A STUDENT GUIDE TO NATIONAL HISTORY DAY

Your Handbook for
Survival in the
Research Wilderness

National History Day in Wisconsin
2015-2016

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NHD NATIONAL HISTORY DAY

The Wisconsin Historical Society proud to sponsor
National History Day in Wisconsin.

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WISCONSIN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The National History Day in Wisconsin office at the Wisconsin Historical Society has based this guidebook upon the *Introducing National History Day* guidebook from National History Day in Minnesota.

WHAT IS NATIONAL HISTORY DAY?

National History Day (or NHD) is more than just a class project. It's your chance to be a historian, You will pick your own topic connected to the annual theme, find primary and secondary sources, and make your own argument about why your topic is significant in history. You will share your story through a format you enjoy: a paper, web site, exhibit, performance, or documentary.

The National History Day Process

The process of creating a National History Day project is probably similar to other research projects that you've created, but on a bigger scale. This handbook is designed to walk you through the important steps you'll take as you research, analyze, and present your historical conclusions. Everyone's journey will be a little bit different, but here are a few important steps that everyone will take along the way:

The Idea: A great research project begins with a great topic idea. Take your first step in the right direction by finding a topic that fits the theme, has plenty of sources, and is interesting to you.

Research: Research is the most important part of creating a project. Historians depend on research the same way that detectives need clues. This is the evidence you'll need to prove your "case."

Analysis: Once you've found information about your topic, you need to read it carefully and figure out what it's trying to tell you. Develop your own ideas and thesis about the significance of your topic.

Presentation: You've done all this hard work, now it's time to share it with others. What is the best way to share your argument and research? What techniques should you use to communicate it well?

The Annual Theme

Each year, National History Day has a new theme for students to explore. No matter where students live or what grade they're in, all National History Day projects will be united under this broad idea. The 2015-2016 the theme is **"Exploration, Encounter, Exchange in History."** As you select your NHD topic, think about the following definitions and ideas related to the theme.

- **Exploration** – What it means to take a risk and go somewhere new. This can be a physical exploration, like Lewis and Clark on their journey west, or an exploration of new ideas, concepts, or theories, like in scientific discovery.
- **Encounter** – What is found at the new place. New ideas, different cultures, or previously unknown plant or animal species are a few examples.
- **Exchange** – How the connections made through exploration and exchange influence the people, societies, cultures, and geographies that are connected.
- Don't forget — **IN HISTORY**. Look at topics that took place in the past, not current events. To create a good project, you need to look at the impact the topic had over time. In looking at current events, we don't yet know the long-term impact. As a general rule of thumb, try to look for topics that took place at least 20 years ago.

No matter what topic you pick, remember: Your topic **must** connect to this year's NHD theme!

- Some theme connections are better than others. Make sure you show the connection in the project itself.
- Work your theme connection into your thesis statement. This connection should be a central piece of your argument and your project!
- While you only have to include one of the theme words (exploration, encounter, or exchange), students who are looking to do well in the competition cycle would be wise to work the whole theme in!.

IDENTIFYING YOUR TOPIC

Selecting a Topic

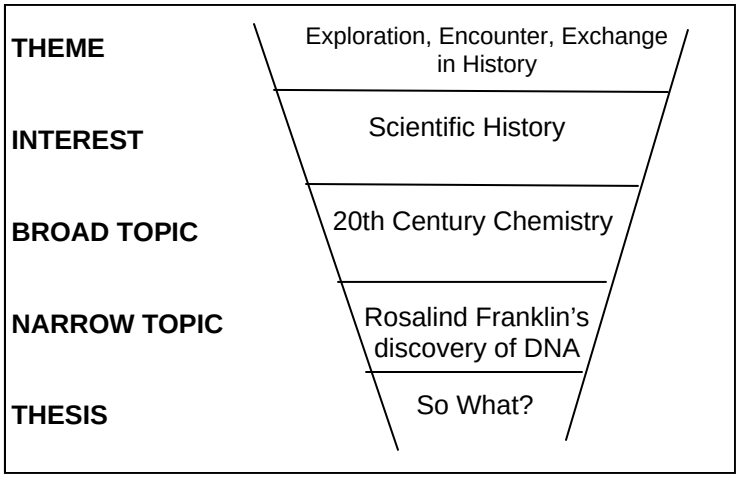
The key to an effective National History Day entry is the combination of a good topic and good sources. Here are some questions to think about when you select a topic to research:

- Can the topic fit the theme for this year?
- Does the topic truly interest you? *(Remember you will spend a lot of time researching this topic, so you might want to make a list of things you like or want to know more about.)*
- Can you find enough sources to document the topic?
- Why is this topic important in history? *(What do you want people to learn from your presentation?)*

Narrowing your Topic

A good way to choose a topic is to start with a general area of history you find interesting. This might be information you read about in your textbook, something you saw in a TV program or movie, or something related to family or community history. Once you define your interest, the next step is to narrow your general ideas into a focused topic.

