INTRODUCING NATIONAL HISTORY DAY 2024

Almost everything you need to know to get started on your History Day adventure!

Your name here!
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Your History Day adventure is divided into three parts: **Research**, **Analysis**, and **Presentation**.

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**Questions**
More information about National History Day in Minnesota for students, parents, and teachers is available on our website. Contact us anytime! [https://www.mnhs.org/historyday](https://www.mnhs.org/historyday)
The Annual History Day Theme

Each year National History Day selects a theme. Every student who participates in History Day has to connect their topic to the theme. Themes are designed to be very broad. You can pick topics connected to local, state, national, or world history.

Why do we need a theme? The theme unites all History Day students around the country and world. The annual theme will also help you to see the connections between your topic and bigger issues in history. Your History Day project will be about more than dates and facts. It will be about the historical significance of your topic.

2024: Turning Points in History

A “turning point” is more than just a change. It’s a moment of significant change where an action, event, or idea directly causes things to be different from how things were before it.

Change happens all the time. The impact of a change will range from things staying pretty much the same to things being very different for a community, country, or even the world. Many changes will fall somewhere in between.

- For example: Changing lanes on the highway while driving north for a fishing trip will not significantly impact your life. Let’s say, however, you take a different route and stop at a fossil site. What if that experience led you to discover a passion for archaeology, which then became your career? That detour might be a turning point in your life.

How do you know if your topic is a turning point? You’ll need to do some beginning research and think about the following questions to learn about the during, before, and after of your topic. Answering these questions will help you create a great project.

During: What happened during my topic?
You will likely start your topic exploration by thinking of a person, thing, idea, or event. It might be something that’s in your history book, was on the front page of a newspaper, or is important in your community. You first need to figure out what happened - who, what, when, where, why, and how. You also might need to make your topic more specific.

Before: How is this different from what happened before?
Historical events do not just happen on their own. They build on the people, ideas, and events that came before them. This is called historical context. You will need to think about how the people, events, actions, and ideas that came before helped to create the situation in which your topic took place. You won’t be able to cover everything. What is directly connected to your turning point?

After: How did this topic significantly change things?
Now that we know what happened and why, we have to think about how the topic significantly changed things. This is how we prove the topic was a turning point. The changes that your topic caused could have happened right away, took a long time, or both. The changes could be positive, negative, or a combination. More than just saying that your topic was a turning point, be specific. A turning point for what? How did things change because of it? Be sure you can prove it..
WORKING ON YOUR OWN OR IN A GROUP

Working on Your Own
There are some advantages to taking your History Day journey on your own. Working alone can be 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. The success of your History Day project depends on you.

Working in a Group
Being part of a group also has 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. Your History Day journey will be one of compromise.

Be careful when choosing group members. 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 working outside of class, will you be able to get together?
- Are you all interested in the same topics? Do you want to do the same project category?

WORKSHEET: Individual/Group & Category/Topic Interest
Use this worksheet to consider your initial category/topic interest, and working alone or in a group.

1. What type(s) of topics are you interested in?

2. Which of the following categories are you interested in? (Circle all that apply)
   - Paper
   - Exhibit
   - Documentary
   - Website
   - Performance

3. Why would this be the best category for you and your topic interests?

4. Do you plan on working individually or in a group? (Circle one)
   - Individually
   - Group

5. Answer the questions below for whichever group size you plan on selecting for History Day.

   **Working Alone**
   A. What will be some of your responsibilities if you work alone?
   B. Why is working alone the best choice for you?

   **Working in a Group**
   A. What will be some of the challenges you face when you work in a group?
   B. Why is working in a group the best choice for you?
SELECTING A TOPIC

The combination of a strong topic with plenty of research will give you a good start to your project. What makes a “good topic” for History Day?

- **The topic fits the theme.** Your topic needs to connect to the History Day theme. You may need to do some research to figure out this connection.

- **You are interested in this topic.** You will spend a lot of time researching your topic. If this is a topic you and the group are genuinely interested in, you will enjoy more of the research.

- **There is research out there about the topic.** Do a basic search to figure out if there are plenty primary and secondary sources connected to your topic. If not, consider another topic.

- **Your topic has significance.** You will need to make an argument about how your topic was important in history. This doesn’t mean you need a world-famous topic, but you need to be able to prove how the topic changed history. Even local topics have an impact on history.

- **Your topic is historic.** If your topic is too recent, you’re going to have a hard time finding the topic’s long-term significance in history. Select a topic that took place at least 20 years in the past.

WORKSHEET: TOPIC BRAINSTORM

To pick a topic, start with a general area of history you find interesting. This might be something you read about in a textbook or something related to your family’s history. Using the chart below, brainstorm one topic in each category that fits this year’s theme.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Politics</th>
<th>The Environment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Topic Idea:</td>
<td>Topic Idea:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Civil Rights</strong></td>
<td><strong>Social Issues</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic Idea:</td>
<td>Topic Idea:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Military History</strong></td>
<td><strong>Religion</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic Idea:</td>
<td>Topic Idea:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Science &amp; Technology</strong></td>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic Idea:</td>
<td>Topic Idea:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Business</strong></td>
<td><strong>Arts, Music, &amp; Culture</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic Idea:</td>
<td>Topic Idea:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
NARROWING YOUR TOPIC

Once you know your general interest, the next step is to narrow your general idea to a more focused topic. Why? History Day projects aren’t huge. If you pick a topic that’s too big, you won’t have enough space or time to include all the information that is needed for the project.

