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

Updated: Summer 2016

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. Choose your own topic connected to the annual theme, find primary and secondary sources, and make an argument about why your topic is significant in history. You’ll share your story through a format you enjoy: a paper, website, 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. Here are a few important steps that you’ll take:

The Annual Theme: “Taking a Stand in History.”

The 2016-2017 theme is “Taking a Stand in History.” As you think about possible NHD topics, think about how they connect to the theme.

- **What does it mean to take a stand?** A person or group or organization must have taken a firm position on an issue and then have taken action that impacted history.
- **A “movement” can take a stand.** Grassroots movements can start small and become something larger and become part of a historical era.
- **“In History” is important.** Look at the impact the topic had over time. With recent events, such as 9/11, we don’t yet know the long-term impact. Look for topics that took place at least 20 years ago and have impacted history. Your project will describe how your topic changed and affected history, both short-term and longer term.

No matter what topic you pick, remember: Your topic must connect to this year’s NHD theme.

- Ask your teacher or advisor for a copy of this year’s Theme Sheet. Re-read it frequently.
- Work your theme connection into your thesis statement.
- Throughout your project, support your thesis using facts, analysis, and language related to the theme.

**NHD Time Saver: List of Theme Language**

Create a list of the theme words and phrases. Start with a thesaurus for synonyms. As you research, write down theme-like language and quotes from historians and “people who were there.” Incorporate those words into your analysis and project. For example, a Civil Rights Movement marcher’s quote of “We protested the government’s authority because we wanted change,” adds variety and historical meaning to your project.
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?
- Can you find enough good sources? If you are struggling to find sources, talk with your teacher or advisor about your research strategy and possibly changing your topic. Sooner is better than later.
- Why is this topic important in history? What do you want people to learn from your project?

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 the history of civil rights, but you realize this is a HUGE topic. You know you have to narrow it down, but how?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THEME</th>
<th>“Taking a Stand in History”</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INTEREST</td>
<td>Civil Rights</td>
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<td>BROAD TOPIC</td>
<td>Civil Rights Leaders and Events</td>
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<td>NARROW TOPIC</td>
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<tr>
<td>THESIS</td>
<td>“So What?”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**BROAD TOPIC:** Perhaps you are working on a group Exhibit and your group decides to narrow it down to the people who protested at important events during the civil rights movement. Is this topic narrow enough to be workable?

**NARROW TOPIC:** Your early research keeps bringing you back to activist Rosa Parks, the woman who is best known for refusing to give up her seat on the bus. You learn that many events and changes took place before and after that iconic event. Knowing that your Exhibit will be limited to 500 of your own words, you decide to focus on how Rosa Parks and the Montgomery Bus Boycott became important symbols of the modern Civil Rights Movement.

**THESIS:** As you research and analyze, you’ll continue to narrow your topic. Ask “So What? Why was my topic important in history?” Throughout, you’ll develop your thesis statement. You may decide to focus even further on Parks’ historical impact in raising awareness of segregation and the civil rights struggle.

**NHD Time Saver: You Don’t Need to Know Everything**
National History Day projects have time, word, or size limits. A narrow topic is important to help create a manageable project that you can easily research and present. While it would impossible to create a 10-minute documentary on the entire women’s suffrage movement, your topic could be narrowed to how Alice Paul took a bold stand for equal voting rights, which helped lead to the passage of the 19th Amendment to the United States Constitution, which helped lead to more women’s rights.
FINDING AND ORGANIZING INFORMATION

Research Strategy
As you start to gather information, it is important to have a two-part research strategy:
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 primary sources and secondary sources to understand the past.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRIMARY SOURCES</th>
<th>SECONDARY SOURCES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Biographies</td>
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<td>Autobiographies</td>
<td>History Textbooks</td>
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<td>Government Records</td>
<td>Media Documentaries</td>
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<td>Photographs</td>
<td>Interviews with Scholars</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interviews with Participants</td>
<td>Books about the Topic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Manuscript Collections</td>
<td>Articles about the Topic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspapers and Magazines from the Time Period</td>
<td>Most websites</td>
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<tr>
<td>Letters</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Music from the Time Period</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historic Objects</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

Secondary Sources
Begin your research with secondary sources. These are usually 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. You'll learn background information, including important people, places, and dates. The footnotes and bibliographies of secondary sources will also lead you to primary sources.

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
Just because someone has written a book or created a website does not mean that his or her interpretation is the only correct view ... or even an accurate account of history. When the opinions of the author 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. Simply put, some sources will be much better than others — spend your time with sources that are more reliable.
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 very 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.

NHD Time Saver: Ask for Assistance

Don't be afraid to ask for help. Librarians, media specialists, and museum staff are happy to help with research. Ask a librarian to order a book that isn’t on the shelves. Send an email to someone at an online archives. Ask your teacher how to efficiently find a few good sources online.
The Internet
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 student website to find links to collections like these or ask a librarian or archivist to help you find other research materials:

Evaluating Websites
Information on the Internet can vary widely in its quality and reliability. Anyone can create a website 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 at what other historians have to say in addition to Internet research. Ask yourself the following questions about each site you use:

From the beginning: Keep a document or spreadsheet of all the sources you review. Take enough notes and cut-paste a few key parts of each website. This will make it much easier to find later for more research and possible citation in your bibliography.