Think about the theme and your general interests as a big funnel where you take something large and narrow it down into something smaller. Let's say your group is interested in women's history, but you realize that this is a **HUGE** topic. You know you have to narrow it down, but how?



BROAD TOPIC: There are many broad topics you could research within the history of science —many different scientific branches, how different cultures viewed science, how science has changed over time—and those are just a few. Perhaps your group decides to narrow it down to chemistry in the 1900s. This is a much more manageable topic, but is it narrow enough?

NARROW TOPIC: After some research, you realize that choosing one discovery would make a much more manageable project. The discovery of how DNA is structured was interesting to you, and it stars Rosalind Franklin and many people she encountered who doubted her or exploited her work.

THESIS: As you're working, you should notice that the funnel doesn't end with just "Rosalind Franklin." Just because you've selected your topic doesn't mean you're done narrowing. You still have to ask yourself "So what?" Why is your topic important in history? After doing this, you will be able to develop your thesis. We'll talk about this more on page nine.

National History Day Hint!

National History Day projects aren't huge. The final product you will create will be limited by size, word, and/or time limits. A narrow topic is important to help create a manageable project that you can easily research and present.

FINDING AND ORGANIZING INFORMATION

Research Strategy

As you start to gather information, it is important to have a research strategy. A good research strategy has two parts:

1. Research Sources: Finding sources of information
2. Research Organization: Keeping track of notes and sources

Research Sources

Historians try to find a variety of sources to help them understand the past. These include **primary** and **secondary** sources. Both of these types of sources are important to a good National History Day project. The following diagram should give you an idea about different types of primary and secondary resources:

PRIMARY SOURCES	SECONDARY SOURCES
Diaries	Biographies
Autobiographies	History Textbooks
Government Records	Media Documentaries
Photographs	Interviews with Scholars
Interviews with Participants	Books about the Topic
Manuscript Collections	Articles about the Topic
Newspapers from the Time Period	Most Web Sites
Letters	
Music from the Time Period	
Historic Objects	

Secondary Sources

Secondary sources are the places where you usually begin your research. Secondary sources are usually published books or articles by an author who makes a personal interpretation about a topic based on primary sources. **The writer is not an eyewitness to, or a participant in, the historic event**. The writer is sort of a middleman between you and the primary sources. It's important to begin your research with secondary sources because they will provide important background information about your topic, including important people, places, and dates that will help you as you search for more information. The footnotes and bibliographies of secondary sources will also lead you to primary sources.

National History Day Hint!
Start your research with a good secondary source, like a general book about the topic!

Primary Sources

Primary sources are **related to an event by time or participation** and have a direct relationship to your topic because they:

- were written or produced in the time period you are studying
- are eyewitness accounts of historic events
- are documents related to specific historic events
- are later recollections by participants in historic events

Evaluating Sources and Bias

The facts of history can be interpreted in many ways depending on the views and opinions of the person who witnesses or studies them. When the subjective views and opinions of the creator influence a source, the source is considered biased. Biased sources are not necessarily bad sources, but as a historian, you will need to be on the lookout for bias so that you can form your own interpretation rather than simply repeat the opinions of others. The perceptions of those who witness an event may lead to bias in primary sources, and the beliefs and opinions of historians can create bias in secondary sources. Remember, just because someone has written a book does not mean that his or her interpretation is the only correct view.

FINDING SOURCES

To find basic information on your topic in the preliminary stages of your research, you may consult an encyclopedia or the Internet… **but your search shouldn't end there!** Once you have a basic understanding of your topic, the best place to begin your search for sources is in your school or local library.

- **Encyclopedias** can give you a basic understanding of the topic and help you to create a list of key terms, people, locations, and dates.
- Your **librarian** or **media specialist** can help you find materials in the library.
- In addition to containing information, **books** and **articles** contain additional information about where you can continue your search. Books containing footnotes or a bibliography can provide you with listings of many other sources, both primary and secondary, relating to your topic. Be sure to write these listings down as possible sources that you can try to find later.

Taking your Research to the Next Level

Once you have collected the basic information and sources about your topic, it's time to take your research to the next level by locating unique sources. Photographs, interviews, and newspapers are just a few types of primary sources you should be looking for to enrich your project. Here are a few places you can look for these research treasures:

Municipal and College Libraries

Municipal and college libraries have many more resources than school libraries. These libraries are especially helpful because they have a wider variety of books and primary sources, such as old newspapers on microfilm, that you can use there or make copies to take with you. Be sure to bring money for copying, especially if you cannot check out books, as well as a flashdrive for scanning!