Consider this example. Your group is interested in racial equality movements, but this general interest needs to be narrowed down. You decide to research “U.S. Civil Rights Movement.” However, even this topic is still too broad. The first step to narrowing it down is defining the “where” and “when” for your project.

Your group should decide to focus on one big action or protest that happened during the movement. For example, the Montgomery Bus Boycott helped start the movement and would be a great, narrow topic to focus on for History Day!

Your narrowing won’t stop there. As you dig into this topic, you come up with research questions. What was happening in Montgomery, Alabama? What sort of opposition did they face? How did their actions change history? Asking these questions will help you narrow your topic even further.

WORKSHEET: TOPIC FUNNEL

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

Research Strategy
It is important to have a research strategy to help you gather information. Your strategy has two parts:
1. Find sources of information.
2. Keep track of notes and sources.

Where should I start?
The best place to begin your search is in your school or local library. An encyclopedia is a good place to find basic information about a topic. Searching the Internet may also lead to some primary and secondary sources. It is important to find other sources of information and not depend only on encyclopedias or the Internet.

How can I find more sources?
Once you have collected the basic information on your topic, try to locate some unique sources. Look for primary sources and more scholarly secondary sources at:
- Municipal, County, or College Libraries: These libraries have more resources than a school. They are especially helpful because they may have primary sources, such as old newspapers.
- Historical Societies: If your topic is on Minnesota history, a historical society may be helpful. State and local historical societies specialize in collecting information about Minnesota. Some historical societies and archives also have specialized collections that relate to national topics.
- 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 in advance and be prepared to take notes or record the interview. If you cannot meet in person, send them questions in the mail, by email, or over the phone. Make sure to remember to send a thank you note to them afterwards! *You can also find pre-recorded interviews online!*
- Talk To a Librarian: One of the best resources for finding information on your topic is asking a librarian or media specialist. They are professional information gatherers!

Using the Internet for History Day Research
The Internet is an extraordinary tool for research of all kinds, but it is not the answer to all your History Day research challenges.
- The Internet is a great place to start your research, find basic information about your topic, and figure out ways to narrow a topic.
  - The Electronic Library of Minnesota [www.elibrarymn.org](http://www.elibrarymn.org) is a great place to start, with databases on the “Student Research” page and an “Ask a Librarian” form for questions.
- The Internet can make your research trips to libraries more efficient! Save valuable research time at the library by checking the library’s website for available resources before you go.
- Websites provide online access to primary sources. Once you narrow your topic, check to see if there are any primary sources available online.
  - Try searching the key words of your topic along with “primary sources.” Ex. Montgomery Bus Boycott Primary Sources

Caution!
- Beware of questionable Internet sites. Anyone can post information on the web. Information from the Library of Congress is more reliable than from “Jane the Civil War buff.”
- Only a small percentage of source material is available on the Internet. Whenever possible, online research should be done in combination with more traditional historical research, not instead of it.
- Books often offer a deeper level of analysis than websites. Often students say that they are finding the same information on each website they visit. Books have more in depth information that can broaden your understanding of your topic and numerous books are available online!
PRIMARY & SECONDARY SOURCES

When historians study a topic, they try to gather a wide variety of sources during their research. They use sources like a lawyer would use evidence. Both need information to "make their case," but not all sources are the same. Historians classify their sources into two categories: **Primary** and **Secondary**. You are going to need to use both types of sources for a successful History Day project.

**Secondary Sources**
Secondary sources are usually published books or articles by an author who is not an eyewitness to, or a participant in, the historic event. Most books, encyclopedias, and websites are secondary sources. Secondary sources provide important background information about your topic. The footnotes and bibliographies of secondary sources can 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 materials directly related to a topic by time or participation. They provide a first-hand account about a person or an event because they were written or produced in the time period you are studying, are eyewitness accounts of historic events, are documents published at the time of specific historic events, or are later recollections by participants in historic events.

**Examples of Primary Sources:**
- Historic objects
- Manuscript collections
- Interviews with participants
- Autobiographies
- Government records
- Newspapers from the era
- Letters
- Photographs
- Music of the era
- Original film footage

**STAYING ORGANIZED**

Information is only valuable if you can record it and use it later. One of the ways to organize your research is to use a table. There are other ideas and more detailed examples in the **Student Research Workbook**.

**Task:** Copy key information from and take notes on each source you use. Gather facts, quotes, and information for your bibliography.

**Tip:** To help you organize your notes, highlight each source in a different color for the section of your project it fits best in (example: blue for background, green for build-up, yellow for main event, and so on).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Citation</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Key Quotes or Info</th>
<th>Paraphrased Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EXAMPLE: McNamara, Dave. Northern Lights: The Story of Minnesota’s Post. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2013.</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>“By 1900, they could vote only in local elections for members of the school and library boards.” (p. 265) “Opponents argued that women were homemakers.” (p. 265) “Each time the Minnesota legislature met, women brought up suffrage.” (p. 265)</td>
<td>Women had the right to vote in local elections, but not in state or national ones. Opponents of women’s suffrage believed women should take care of homes and children and stay out of politics. Activists pressured Minnesota lawmakers to pass women’s suffrage every session.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Successful research involves more than just finding all the information about a topic. You will never be able to find—or read—everything. A narrow topic will keep your project to a manageable size. You can also use research questions to help focus your project.

