See Rule 17, pp. 18-19).

Using Footnotes

Footnotes are explanations provided by writers about ideas or quotations presented in the paper that are not their own. Footnotes not only give credit to the originators of ideas, but also serve as evidence in support of your ideas. Usually footnotes occur in three situations:

- Quoting a Primary Source: An example of this would be including a selection from a speech or interview.
- Quoting a Secondary Source: If you take a direct quotation from someone's book, you must footnote it.
- Paraphrasing a Secondary Source: Even if you change an author's ideas into your own words, you must footnote where you found this information.

Category: Performance

This category allows you to create a historical argument through a short play or other performing art. You write the script, make the costumes, and act out historic characters. The challenge is making your performance engaging without sacrificing historical quality.

Rules to Remember:

- Time Limit: 10 minutes
- Originality: Your performance must be an original production
- Props: You must set up any props yourself. You have 5 minutes to set up before your performance and 5 minutes at the end to remove props and participate in the judge interview.



Performance Rule Changes – as of June 2020

- **Interaction** (B5, p. 26) – During your performance **you may not interact with or require participation from the audience.**

Write the Script

The average script for a ten-minute performance is four to five double-spaced pages. Make sure your thesis is clear in your performance, ideally incorporated into the beginning and ending of your performance. Make sure your script contains references to the historical evidence, particularly the primary source material you found in your research. Using actual dialogue, quotations, or taking excerpts from speeches are good ways to put historical detail into your performance.

Practice!

Once you have a solid script you can begin practicing. This will include blocking, memorizing, costumes and set design. Often the simpler props and costumes are better. Good costumes help make you convincing but be sure they are appropriate to your topic. Consult photographs or costume guides if you are unsure about appropriate dress. See examples of historical plays to get ideas about stage movements, use of props, etc.

Remember What's Important

Content is the most important factor in your performance and any props you use should be directly related to your theme. Props should help you to emphasize the key concepts of your performance. Remember, you only have five minutes to put up and take down your props.

Category: Website

In this category you create an interactive website. Good websites are well organized, easy to read, and simple to navigate. They make good use of color, font, and visual sources without taking away from your research.

Rules to Remember:

- Website Editor: All website entries must be created in NHDWebCentral: nhd.org/nhdwebcentral. See Rule E2, p. 33.
- Word Limit: No more than 1,200 student-composed words on the site. This does not count words required on your homepage. It also does not count words used in citations, direct quotes, recurring menus, titles, or navigation instructions.
- Multimedia: Your use of multimedia clips may not exceed 3 minutes. It's up to you if you want to do many short clips, or a few longer ones. You may not narrate audio/video clips.
- Credits: All visual and multimedia material must include a brief credit on your website and be included in your bibliography. These do not count towards your word limit.
- Required Written Materials: Your process paper and bibliography must be on your website as PDFs. They do not count towards your total website word limit.

Website Rule Changes – as of June 2020

- **Home Page Requirements** (E4, p. 34) – In addition to the previous requirements, the home page must now include the **total length of multimedia, and the total number of all visible student composed words**.
- **Avoid External Hyperlinks** (E6, p. 35) – To comply with the rule prohibiting links to external content (E5), you must **remove the hyperlink from all URLs** listed in on-screen source credits. The only external links allowed are those that direct the viewer to an internet site where they can download a free, secure, and legal download of software needed to view the site (e.g., Flash, QuickTime, and RealPlayer).

Research and Plan out Your Website First

It may be tempting to begin using the NHD Website Editor right away, but actually building your website is one of the final steps in your process. You will want to do your research and develop a thesis first. Once you have an idea of what you want to say, plan your website out on paper. Decide on the pages you need, how they will be organized, and what sort of supplemental media content you might want to use.

Consider Including...

The most successful websites are more than just a paper on a computer screen. This category gives you the opportunity to share your ideas in a variety of engaging formats, including multimedia clips, images, and primary sources within your website. As you decide which elements to include, remember to only include those that relate most directly to your argument.

Contact Us!

We're so happy that you're participating in History Day this year! We can't wait to see your final project! Remember that if you need help, you can always ask your teacher. Ohio History Day staff are also available to answer questions and give feedback. Feel free to contact us at any time.

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