Historical Societies

If your topic is on Wisconsin history, a historical society may be helpful. The state and local historical societies specialize in collecting information about Wisconsin and local communities. In addition to state resources, the Wisconsin Historical Society also has many interesting primary sources on national topics and three world renowned collections: social action, mass communication, and organized labor. This means that there is a wealth of materials on the Civil Rights movement, the protest movements against the Vietnam War, and the reproductive rights/right to life movements. Letters, diaries, photographs, and other documents are but a few of the many materials available for your research. There may be special rules on how you may use some of these materials. It is best to telephone first or check their website to learn if the society's collections include information about your topic and to confirm the hours and procedures for research.

To search the holdings of the Wisconsin Historical Society and to obtain specific information on conducting research there, check out the website at: http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/libraryarchives/

Interviews

If your topic is recent enough to include people who are still alive and can provide informed opinions, you may want to conduct interviews with them. Interviewing professors or experts on your topic can also bring vey rewarding results.

- Contact your subject to set up a time and place to meet, or, if they cannot meet you in person, ask them to answer your questions over the phone or through email.
- Research the topic and write your questions in advance and be prepared to take notes or record the interview.
- Know enough about the topic to have specific questions in mind.

National History Day Hint!

Don't be afraid to ask for help. Even professional historians rely on the expertise of librarians and archivists as they try to find information. Your school or local library may have great information and it sometimes just takes a librarian to help you find it!

The Internet

The Internet has revolutionized the way we access information. For National History Day researchers, it offers a wonderful way to do some preliminary exploration of a topic or access to collections that would normally be out of reach.

Many historical societies and universities are digitizing collections of primary source material and making them available online. Check out the National History Day in Wisconsin web site to find links to collections like these or ask a librarian or archivist to help you find others:

http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Content.aspx?dsNav=N:1120

Evaluating Web Sites

Information on the Internet can vary widely in its quality and reliability. Anyone can create a web site and, unlike books, journals, and magazines, there may not be an editor or reviewer to make sure all the information is true. Therefore, it's especially important to evaluate the source of information you find on the Internet. Read secondary sources related to your topic and look and what other historians have to say in addition to Internet research. Ask yourself the following questions about each site you use:

1. What is this site about?
   Record its title for citation.

2. Who created this page?
   Consider the author's credentials. Record the author's name for citation.

3. Where is the information coming from?
   Consider the sponsoring institution for the page. Record the URL for citation.

4. Why is this site on the web?
   Consider how the site's purpose affects the information it offers.

5. When was the page or information created?
   Record the created/updated date and your date of visit for citation.

6. How accurate or credible is the page?
   If you think an online source is questionable, find the information elsewhere. Most information that's online can also be found offline in a library.

Tips for Internet Research

When using the web for research, it's important to remember that only a small fraction of all primary and secondary source materials that exist are available on the Internet. Think critically about what organizations, societies, or other repositories would have information about your topic and don't be afraid to contact them. Use a variety of source materials, including books, diaries, journals, photographs, interviews, articles, etc. This will help you move beyond basic research and into more scholarly materials.

Wikipedia, etc.

It's also important to understand how dynamic web sites, like Wikipedia, work. Anyone can submit content to be posted without editing or fact-checking the information. Basing your historical analysis solely on these sources will not provide solid support for your project. Wikipedia may be a good place to get some quick information to see if you're interested in selecting a topic, but you should not be basing your project on this source. Dig deeper!

National History Day Hint!

Try out **Google Books**—**http://books.google.com/**. This project is digitizing materials from libraries around the world, which can make it easier for you to find rich sources that were once out of reach. Some books are available in full, so it may be useful to see what you can find on your topic. Make sure to look at the **Wisconsin Connection:** The University of Wisconsin—Madison and the Wisconsin Historical Society are partners on this project, and it contains great local topics for you to research—**http://uwdc.library.wisc.edu/collections/WI/about**

RESEARCH STRATEGY: ORGANIZATION

Information is only valuable if you can record it and use it later. Before you begin your research, it's important to decide on an organizational strategy for your research. In the past, students have successfully used loose leaf paper, notebooks, index cards, or a computer to take notes on their research. No matter which system you select, make sure your method is flexible enough for you to work at school, home, or the library.

One of the most popular systems for students is the note card system. Use lined or plain index cards to record important information about your topic. Here are some examples of note cards for a bibliographic entry and research notes about a Wisconsin suffragist named Ada James.

Bibliography Secondary Source Book

McBride, Genevieve G. On Wisconsin Women. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1993.

This book contained information about Ada James and her efforts to win voting rights for women. It also described the history of the suffrage movement in the Wisconsin.

Important Pages: 133, 198-204, 207-208

1. Source Card:
Use one set of cards to record information about your sources that you will need for your **annotated bibliography**.

Ada James' Background and Early Suffrage Ideas — McBride, Pages 198-199

Ada James was a second-generation suffragist. She remembered attending suffrage meetings with her grandmother and great-grandmother.