Writing Research Questions
Research questions dig deeper into understanding not just what happened, but why it happened, how it was connected to other ideas or issues, and how it changed history. You can learn more about research questions and how to write them [on our website](#).

Before writing research questions, you will need to do some pre-research. The answers to these fact-finding questions will give you the basic information about your topic. You can’t write research questions until you have done your pre-research.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WORKSHEET: WRITING RESEARCH QUESTIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Part of Project</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Long Before</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● What issues or problems were the main players involved with your topic trying to change and why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Right Before</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● What inspired or sparked the main players of your topic to take action and why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● How was this topic a continuation of larger issues, trends, or movements that came before it?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Main Event</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Who supported it and why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Who did not support it and why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● How was this event different from or similar to other things taking place at the time, or approaches others had taken?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Right After</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● So what? How did this topic change history?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● How was this topic a turning point in a larger issue, trend, or movement?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● How were the impacts of this topic felt differently by those involved or impacted?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Long After</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● How did this topic inspire future movements, events, or changes?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● How has our understanding of the topic changed over time?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Plan a strategy for your History Day research, including what to search for and where to look.

1. **What are some important words, dates, or people related to your topic?** These terms will help you to search for sources. Remember to check spelling!

2. **What types of secondary sources might exist about your topic?** Circle the types of sources you think you could find about your topic.

   - Book: History Textbook
   - Scholarly Article: Biography
   - Video Documentary: Website
   - Encyclopedia: Interview with a Scholar

3. **What types of primary sources might exist about your topic?** Circle the types of sources you think you could find about your topic.

   - Diary
   - Historic Newspapers
   - Original Film Footage
   - Manuscript Collection: Autobiography
   - Government Records: Photographs
   - Historic Objects or Sites: Interview with a Participant

4. **Where can you go to find this information?** Answer the following questions and think about the places you could look for sources.

   - **School Library**—Name:
   - **Public Library**—Name:
   - **College/University Library**—Name:
   - **History Textbook**—Title:
   - **Electronic Library of Minnesota** ([www.elibrarymn.org](http://www.elibrarymn.org))
     - Encyclopedia Britannica
     - Academic Search Premier
     - ProQuest
     - Gale in Context
   - **Minnesota Historical Society**
     - MNopedia ([www.mnopedia.org](http://www.mnopedia.org))
     - Library Guides ([http://libguides.mnhs.org](http://libguides.mnhs.org))
     - Minnesota History Magazine ([www.mnhs.org/market/mhspress/minnesotahistory/](http://www.mnhs.org/market/mhspress/minnesotahistory/))
   - **Google**
     - Google Search
     - Targeted Search: “Primary Sources” or “History” plus your topic
     - Google Scholar ([www.scholar.google.com](http://www.scholar.google.com))
   - **Other idea:**
   - **Other idea:**
PART TWO

ANALYSIS

Now that you’ve done your research, it’s time to figure out what it all means. You will need to make an argument about the significance of your topic in history. This argument is also called a thesis statement, and is the central focus of your entire History Day project!

Thesis Statements
Your thesis statement is an essential element of your History Day project. It is the centerpiece of every project. It should be clearly stated in your Website, Exhibit, or Paper, or woven into the beginning and the end of your Performance or Documentary script.

You will decide what information you need to include in your project by using your thesis statement as a guide. Every part of your project will support your thesis statement.

Writing a thesis can be hard work. Don’t expect it to be perfect the first time; you should go through several drafts. The worksheet on the following page will give you a few ideas about how to get started.

Remember when we talked about research questions? They can also come in handy when writing your thesis statement. The answers to well-written research questions can form the basis for a good thesis statement. Check out the example below about the Montgomery Bus Boycott.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Sample Thesis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Why did Rosa Parks refuse to give up her seat on the bus? What other events were</td>
<td>Rosa Parks was arrested in 1955 for refusing to give up her bus seat to a white passenger. This nonviolent protest aimed to expand the frontier of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>going on in the Civil Rights Movement? What impact did her actions have on the</td>
<td>racial equality. Black citizens in Montgomery organized a year-long bus boycott, ending when the Supreme Court declared bus segregation unconstitutional, leading to other Civil Rights Movement victories.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil Rights Movement?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Remember The Theme Connection
As you develop your thesis statement, think about this year’s theme. The strongest History Day projects will weave the central ideas of the theme into the thesis statement and throughout each project section.

Make sure to include your turning point clearly in your thesis. Look for ways to show a significant change because of your topic. This will help to show the judges a strong theme connection.

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.