1. Why is this site on the web?
   Ask: Does this website help me with my topic and this year’s NHD theme?
   Do: If yes, take some notes, including the title and URL. If no, make a quick note of the name and URL so you don’t return to this site later.

2. Who created this page? Where is the information from?
   Consider the author’s credentials. Note the name of the author or the sponsor/owner (such as a university or archives or museum collection).

3. When was the page or information created?
   If known, note the year that the site was updated. Also note the date you looked at the site; you might need this date for your bibliography.

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.
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! If your teacher says it’s okay to start with Wikipedia, use it to focus on this year’s theme connection and move quickly to the other sources provided within the Wikipedia page.

NHD Time Saver: Online Results in Just a Few Minutes
Try out Google Books: http://books.google.com/ . Some books are available in full. Even a partial version of a book can be valuable. Take five minutes to try this search: rosa parks impact history . You’ll see many books. This first one is titled “The Rebellious Life of Mrs. Rosa Parks.” (Hmm, sounds quite Theme-like, doesn’t it?). Look at the available pages online. Notice this quote: “... We had to take a stand...”). In just a few minutes, you have found invaluable and reliable information! Ask your librarian about requesting this book — and the others like it.

Check out the Wisconsin Connection: The University of Wisconsin—Madison and the Wisconsin Historical Society are partners on this project. You’ll find great local topics and sources: https://uwdc.library.wisc.edu/ and https://uwdc.library.wisc.edu/collections/wi/
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. Students have successfully used loose leaf paper, notebooks, index cards, or an online notes tool. Make sure your method works at school, home, and anywhere else you might be working.

One of the most popular systems for students is the note card system: either actual index cards or an online/electronic note taker. Here are sample note cards for a bibliographic entry and research notes about a Wisconsin suffragist named Ada James.

Bibliography

Book with info about Ada James and her efforts to win voting rights for women. Describes 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.

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

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)

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 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.

NHD Time Saver: Organization now, be happier later
The note card system is just one of the many ways you can organize your information. The most important thing is to find a system and stick to it. Some students prefer to keep their information online; if you do, make sure you backup all your hard work and that you can access it from home or other non-school locations.

Advice from NHD students who learned the hard way: “Take a few minutes to take notes when you find something you like—you’ll thank yourself later. Three months from now, you probably won’t recall the website where you found a great quote or the best map.”
WHAT’S YOUR POINT?— DEVELOPING A THESIS STATEMENT

Every NHD exhibit, performance, documentary, website, and paper should make a point about its topic. Over time, you will develop your own arguments about the historical impact of the person, event, or idea you are studying. The point you make could also be called a thesis statement. 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 strong NHD thesis statement does three things:

• Addresses a narrow topic that connects to the theme
• Expresses an opinion that relates to the theme
• Evaluates significance in history

Step 1: “Labor rights for farm workers.”
This is not a thesis statement yet because it doesn’t address a specific, narrow issue. Which farm workers? Where and when were they working?

Step 2: “Cesar Chavez fought for farm workers’ rights.”
Getting closer! You have a broad topic that will need to be narrowed a bit, but you still don’t have a thesis statement. This phrase expresses no opinion and makes little argument about the significance of Chavez’s work.

Step 3: “Labor activist Cesar Chavez took a stand for farm workers’ rights when he lead non-violent protests in the 1960s and 1970s.”
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. Your school might have a requirement that a thesis statement be one sentence. NHD, however, allows more than once sentence — ask your teacher for advice.

Step 4: “Civil rights activist Cesar Chavez changed labor and social history through non-violent protests, such as boycotts, against working conditions for many farm workers during the 1960s and 1970s. Chavez inspired others to take a stand to change laws and policies, leaving a legacy that continues today.

We have a winner! This thesis looks at a narrow topic, expresses an opinion, and evaluates the significance of the topic—and clearly connects to this year’s theme of “Taking a Stand in History.”

Testing Your Thesis
A thesis statement expresses an informed opinion. To test the strength of your thesis, think about an opposing opinion.

Try drawing a chart like the one below. 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?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My thesis:</th>
<th>Opposing arguments:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evidence that supports my argument:</td>
<td>Evidence that supports opposing arguments:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which argument is strongest? Why?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Your thesis statement will — and should— evolve over time. Early in your project, start by writing phrases and ideas. As your research and analysis become more specific, so will your thesis statement.

Advice from NHD students who learned the hard way: “Wait until nearly the end to finalize your thesis statement. Until then, estimate how many words or how much space it will take in your project. I regretted typing it up and pasting it onto my Exhibit board in December. By the contest time, I had to tear that part off because I had improved it. Actually, I wish I’d waited to paste ANYthing on my board until I was sure it was my final version.”
THE PROCESS PAPER AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

National History Day entries in the exhibit, documentary, website, and performance categories* must include a process paper and bibliography. 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. 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 [NHD 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 a 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 will 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.