Ada sent her uncle, a state legislator from Richland Center, to the Capital with a goal: to complete "the unfinished work my mother did." (James)

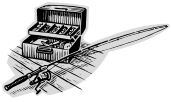
2. Note Card:
Use another set of cards to record **notes and quotes** that you find in your sources.

When you start working with a source, begin by copying down the important information on the source card, including title, author, publisher, publisher location, and date. Once you have copied down the important information, you can begin to take notes. Get a new card and write a brief description of the information on the top. Write the source and page number for these notes in the upper right hand corner. To avoid **plagiarism** make sure you note when you have copied down the author's words exactly. In most of your notes you will **paraphrase** the author's text. This means that you will write a short summary of the author's ideas in your own words.

Using note cards is a convenient research system because it is very flexible. Once you've completed your research, it's easy to sort your cards by topic and to see all the information you have on a particular idea. You can easily rearrange and order these cards as you begin to outline your argument and build your project.

National History Day Hint!

The note card system is just one of the many ways you can organize your information. It's important for your to find a system and stick to it. No matter how great your research is, if you can't find your notes you won't be able to put together your project!



WHAT'S YOUR POINT?— DEVELOPING A THESIS STATEMENT

National History Day projects should do more than just tell a story. Every exhibit, performance, documentary, web site, and paper should **make a point** about its topic. To do this in your project, you will need to develop your own argument about the historical impact of the person, event, or idea you are studying. The point you make could also be called a **thesis statement**. A thesis statement is not the same as a topic. Your thesis statement expresses your opinion about the impact and significance of your topic. Researchers start out with a topic and a research question, but they usually don't have a thesis statement right away. Instead, they develop their thesis over time as they learn more about their topic and make judgments about the evidence they find.

A good thesis statement does **three** things:

- **Addresses a narrow topic**
- **Expresses an opinion**
- **Evaluates significance**

For a demonstration, check out the building of the thesis statement below:
Step 1: "Westward Expansion."
This is not a thesis statement yet because it doesn't address a specific, narrow issue related to immigration to Milwaukee. What will the project examine? The first pioneers? Thomas Jefferson and the Louisiana Purchase? James K. Polk and how American territory was expanded to the Pacific Ocean? There are thousands of projects that a historian could research on this topic. It needs to be narrowed quite a bit before it can be used to build a thesis.

Step 2: "James K. Polk and the last stretch of Western expansion."
This is a nice and narrow topic, but it's still not a thesis. This phrase expresses no opinion and makes little argument about the significance of Polk and expansionism.

Step 3: "President James K. Polk's belief in Manifest Destiny push Americans to explore the West, physically and politically, where they encountered difficulty in their encounters with the native people and in annexing the land to be states."
This sentence is close to a thesis statement, but it isn't quite there yet. The thesis is specific, but could still use more information on how this topic is significant.

Step 4: "President James K. Polk's belief in Manifest Destiny push Americans to explore the West, physically and politically, where they encountered difficulty in their encounters with the native people and in annexing the land to be states. Thanks to Polk, America has the borders known today."
We have a winner! This thesis looks at a narrow topic, expresses an opinion, and evaluates the significance of the topic. A History Day project based on this thesis statement would discuss Polk's political work and show evidence that he influenced westward expansion as well as territorial annexation while examining the effects of this on the people whose land was taken in this expansion.

Testing Your Thesis

A thesis statement expresses an informed opinion. To test the strength of your thesis, think about what an opposing opinion might be. If someone could argue that your topic is not significant in history, or that it is significant for a different reason, how would you argue against their interpretation? Why is your view stronger?

To visualize and organize your ideas, try drawing a chart like this one on a piece of paper. Now consider the strength of each argument. Do you need more evidence to support your thesis statement? How will you deal with evidence that supports opposing arguments? Thinking about questions like these can help you decide what the next step in your research process should be.

My thesis:	Opposing arguments:
Evidence that supports my argument:	Evidence that supports opposing arguments:
Which argument is strongest? Why?	

THE PROCESS PAPER AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

National History Day entries in the exhibit, documentary, web site, and performance categories* must also include a process paper and bibliography. This paper introduces your topic, explains how you developed your entry, and documents your research. It is important to do a good job on this part of your entry because it is the first thing viewers will look at when they evaluate your work and may be the only part they take with them when they are done viewing your project and interviewing you. These supplemental materials include three parts: the title page, a process paper, and the annotated bibliography.

** The research paper category requires a title page and annotated bibliography, but does not include a process paper. See the* Contest Rule Book *for complete details.*

Title Page

The title page includes the title of your entry, name(s) of the student(s) who developed the entry, and the age division and category of the entry. It does not include your school, hometown, or teacher/class. It is important to come up with a good title for your entry. A good title will not only introduce your topic, but also helps the viewer understand your point of view. Including ideas from the theme in your title also helps show your topic's connection to it.