Investigate your topic’s historical context to get a full understanding of your topic. The chart on page 13 gives you some guiding questions to help figure this out.
SAMPLE TOPIC: Rosa Parks and the Montgomery Bus Boycott

WHO: Who was involved? Who was affected? Rosa Parks, Citizens in Montgomery, Civil Rights Movement leaders, Montgomery’s government officials

WHAT: What happened? What was the main event? Rosa Parks refused to give up her bus seat to a white passenger, which violated a law enforcing segregation on Montgomery city buses. She was arrested and went to jail. Civil rights leaders, including Martin Luther King, Jr., organized a boycott of buses and challenged the law as unconstitutional.

WHERE: Where was/were the place(s) it took place? Montgomery, Alabama

WHEN: When did it happen? How long of a time period was it? Rosa Parks was arrested on December 1, 1955. The boycott started on December 5 and lasted for 381 days.


WHY: Why is it important? What were the outcomes? The boycott forced change in Montgomery and succeeded in overturning the law requiring segregation on public transportation. This success inspired other Civil Rights Movement protests and helped Martin Luther King, Jr. and others develop nonviolent strategies to fight segregation.

THEME CONNECTION: Turning Points in History
- What was the Turning Point? The use of the boycott proved that nonviolent protests was an effective method for creating change and changed the strategy of fighting segregation by Civil Rights leaders.
- How did things change? The boycott and Supreme Court victory ended segregation on buses. The nonviolent protest showed the power of collective action and became an effective strategy for other Civil Rights Movement protests.

Put it all together into a thesis statement.
Rosa Parks was arrested in 1955 for refusing to give up her bus seat to a white passenger in Montgomery, leading to a year-long bus boycott. The success of this nonviolent protest against segregation was a turning point in strategies used during the Civil Rights Movement that opened the door to other victories.
Historical context considers the way your topic influenced and was influenced by other people, events, and ideas. Consider what happened both before and after the main events of your topic.

How was the **setting** important to this topic?

What were the **immediate results** of your topic?

Were there **people or movements** that influenced the topic?

Did your topic **influence people, ideas, or events** afterwards?

What **ideas or events** took place at the time that were **related to your topic**?

What **long-term changes** took place because of your topic?

What other **major events** took place **before your topic** that are connected to your topic?

**Why was your topic significant** in history?
PART THREE  PRESENTATION

History Day has five different categories - or ways that you can share your information. Your teacher may let you choose from all of them - or may limit your choices. Use this page to figure out which category is best for you!

- PAPER
- EXHIBIT
- DOCUMENTARY
- PERFORMANCE
- WEBSITE

Choosing a Category

There are several important questions you need to think about before picking a presentation category:

- Which category best fits your interests and skills (or the talents of group members)?
- Will you have access to the equipment or materials you need to present your project? This is especially important for Documentaries and Websites!
- Does your research fit one category better than another? For example, do you have enough pictures and illustrations for a Documentary?

To help you choose a category, try to look at examples created by other students. Go to https://www.mnhs.org/historyday and click on “Categories and sample projects.” Keep in mind that these samples are finished products and have gone through many revisions.

The National History Day Contest Rule Book

Be sure to read the the National History Day Contest Rule Book for all of the rules for your presentation category. The Contest Rule Book also describes the judging criteria for competitions. Download it from our website - https://www.mnhs.org/historyday. Click on “Categories and sample projects.”

WORKSHEET: PICKING A CATEGORY

Use this worksheet to explain your choices about which category you are choosing for your project

1. Which category do you want to select?
2. How does this category fit your interests and skills?
3. Explain how you will access the necessary equipment or resources to complete your project:
4. Why is this the best category to present information on your specific topic?
5. What is the biggest challenge you think you may face with this category?
CATEGORY OVERVIEW: EXHIBIT

Exhibits are visual representations of your research and analysis. They are easy to understand and are similar to exhibits in a museum. To be successful, an Exhibit must create an effective balance between visual interest and historical explanation.

### Basic Rules

**Word Limit: 500 student composed words**

There is a 500 student-composed word limit that applies to all text that appears on an Exhibit that is created by the student.

This includes the text you write for titles, subtitles, captions, graphs, timelines, media devices (e.g., video or computer files), or other materials (e.g. photo albums, scrapbooks, etc.) where you use your own words.

**Size Limit: 30” x 40” x 6’**

The overall size of your Exhibit can be no larger than 40 inches wide, 30 inches deep, and 6 feet high.

Circular or rotating Exhibits or those meant to be viewed from all sides may be no more than 30 inches in diameter.

**Media Limit: 2 minutes**

If you use a media device, you are limited to two minutes total of audio or video.

**Required: Credits**

You must give a brief credit for each visual on your board, these do not count towards your word limit.

Your project must follow all other category rules, and the General Rules for All Categories. Read the Rulebook!

View Sample Exhibits: https://www.mnh.org/historyday/categories

### Common Types of Exhibits

#### Three-Panel Exhibit

The most common style of Exhibit entry is a three-panel display. This style is the least complicated to design and build, but is still a very effective way to present your information.

- The title will likely be the first thing the viewer looks at - It will likely be in the largest font size and near the top of your project.
- The thesis should be clear on your project itself. The center panel of an Exhibit is a great place to showcase this!
- Think carefully about the organization of your Exhibit. Use different font sizes and colors to help direct the viewers’ eye around the project.
- The area in front of your project, on the table between the side panels, can also be used as part of your Exhibit. Make sure any materials you put here relate directly to your Exhibit.