3. **Annotations**: The annotation for each source is a short description of the source and how you used it in your entry, usually one or two sentences. 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**


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**
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.

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 understand the dynamics that existed between the executive and legislative branch in response to the Louisiana Purchase. This website is sponsored by the National Archives.

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

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.

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.

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.

This is a short but detailed biography from the foundation that manages Jefferson’s home, Monticello. 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.
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 your work. Some categories may work better for certain topics. You can choose from among:

- Historical Paper
- Website
- Exhibit
- Performance
- Documentary

**Group vs. Individual Project**

Before beginning your project, you need to decide if you want to work as an **individual** or as a **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 as an individual, except for historical papers, which can only be created by an individual.

**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 images to create a documentary?)*

Once you have selected a category, 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.

**Sample Project Examples** from Wisconsin students

Regardless of the category you choose, keep in mind that the most important part of any entry is its 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 [NHD Contest Rule Book](http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/pdfs/nhd/NHDContestRuleBook2014.pdf) for more information relating to your entry and judging criteria.

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 fewer than 1,500 words and no more than 2,500 words (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.
- Follows additional requirements in the NHD Contest Rule Book.

WEBSITES

A National History Day website 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 websites. 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 free Weebly NHD Site Editor, starting from the school level
- No more than 1,200 visible, student-composed words (pages 23-25, 31 of the Rule Book).
- No larger than 100 MB
- Is an original student production
- Follows additional requirements in the NHD Contest Rule Book

Words count. At the contests, judges will be counting words. Learn how to include captions, citations, and credits—and how to count the words. If you have any questions about word count, ask!

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

**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, Sony Vegas, or Adobe Premiere at home or school and should be aware of where they will need to do the majority of their work. Count on quiet time outside of class for narration.

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

- Must be 10 minutes or less, including credits.
- Must be student-produced.
- Must credits at the end of your documentary (see the Rule Book page 30 for an example)
- Must be self-run. No live narration is allowed during the presentation at a competition.
- Must follow additional requirements in the [NHD Contest Rule Book](#).

### 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

- May not exceed 10 minutes.
- Must follow additional requirements in the [NHD Contest Rule Book](#).

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

MORE ABOUT NATIONAL HISTORY DAY CATEGORIES

EXHIBITS

An exhibit is a visual representation of your research and an 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. These “student-composed” words include all the text you write for titles, captions, subtitles, timelines, etc. Please seek advice on how to include and count words for captions, citations, and credits.
- See the NHD Contest Rule Book for additional requirements. See pages 23-25 for word count information. If you have any questions about word count, ask!

More detailed guides to each contest category—including full rules, presentation strategies, and tips are available online: http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/pdfs/nhd/guide_exhibit.pdf
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 historians, professors, educators, and community members. The 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. During a brief and informal interview, the judges will ask questions about how you researched and developed your project. 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?” While this may seem a bit daunting, try not to be too nervous. 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.
- **Rules 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 an Exhibit, or time a performance. Violations will be counted against your project’s ranking.

Check out the [NHD Contest Rule Book](#) for more information on the judging process.

Comments & Revisions
After each competition, you will get comments from the judges. While the judging process might differ at school events, at the Regional and State levels students will receive [NHD Evaluation Forms](#). The judges will note your project’s strengths and possible areas for improvement. If your project is moving on to the next level of competition, you are encouraged to use this feedback for revisions.

If your project has not moved on to the next level, that’s okay. You’ve learned a lot—and if you decide to participate in NHD in the future, you’ll have a good start!
HOW TO SUBMIT YOUR HISTORICAL PAPER

For Paper students only: your projects will be submitted online. Please follow the instructions below carefully to submit your paper correctly before your registration 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 document or as a PDF.

STEP TWO
Save your paper in this format: DIVISION, NAME, TITLE
For example: The student’s name in David Florez. He is in 7th grade, so he competes in the Junior Division. His paper is titled wrote a paper on Lewis and Clark called “The Flying Tigers Protect the Burma Road.”
This paper would be saved as:
JuniorDivision,DavidFlorez,FlyingTigersProtecttheBurmaRoad.
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.

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 David Florez’s, who lives in Kenosha and is attending the Southeastern Regional in Milwaukee, email would read: Milwaukee Regional, Junior Division, David Florez, The Flying Tigers Protect the Burma Road.
If David’s project is selected for the State contest, his submission would read: State, Junior Division, David Florez, The Flying Tigers Protect the Burma Road.

Please 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:
HistoryDay@WisconsinHistory.org
(608)264-6487
THINK YOU’RE READY TO SURVIVE IN THE RESEARCH WILDERNESS?

We’re happy to have you participating in National History Day this year. We look forward to seeing 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 website, 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 an email away—they like to 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 its 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.

- **Make 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.

- **Have Fun!**
  National History Day can be a lot of fun. Enjoy the experience!

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**National History Day in Wisconsin**
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Madison, WI 53706

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