Process Paper

The process paper is a description of your research. *It is not a summary of your topic*, but an essay that describes the research you conducted and process of creating your entry. Use your 500 words to address these four topics:

- How you selected your topic
- How you conducted your research
- How you created your presentation
- How your topic fits this year's theme

Annotated Bibliography

A bibliography is an alphabetized list of sources you used to create your project. An **annotated bibliography** not only lists the sources, but also gives a short description of the source and how you used it in your entry. The National History Day annotated bibliography has three important characteristics:

1. **Primary vs. Secondary**: Your bibliography must be separated into primary and secondary sources. As you are creating your bibliography, think carefully about the correct category for each source. If a source could be classified as either primary or secondary, make sure to use your annotation to explain your reasoning to the judges. Refer to the list on page five if you need more help.

2. **Citations**: The citation is composed of all the vital information a researcher would need to know in order to find the same source that you used. This information, found on your bibliography cards, should be combined to form your annotated bibliography. You should format your citation in either MLA or Turabian style. For specific guidelines on bibliographic style you should refer to *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* by Kate L. Turabian, or the style guide of the Modern Language Association of America (MLA). Another great source is PurdueOWL, an online guide from Purdue University.

National History Day Hint!
It is much easier to create your bibliography if you don't wait until the night before. Record citation information and write brief notes for your annotations as you work with each source.

3. **Annotations**: The annotation for each source is a short description of the source and how you used it in your entry, usually one to three sentences long. Extensive annotations are not appropriate ways to get around the word limit. Annotations for Internet sources should also include a description of who sponsors the site.

Sample Citation and Annotation

McBride, Genevieve. *On Wisconsin Women: Working for Their Rights from Settlement to Suffrage.* Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005.

This book illuminated the important role Wisconsin women played in local, state, and national suffrage movements. It helped me understand how the suffrage movement in Wisconsin fit into the movement on a national level.

SELECTED PORTION OF AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

Commager, Henry Steele, ed. Documents of American History. New York: Meredith Corporation, 1968.

Two important documents were used: part of Jefferson's letter to Livingston, America's minister to France, with instructions for negotiating the purchase of New Orleans and the Floridas; and the treaty between France and the United States for the purchase of the Louisiana Territory. Both of these documents were placed on the project.

Historical Maps on File. New York: Facts on File Publication, 1984.

A historical map series with maps showing the exploration of the Mississippi River and North America in 1783, and western lands in 1802 and 1803. These maps were used on the project to show the growth of the U.S. and who claimed other parts of North America.

Message of President Thomas Jefferson concerning the cession of the province of Louisiana to the United States, Congress–Senate Records, Record Group 46; National Archives Building, Washington, D.C. [Online version on August 16, 2001, available through the online catalog at *http://www.nara.gov/nara/nail.html*] I used Jefferson's address to Congress to under stand the dynamics that existed between the executive and legislative branch in response to the Louisiana Purchase. This web site is sponsored by the National Archives.

Thomas Jefferson's Third Annual Message, A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents. New York: Bureau of National Literature, Inc., 1897.

I used part of Jefferson's third annual message to Congress where he talks about the Louisiana Purchase. This helped me understand that Jefferson compromised his beliefs by using his power to make treaties acquiring land. He would have preferred to have used the Constitution if it had a provision for land acquisition.

Secondary Sources

Carruth, Gordon, Editor. American Facts and Dates. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1972.

Brief entry on the Louisiana Purchase giving price paid and acreage purchased. I used this information for my list of statistics.

DeConde, Alexander. A History of American Foreign Policy. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1963.

The author discussed Jefferson's policies regarding U.S. relationships with Spain, France, and England during 1800-1803. This helped me to understand Jefferson's third annual message of October 17, 1803. I used a quote from this author in a caption.

Edwards, Mike W. Thomas Jefferson, National Geographic, February 1976.

This article is a pictorial overview of Jefferson's life with a brief mention of the conflict and compromise of the Constitution about acquiring property. I used three pictures from this article for my display.

Stokes, George. Louisiana, The World Book Encyclopedia, 1981, Vol. 10.

This article was useful for the history of Louisiana. A timeline of the important events was developed from this article and placed on the project.

"Thomas Jefferson, A Brief Biography," The Thomas Jefferson Foundation, accessed July 29, 2014, http://www.monticello.org/site/jefferson/thomas-jefferson-brief-biography

This is a short but detailed biography from the foundation that manages Jefferson's home, Monti-cello. I used this information when I described how Jefferson lived in the biography I wrote.

Harry W. Fritz (Professor at University of Montana, Missoula) interview by Sarah Fallon, July 20, 2014.

I talked with Harry W. Fritz. a historian who has written about Jefferson and Jefferson's time. I used quotes from this interview in my main argument.