#### Three-Dimensional Exhibit

A three-dimensional Exhibit is more complicated to construct, but can be visually effective depending on your topic choice. Like the three-panel display, one side should contain your title and thesis statement.

As you move around the Exhibit, the development of your topic can be explored. It is not necessary for the project itself to be able to spin. You may set it on a table (or the floor) so people can walk around it. Make sure to design your 3D exhibit so people know where to begin reading.

### Tips for Creating an Exhibit

**An Exhibit Should Be Self-Explanatory**

The judges shouldn’t need to depend on your interview to understand the argument your thesis and project are making. All the information they need should be in the project itself. Your text, illustrations, and written materials should be easy to understand and to follow.

**Avoid Clutter**

It is tempting to try to get as much onto your Exhibit as possible. Try to select only the most important items that directly support your thesis for your Exhibit.

**Plan it Out in Advance**

Figure out what you want in each section before you put your exhibit together.

- What information do you want to include in each section? Each section should be labeled to direct the viewer’s eye.
- How does each section support your thesis?
- What supporting evidence do you need - illustrations, quotes, etc. - to support the text?
PLANNING YOUR EXHIBIT

Each section of your Exhibit will support your thesis. Plan out what ideas you want to include in each section. Be sure to come up with creative titles for each section on your Exhibit.

PROJECT TITLE

Background

Put your topic into historical context.

- 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?

Build-Up

Give more specific information related to your topic. Think of this as “the spark” that set the main event into action.

- Who were the main players and what were they doing for the main events of your topic?
- What were the events leading up to the main event(s)?
- What was life like before the main event(s) of your topic?

THESIS

The “Heart of the Story” or “Main Event” describe the key details of your topic.

- Give the major details about the main event(s) in your topic. What actually happened?
- Include specific details about the most critical people and events related to your topic.
- This section generally covers a smaller time period (several months to several years).

Heart of the Story


Short-Term Impact

Focus on what happened shortly after the main events of your topic.

- What are some of the reactions to the main event, shortly after it happened? Be sure to consider both positive and negative reactions.
- Did anything change right away? New laws? New ways of thinking?
- Who was affected by the event?
- Were there intended/unintended consequences?

Long-Term Impact

Think about the historical significance of your topic. Be sure to connect this back to your thesis!

- How are things different because of your topic?
- What is the long-term significance?
- Did your topic influence other historical events?
- Why is this topic important in history?

Theme Connection: There is no requirement for where you should discuss “Turning Points in History” in your project, but you will most likely see it in the Heart of the Story. However, you should try to work these ideas into your project in the sections where it makes the most sense, based on your theme connection and thesis statement.
The Website category allows you to create an interactive, educational Website. The key to the Website category is a strong historical argument and evidence supported by clear organization, simple navigation tools, and interactivity without glitz.

**Basic Rules**

**Created with NHDWebCentral**
Your entry must be constructed using the NHDWebCentral website editor.

**100 MB Size Limit, No Outside Links:**
The site can be no larger than 100 MB. You cannot link to any outside websites.

**Word Limit: No more than 1,200 visible, student-composed words**
Text that you write, including captions, graphs, etc., will count toward your limit. Look at the Rule Book for guidance on how to count words.

**Media Limit: 3 Minutes**
Audio/visual clips must add up to no more than 3 minutes.

**Required: Homepage**
The Rule Book lists what you must list on the homepage.

**Required: Credits**
Each visual on your website must have a brief credit; this does not count towards your word limit.

**Required: Written Material**
You must include an annotated bibliography and process paper on your Website in PDF format.

Your project must follow all other category rules, and the General Rules for All Categories. Read the Rulebook!

**NHD Web Central**

You must build your Website using NHDWebCentral: a free, online web-building tool. More information is available on our website: www.mnhs.org/historyday/categories

You can save and edit your site throughout the year, though you will be locked out of editing your project while contest judging is taking place. At the end of the school year, you will have the option to save your site before it is cleared from the system on September 1 (for a small fee).

**What is a History Day Website?**

With a Website, you will create a collection of interconnected pages that use multimedia to showcase your historical argument, research, and interpretation of your topic’s significance in history. Your Website will contain:

- **Homepage & Thesis:** Required by History Day, the homepage includes important information. The homepage is a great place to include a thesis!
- **Supporting Pages & Navigation:** You will divide your information into supporting pages - and interconnect them with a navigational menu.
- **Student-Composed Text:** Your text will support your thesis. You will discuss what happened before, during, and after the main events of your topic.
- **Images and Multimedia:** This media will provide important evidence for your text and thesis. Choose carefully! You have limited space and time - and more importantly, too much can be overwhelming!
- **Quotes:** Quotes from primary sources - such as documents or testimonies from participants - can be another great type of evidence (and won’t count toward your word limit).

**Planning Your Website**

**Research and Plan Your Website First**
It may be tempting to begin crafting your website on NHDWebCentral, but actually building your Website is one of the final steps in your process.

1. Do your research.
2. Develop a thesis.
3. Plan your Website out on paper.
   a. What pages do you need?
   b. What will you discuss on each page?
   c. How will the pages be connected?
4. Write your text: Write this in a word processing program - not directly into the website creator!
5. Select supporting evidence: What images, media, or quotes will help to prove the text you have written and your thesis?
PLANNING YOUR WEBSITE

Your Website will be a set of interconnected pages that support your thesis. You should carefully select the content that goes on each of these pages - and plan this out before using NHDWebCentral.

The following pages are the basics you of your project. You may end up adding more pages, but start with the basics first.

**Directions:** Use your thesis to decide which major ideas you want to include on each page. Your viewer will read the pages in chronological order, but it’s easier to plan out your pages with the following steps.

- **Step 1:** Start with the Heart of the Story and describe what happened.
- **Step 2:** Next, think about what happened right before the event. What sparked the main events of your topic?
- **Step 3:** Set your topic into larger historical context. What background information does your reader need to know?
- **Step 4:** In this step, think about what happened right after the main event - the short-term impact.
- **Step 5:** Lastly, think about the legacy, or long-term impact of your topic.

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**Before the Main Event**

**Background**

- What background information does you reader need to know about your topic?
- What events, ideas, or people influenced your topic?
- What was going on in the world at the time?

**Build-Up**

- Who were the main players?
- What were they doing to get ready for the main event of your topic?
- What events or ideas led up to the main event?

**After the Main Event**

**Short-Term Impact**

- What happened or changed right away?
- Think about positive and negative changes.
- How did this event impact different groups of people?

**Long-Term Impact**

- So what?
- Why is your topic important in history?
- How has your topic changed history?
- Why is the event still important today?

**During the Main Event**

**Heart of the Story or During the Event**

- What happened?
- How did it happen?
- When did it happen?
- Why did it happen?
- Who was involved or affected?
- Where did it happen?

**Written Work**

- Process Paper
- Annotated Bibliography
EVALUATING ALL PROJECTS

At all levels of History Day competitions, judges are looking at the following criteria, which heavily focuses on the history behind your project.

- **80% Historical Quality**: Historical argument, wide research, use of available primary sources, historical context, multiple perspectives, historical accuracy, demonstration of significance of topic in history, and connection to theme.
- **20% Clarity of Presentation**: Uses the category effectively to clearly explain ideas and shows original student voice.
- **Rules Compliance**: Project follows general guidelines for History Day as well as category-specific rules.

CREDITS FOR WEBSITES AND EXHIBITS

Students must include a brief credit for all visual sources (e.g. photographs, paintings, charts, graphs, etc) on the Exhibit or in the Website. They must also fully cite these sources in their annotated bibliography.

- A credit is more brief than a full citation. For example: The credit below includes the organization where this picture can be found (Library of Congress), but does NOT include the details that are part of the bibliographic citation.
- Consider including these credits in a smaller font, below the image on the Exhibit or near the image on a website - similar to how a credit appears in a book.
- These brief credits do NOT count toward the student-composed word count.

A brief, factual credit is required and does not count toward the word limit.

Consider including your credit in a smaller font either below or along the side of the image.

U.S. Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm ran for president in the 1972 Democratic party primary but was blocked from participating in televised debates.
A Documentary is an audio/visual presentation that uses multiple source types such as images, video, and sound to communicate the historical argument, research, and interpretation of the topic’s significance in history. It is similar to a documentary you may have seen on PBS or the History Channel.

### Basic Rules

**Time Limit: No longer than 10 minutes**
Timing begins with the first visual (text or image) on the screen or when sound is first heard and ends at the conclusion of the last visual (text or image) or when last sound ends. Source credits must be included in the total time limit.

**Project Runs on Its Own**
Once the documentary begins, it must run on its own. Judge or audience interaction is not allowed.

**Created by YOU**
You (and group members, if working in a group) must create and produce your documentary. If you are recording your own footage, only you (or group members) may appear on screen, with the exception of any interview subjects.

**Required: Source credits at end of documentary**
The last portion of your documentary must be a brief list of credits for sources. They should be readable - but not the full bibliographic citation.

### Documentary Technology

**Video Presentations**
The availability of video editing computer software has made this type of documentary the most popular option. There are two ways you may access this technology:

- **On a computer or device:** Apple’s iMovie or Windows’ MovieMaker may already be a part of your computer/device. Other software, such as Final Cut Pro or Adobe Premiere, may be used, but are more expensive.
  - If you are creating your documentary using one of these programs, you will need to use the same computer each time, as the files are saved to the device.
- **Web-Based:** Your school may have a subscription to a web-based editing software, such as WeVideo. Talk to your teacher!
  - If you are using a web-based program, your files are saved to the cloud. You can work on a variety of different computers/devices - or have group members working together in different places.

**Computer Slideshow Presentations**
Using slideshow software, such as PowerPoint, is a low-tech way to combine the audio and visual parts of a documentary. You can load the images into the slides, record the matching audio, and set the presentation to automatically advance.

- **These types of presentations are becoming less and less common.** If you are competing, be sure to read the event materials on how to prepare your project if making a slideshow.

### Planning Your Documentary

**Storyboards**
A storyboard is a great tool that can help you combine the audio and visual elements of your project. It can also save you time when you go to create your documentary.

Make a storyboard form by creating a three-column table similar to the one shown on the right. Label the columns: Notes, Visual, and Audio. Use the Visual and Audio columns to match your text/narration with the images you intend to use to support your points. Use the Notes column to add any information about the section that will help you during the production stage.