PRESENTATION

Once you have completed your research, you need to design an effective project to share your conclusions with others. National History Day offers you five different categories through which you can share you work. Each category is unique and some categories may work better with certain topics. Keep these factors in mind as you choose which one you'll work with:

- **Historical Paper**
- **Web Site**
- **Exhibit**
- **Performance**
- **Documentary**

Group vs. Individual Project

Before beginning your project, you need to decide if you want to work as an **individual** or **group** to do your research and create your project. (National History Day officially allows groups of 2-5 students, but make sure to check with your teacher about your school's maximum limit for group size.) Take time to think about whether you work best alone or with others. You can create projects in all categories as either a group or individual except for historical papers, where you have to work on your own.

Choosing a Category

When selecting a category it is important to consider the following:

- 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 create your entry? *(This is especially important for documentaries and exhibits!)*
- Does your research fit one category better than another? *(For example, do you have enough pictures to create a documentary?)*

Once you have selected a category, try to look at examples created by other students. This may help give you ideas about the best way to present your topic. Your own creativity, in combination with good research, will make your presentation stand out.

Regardless of the category you choose, keep in mind that the most important part of any entry is its historical quality. Avoid getting so caught up in the production or creation of your project that you lose sight of the importance of historical quality. Judges are not looking for glitzy productions. They are looking for solid research and a thorough analysis of the topic.

The National History Day *Contest Rule Book*

After choosing your category be sure to consult the National History Day *Contest Rule Book* for more information relating to your entry. The *Contest Rule Book* also describes the judging criteria for evaluating History Day entries. You can find it at nhd.org or through us here http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/pdfs/nhd/NHDContestRuleBook2014.pdf

MORE ABOUT NATIONAL HISTORY DAY CATEGORIES

PAPERS

The process of writing the historical research paper is similar to other papers you may have written, but on a larger scale. When finished, your project will be similar to an article written by a historian. The research and writing skills you develop writing a paper will be essential throughout the rest of your academic career, as well as life.

The historical paper category is great for students who enjoy writing and don't mind working alone on their project. This category is best for topics that may have limited visual materials available or that can be presented well without much visual support.

THE BASICS

- No less than 1,500 words and no more than 2,500 (about 6-10 pages).
- Grammatically correct and well-written.
- Contains citations to document work (footnotes, endnotes, or other internal documentation).
- Typed, printed, or legibly handwritten on plain, white, 8.5 by 11-inch paper with 1-inch margins.
- Be sure to check the *Contest Rule Book* for additional requirements and guidelines.

WEB SITES

The web site category is the newest and most interactive of all the National History Day categories and gives you a chance to use web design software and computer technology to communicate your topic's significance in history. A National History Day web site is more than a just paper on the web and it's not simply an exhibit made into a web page. A National History Day web site allows you to present a variety of information, evidence (text, illustrations, documents, media, etc), and interactive elements in a format that is become increasingly popular for historical scholarship.

This category is great for students who enjoy working with computers and are interested in learning how to build web sites. Students in this category will need to have access to a computer with an Internet connection either at school or at home and should be aware of where they will need to do the majority of their work. This category is best for topics that have a variety of illustrations, documents, media, and potential for interactive elements.

THE BASICS

- Built using the NHD Web Site Editor beginning at the school level.
- No more than 1,200 visible, student composed words.
- No larger than 100 MB.
- Is an original student production.
- Be sure to check the *Contest Rule Book* for additional requirements and guidelines.

More detailed guides to each contest category—including full rules, presentation strategies, and tips are available online:

www.wisconsinhistory.org/Content.aspx?dsNav=N:1120

MORE ABOUT NATIONAL HISTORY DAY CATEGORIES

DOCUMENTARIES

A documentary should reflect your ability to use audiovisual equipment to communicate your topic's significance, like a professional documentary. With the increasing popularity and availability of computer-based video editing software, TV-style documentaries are becoming most common for National History Day documentaries. PowerPoint slideshows are also allowed, although students who create slideshows will need to put extra effort into designing a presentation that combines visual images and recorded narrative effectively.

The documentary category is great for students who are interested in working with computers and documentary technology. Students should have access to PowerPoint or video editing software, such as iMovie, Windows Movie Maker, or Adobe Premiere at home or school and should be aware of where they will need to do the majority of their work.

While many different types of topics can be effectively presented through the documentary category, this category is best for topics that have a variety of illustrations, documents, media, and other visual materials.

THE BASICS

- No more than 10 minutes long.
- Your entry must be student-produced.
- You must have credits at the end of your documentary.
- Your entry must be self-run. No live narration is allowed during the presentation at a competition.
- Be sure to check the *Contest Rule Book* for additional requirements and guidelines.

PERFORMANCES

The performance category allows you to create a historical play with dramatic appeal, but not at the expense of historical information. Innovative performances have made this category a highlight of many National History Day events. Performance category presentations are not simply oral reports. You will write a script, choose costumes and develop characters to convey a historical argument.

Drama-loving students who enjoy being on stage will definitely enjoy the performance category. A wide variety of topics can be effectively presented in the performance category. If you are considering this category, brainstorm characters or scenes that you can use to present your argument as well as historical evidence that you can incorporate into your performance as support for it.