[View Sample Documentaries:](https://www.mnhs.org/historyday/categories)
Think about dividing up the ten minutes in your documentary into smaller sections, like a Tootsie Roll. The following organizer gives you an idea of how you can divide this time to make sure you talk about what happened before, during, and after the main events of your topic.

**Introduction & Thesis**
- General introduction to documentary.
- Incorporate thesis and theme words.
- Don’t have to label as “thesis” or put it on screen in text.
- Remember this is the road map to your project.

**Background/Buildup**
- Place your topic in historical context.
- What information do we need to know to understand your topic?
- What outside people, ideas, or events influenced your topic?
- Who are the main players?
- What events lead up to the main event?

**Main Event/Heart of the Story**
- Major details about the main events in your topic.
- Include specific details about the most critical people and events related to your topic.
- This section generally covers a smaller time period (several months to several years).

**Title**
- Briefly list the main sources of audio and visual material.
- Thank people, organizations, and libraries who helped or contributed to your project.

**Conclusion**
- Restate your thesis and theme connection.
- Focus on the main points you want your audience to take away.
- Why is this topic important in history?

**Short and Long-Term Impact**
- What are some of the immediate reactions to the main event, shortly after it happened?
- What changed? New laws? New ways of thinking?
- Who was affected by the event?
- How was the world different after the main events of your topic?
- What is the long term significance?
- Were there unintended consequences?
- Did it influence other historical events?

**Audio Track 1**: Student-read narration and oral history interviews.

**Audio Track 2**: Historically appropriate music and sound. (Optional)
# CATEGORY OVERVIEW: PERFORMANCE

The Performance category allows you to create a historical argument using a theatrical performance. This will be a dramatic portrayal of your topic's significance in history. Entries must have dramatic appeal, but not at the expense of historical information.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Basic Rules</th>
<th>Elements of a Performance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Time Limit: No longer than 10 minutes**  
Timing begins from the first word or action following the introduction of your Performance. | **Script**  
You will write your own script, which is usually 4-5 double-spaced pages. Be sure to include your thesis in your script! |
| **Performed Live**  
Performances should be performed live. You may not submit a recorded Performance in this category, or in the Documentary category. | **Characters**  
Select one or more characters for your Performance. These could be actual historical figures or fictional people based on your research. |
| **Created by YOU**  
Your Performance must be an original production - created by you (and your group members, if working in a group). You may not perform a script written by someone else. | **Scenes**  
You may have one or more scenes for your characters. Your script, props, and any set pieces will help identify the scenes for your audience. |
| **Media is Okay**  
You can use technology within your Performance, but you (or your group members, if working in a group) must provide and run all equipment. | **Props and Set**  
Props or parts of the set can help tell the story. These may include objects, historical documents, furniture or set pieces (such as a backdrop). Keep it simple! Make sure each prop has a purpose and can be easily set up and taken down. |
| **Forbidden: Audience Participation**  
You are not allowed to have the audience participate in your Performance (but it’s okay if they laugh or cry!) | **Costumes**  
Pick a historically appropriate or neutral costume for your characters. Keep it simple! Fancy costumes can be difficult. |

**View Sample Performances:** [https://www.mnhs.org/historyday/categories](https://www.mnhs.org/historyday/categories)

**Planning Your Performance**

1. **Research Comes First**  
Avoid jumping right in and writing a script first. Instead, do your research first! Research the foundation for your entire project.

2. **Develop a Thesis**  
Even in the Performance category, you will still need a thesis that explains why your topic is important in history. Write your thesis before you start planning your script.

3. **Brainstorm Scenarios and Characters**  
Use your thesis to figure out which characters and scenes are best to share with your audience. Be creative! Consider both major and minor players in your topic. Who was connected to this topic that might provide an interesting point of view on the issue?  
- **Remember:** Avoid presenting an oral report on a character that begins with when they were born and ends with when they died. This performance choice is limited and often prevents you from discussing multiple points of view and the significance of the topic in history.

4. **Write the Script**  
The average script for a Performance is 4-5 double-spaced pages.  
- Make sure your thesis is clear in your Performance, ideally incorporated into the beginning and ending of your Performance.  
- Your script should include references to the historical evidence, particularly the primary source material you found in your research. Use actual dialogue, quotations, or take excerpts from speeches to add historical detail.
PLANNING YOUR PERFORMANCE

Performance is the most creative History Day category. It’s impossible to give you a formula for a Performance. They can be in many different formats and will vary based on the number of group members, characters, scenes, and topic. Below are two tools to help you begin brainstorming your Performance. Keep in mind that these are not the only successful approaches to the Performance category—just a place to get started. Get creative!

What Would Your Characters Know?

When selecting characters for your Performance, it's important to think about what they would or wouldn't know. If your character is Abraham Lincoln, it's impossible for him to know what happened in 1870, because he was assassinated in 1865. Try selecting a different character—maybe more of a minor player. This could give you the chance to take a step back and discuss your topic's significance in history in a different way. Instead of using Abraham Lincoln, consider being one of his advisors or aides who lived after his death. This would give you more long-term perspective on Lincoln's presidency.

DRAFTING YOUR SCRIPT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What</th>
<th>Key Questions and Elements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intro (1 minute)</td>
<td>• Set the scene. Who are you? When is this taking place? Where are you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Introduce your thesis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical Context/Background (2 minutes)</td>
<td>• What happened before your topic to influence it?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Were there other movements, people, or ideas that influenced it?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• What events led up to your topic?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heart of Story (3 minutes)</td>
<td>• Key events and issues related to your topic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short and Long-Term Impact (3 minutes)</td>
<td>• What were the immediate outcomes of your topic?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• What has been the long-term significance of your topic in history?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion/Wrap-Up (1 minute)</td>
<td>• Reinforce your thesis.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Conclude your character's actions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Scene Brainstorm

Brainstorm at least two different scenes, using different characters in each. Which one is the best approach for presenting your ideas?

Scene #1

Character(s) (historical figures, composite characters, narrators):

Setting:
Timeframe:
Describe Scene:

Scene #2

Character(s) (historical figures, composite characters, narrators):

Setting:
Timeframe:
Describe Scene:
**CATEGORY OVERVIEW: PAPER**

A Paper is a written format for presenting your historical argument, research, and interpretation of your topic’s significance in history.

### Basic Rules

**Length: 1,500 - 2,500 total words**

Each word or number in the text of the paper counts as one word. Unlike Exhibits or Websites, **ALL WORDS** in the body of the paper will count towards the word count, both student-composed and quoted words. The title page, process paper, citations, and annotated bibliography do NOT count toward your word limit. The paper itself will usually end up being about 6-10 double-spaced pages.

**Individual Only**

Only individual papers are allowed in History Day. You may not create a group paper.

**Required: Citations**

Citations should credit the sources of specific ideas and direct quotes. You should use footnotes, endnotes, or internal documentation.

**Optional: Appendices**

If you want to include relevant images, maps, graphs, or primary sources, they should be in an appendix.

### Picking the Research Paper Category

The Paper category is a familiar way to present information. You have probably written a paper. Before you choose the Paper category, make sure it’s a good fit for you and your topic! This category is great for students who:

- **Want to work alone.** You are responsible for all aspects of your project - there is no such thing as a group paper!
- **Enjoy writing.** While there is writing in each History Day category, Papers rely only on the written word to explain the argument.
- **Have a topic that fits with the category.** You won’t be able to use many visual or any media evidence in this category. For example: A Paper may not be the most exciting choice for a project on a music history topic.

### The Mechanics of a Research Paper

Citations are probably the biggest difference between a History Day Research Paper and a paper you may have written previously. Citations are used to credit the sources of specific ideas as well as direct quotes in your Paper. You can use footnotes, endnotes, or internal documentation for your citations. While all three are allowed, we suggest using footnotes, as these are most common in historical works.

**What is a footnote?**

Footnotes are explanations provided by writers about the ideas or quotations presented in the Paper that are not the author’s own. Footnotes not only give credit to the sources for ideas, but also serve as “evidence” in support of your ideas.

Footnotes occur in three instances:

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

Superscript numbers are small numbers next to words or sentences in the body of your paper that will direct readers to citations at the bottom of the page - the footnotes.

**View Sample Papers:**

[https://www.mnhs.org/historyday/categories](https://www.mnhs.org/historyday/categories)
PROCESS PAPER & ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Students in all categories must create and submit additional supporting materials with their projects. All categories must submit one annotated bibliography and one process paper for their entry.

Title Page
The title page includes the following information. Do not include any additional information or illustrations on the title page.

- Title of the entry.
- Name(s) of the student(s) who developed the entry.
- Age division and category of the entry.
- Word count for each category:
  - Exhibit: The student-composed word count for the Exhibit and the total word count in the process paper.
  - Documentary and Performance: The total word count in the process paper.
  - Paper: The total word count for the Paper and process paper.
  - Website: This information will be on the homepage of your Website. Include the student-composed word count for Website, the total length of all multimedia, and the word count of the process paper.

It is important to come up with a good title for your entry. A good title will quickly introduce your topic, but also adds wording that helps the viewer understand your point of view.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>“Title”</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
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<td>Junior Division</td>
<td>Junior Division</td>
<td>Senior Division</td>
<td>Senior Division</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical Paper</td>
<td>Group Exhibit</td>
<td>Individual Performance</td>
<td>Individual Documentary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process Paper: 426 words</td>
<td>Process Paper: 410 words</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Process Paper
Students competing in any category must also write a process paper. The process paper is not a summary of the topic, but an essay that describes the process of how you developed the entry. Quotes, images, or captions are not allowed in the process paper. The process paper is no longer than 500 words, usually 4-5 paragraphs answering:

- How did you choose your topic and how does it relate to the annual theme?
- How did you conduct your research?
- How did you create your project?
- What is your historical argument?
- In what ways is your topic significant in history?

Annotated Bibliography
A bibliography is an alphabetized list of the sources used in developing a historical project. An annotated bibliography not only lists the sources, but also gives a 1-3 sentence description of each source and how you used it in your entry. A History Day bibliography should be separated into primary and secondary sources. For guidelines on bibliographic style, refer to A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations by Kate L. Turabian or the Modern Language Association of America (MLA) style guide.