THE BASICS

- Must be an original production.
- May not exceed 10 minutes.
- Be sure to check the *Contest Rule Book* for additional requirements and guidelines.

More detailed guides to each contest category—including full rules, presentation strategies, and tips are available online:

www.wisconsinhistory.org/Content.aspx?dsNav=N:1120

MORE ABOUT NATIONAL HISTORY DAY CATEGORIES

EXHIBITS

An exhibit is a visual representation of your research and interpretation of your topic's significance in history, much like a small version of an exhibit you would see in a museum. The information should be displayed in an easy-to-understand and attractive manner that uses a variety of text and illustrative sources as support for your argument.

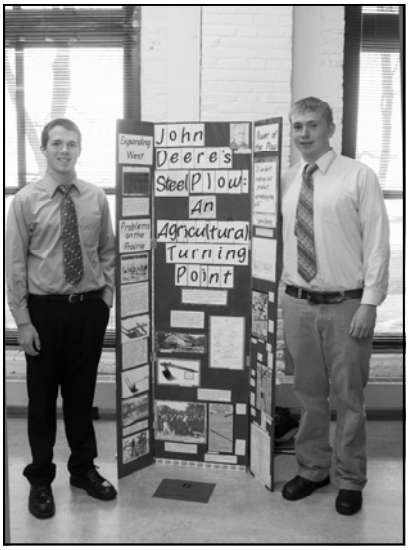
The exhibit category is great if you enjoy creating things with your hands and visually building an argument. You should have access to exhibit creation supplies, such as poster or exhibit board, construction paper, a printer, scissors, adhesives, etc.

If you're interested in the exhibit category, you should think about how your topic fits with this presentation style. Are there photographs, documents or other illustrative material that would work well on an exhibit to support your argument? Remember—you are only allowed include 500 words that *you write* on your exhibit. This includes any titles, captions and text. You are allowed to include a wide variety of items that you did not write, which do not count against your word limit. Newspaper articles, letters from historical figures, etc. are all items that would not count against your word limit and could provide great evidence to support your argument.

- Many students will include quotes from primary sources as part of their exhibit. This extra evidence will not count against their word limit and will help them to support their argument.

THE BASICS

- The overall size of your exhibit when displayed must be no larger than 40 inches wide, 30 inches deep and 6 feet high.
- The analysis and interpretation in your exhibit should be clear and evident to the viewer.
- There is a 500-word limit that applies to all text that you create and put on your exhibit. This includes all text you write for titles, captions, subtitles, timelines, etc.
- Be sure to check the *Contest Rule Book* for additional requirements and guidelines.



More detailed guides to each contest category—including full rules, presentation strategies, and tips are available online:
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SHARING YOUR WORK

National History Day Competitions

In addition to sharing your work with your teacher, classmates, and family, you have the option of sharing your research with other National History Day students at a series of competitive events that take place each spring. Beginning with a school or regional event, you can progress to the state or even national competitions.

More than just competing for prizes, National History Day events give you a chance to share your hard work with other students, historians, professors, educators, and other community members. These judges volunteer their time to talk to you about your research and learn about the conclusions you have drawn about the past.

At a National History Day competition, you will have the chance to share your project with the judges and the judges will have a chance to interview you about your project. They will ask you questions about how you researched and developed your project. Don't be nervous about the interview! Judges will just want to learn more about your project and may ask you questions like "How did you select your topic?" or "How does your project relate to this year's theme?" Besides, by the time you arrive at a competition, you will be an expert on your topic!

Judging & Evaluation Criteria

When evaluating an entry, National History Day judges are looking at how well your project meets the criteria for National History Day. The criteria are weighed as follows:

- **Historical Quality—60%**: This is the most important part of your entry and includes a variety of important elements. The information in your entry should be historically accurate. Your project should clearly show your analysis and interpretation of your topic. You should place your topic in historical context. Judges will also look at your bibliography to evaluate your research. They will be looking to see that you have consulted a variety of sources, including available primary sources.
- **Relation to Theme—20%**: Your entry must clearly explain how your topic is related to the theme.
- **Clarity of Presentation—20%**: Your entry should be presented in an effective and clear manner for the judges. Organization, neatness, and good communication are a few keys to making sure your argument is clear to the judges.
- **Rule Compliance**: It's important that you know that the specific category rules are for your entry and to make sure that your project doesn't violate them. At a competition, a judge is able to count words, measure, or time and to count any violations against your project's ranking.

Check out the *Contest Rule Book* for more information on the judging process.

Comment Sheets & Revisions

After each competition, you will get comment sheets back from the judges. These sheets are filled with ideas and feedback about your project, including both strengths and areas for improvement. These sheets will give you great feedback if you are moving on to the next level of competition with ideas on how you can improve your project before the next event. If your project has not moved on to the next level, these sheets will give you ideas as to how you might improve your work… and hopefully give you ideas as to what you might want to do if you participate in National History Day in the future!

HOW TO SUBMIT YOUR HISTORICAL PAPER

For paper students only: PAPER SUMBISSIONS ARE NOW ONLINE. This process was used for the first time in 2015, and will be done again. Please follow the instructions below carefully to submit your paper correctly before the deadline.

STEP ONE

Save your paper as a **Word Document** or **PDF**.

You paper must include your **Title Page**, **Essay**, and **Bibliography**. All three of these items must be saved in **ONE DOCUMENT.** Separate documents or entries will not be accepted.

Because of formatting changes and the ability GoogleDocs provides to students to edit papers even after sharing their work, other files will NOT be accepted, including GoogleDocs. GoogleDrive gives users the option to save as a Word of PDF.

STEP TWO

Save your paper in this format: **DIVISON, NAME, TITLE**

For example: The student's name in John Smith. He is in 7th grade, so he competes in the Junior Division, and he wrote a paper on Lewis and Clark called "Lewis & Clark: Exploring the American West."

This paper would be saved as:

JuniorDivision,JohnSmith,LewisandClarkExploringtheAmericanWest**.**

It is long, but it allows student's papers to be filed correctly. **If papers are not submitted this way, they may not be received by the correct judges** as many students may choose similar topics**.**

STEP THREE

Create an email addressed to **nhdinwi@gmail.com**

STEP FOUR

Title the email in this way: **CONTEST, DIVISION, NAME, TITLE**.

For example: the subject line of John Smith's, who lives in Kenosha and is attending the Southeastern Regional in Milwaukee, email would read: Milwaukee Regional, Junior Division, John Smith, Lewis & Clark: Exploring the American West.

If John made it to State, his submission would read: State, Junior Division, John Smith, Lewis & Clark: Exploring the American West.

DO NOT title the email "My NHD Paper," or "Historical Paper Entry." If the subject line of the email is not titled correctly, similar to the title of the paper, **it may be lost**.

STEP FIVE

Attach your paper, saved as a Word or PDF file and titled as instructed above, to the email you created in Step Three and titled in Step Four.

STEP SIX

Send the email. That's it!

You will NOT receive a confirmation email. To confirm your email was sent correctly, please check your "Sent" folder of your email and double check each step above. If you have registered for the contest and the office is missing your paper, you will be contacted.

Any questions you have about NHD should be addressed to Sarah Fallon at

Sarah.Fallon@wisconsinhistory.org
(608)264-6487

THINK YOU'RE READY TO SURVIVE IN THE RESEARCH WILDERNESS?

We're happy to have you participating in History Day this year and excited to see your work! As you go through the National History Day process, keep these "survival tips" in mind:

✓ **Secondary Sources Before Primary Sources**
Beginning your research with secondary sources will give you the background information you need in order to understand where to look for primary sources and what they mean. More than just an encyclopedia or a web site, a general book on your topic is often a great place to start for a full picture of your topic.

✓ **Go Beyond Google**
This is your chance to **be** a historian, take advantage of it! Really dig in and see what you can discover. Try to find some unique or interesting primary sources. Librarians and archivists are just a phone call or email away if you need help.

✓ **Put it into Context**
Nothing happens in isolation and the same is true of your National History Day topic. Think about the historical context for your topic. What people, issues, events, or movements may have influenced or lead to your topic's development? You need to understand the historical context for your topic in order to understand it's impact and change in history!

✓ **The Project Must Stand Alone**
No matter which category you're participating in, your argument (or thesis) must be clear in your project itself. You cannot rely on being there to tell the viewer what your project is about or why your topic is significant in history. The viewer should be able to figure it out just by looking at your project. A good check for this is to ask someone (a friend or family member) who hasn't seen your project before to take a look at it. Once they're done looking, ask them what *they* thought your argument was. If they can't tell you, you probably need to make it more clear in your project.

✓ **Revisions**
Just because you're "done" doesn't mean you can't change your project. Don't be afraid to ask other people to look at your work and ask for feedback. After each competition you will also get comment sheets back from the judges full of ideas for improvement. Take these ideas into consideration as you revise your work.

✓ **Don't Be Afraid to Ask for Help**
When you're frustrated or feel like you've hit a wall, there are plenty of people to help you. Your teacher and school or city librarian are some of the first people you should talk to if you're having trouble. In addition, National History Day in Wisconsin and Wisconsin Historical Society staff members are always available and willing to answer any questions you have about the program or help you through any research problems. Just give us a call!

Have Fun!
Believe it or not, National History Day can be a lot of fun if you let yourself enjoy the experience!

National History Day in Wisconsin
Wisconsin Historical Society
816 State Street
Madison, WI 53706

Email: historyday@wisconsinhistory.org
Phone: (608) 264-6487
Web: www.wisconsinhistory.org/teachers/historyday/