



## PAPER CATEGORY: JUDGING CRITERIA AND RULES

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*Revised Oct. 2014*

Thank you for agreeing to serve as a judge for the National History Day (NHD) contest. Some of our finest young historians have labored for months preparing their entries and are eager to share their outstanding historical research and conclusions with you.

### PURPOSE OF JUDGING

NHD's goal is to provide young people with a high quality educational experience—whether or not they win a prize. It is critical that your interactions with the students be fair, helpful, and positive. Your spoken and written comments are fundamental to the learning process.

Together we succeed or fail based on the quality of the learning experience.

### YOUR PROCESS

Follow your NHD coordinator's instructions for pre-contest evaluation procedure.

### EVALUATING PAPERS

A paper is the traditional form of presenting historical research and interpretation. In addition to traditional research papers, various forms of creative writing are permitted (for example, fictional diaries, poems, etc.), but must conform to all general and category rules. Papers should be grammatically correct and well written.

No matter how impressively the students handle themselves during the interview, please remember that the entry itself should be able to stand alone. Answers to questions should not overshadow the material presented in the entry.

### JUDGING CRITERIA

#### ***Historical Quality – 60%***

This is by far the most important factor in judging a paper. It refers to the research, analysis, and interpretation of the topic. The paper should be historically accurate. It should not simply recount facts but interpret and analyze them; that is, the entry should have a strong thesis or argument. In addition, it should place the topic into historical context—the intellectual, physical, social, and cultural setting. The entry also should reflect historical perspective—the causes and consequences of an event, for example, or the relationship of a local topic to larger events. The best entries will use a variety of both primary and secondary sources and will consider multiple viewpoints (e.g., those who suffered as well as those who benefited, males and females, people from different racial, ethnic, or socioeconomic groups, etc.) as appropriate to the topic.

Primary sources are materials directly related to a topic by time or participation. These materials include letters, speeches, diaries, contemporaneous newspaper articles, oral history interviews, documents, photographs, artifacts, or anything else that provides first-hand accounts about a person or event. This definition also applies to primary sources found on the Internet. A letter written by President Lincoln in 1862 is a primary source for a student researching the Civil War era. An article about the Vietnam War published in 2001 and not written by an eyewitness or participant about his or her experience is not a primary source. An interview with an expert (a professor of Vietnamese history, for example) is not a primary source UNLESS that expert actually lived through and has firsthand knowledge of the events being described. Primary materials such as quotes from historical figures or photographs of historical events, when found in secondary sources, can be used effectively in NHD projects; however, these are not considered primary sources.

### ***Relation to the Theme – 20%***

The entry must clearly relate to the annual theme and demonstrate why the topic is significant in history. Do not confuse fame with significance. Local history topics may not be well known but may represent larger trends or events. The paper should draw conclusions about the topic's significance. In other words, the entry should answer the questions, "So what? Why was this important?" It should not be just descriptive.

### ***Clarity of Presentation – 20%***

This relates to the paper's writing quality and overall appearance. Is the paper well organized and logical? Are the sectional divisions and main points easy to discern? Are citations used properly? Is the paper grammatical, spelled correctly, and neatly presented?

## **CONTEST RULES**

These are the rules to which all students must adhere in developing their entries. Please note the difference between a simple violation of these rules and a disqualifying offense:

**Rule Infraction:** A violation of any of the rules stated in the *Contest Rule Book*. Judges will take any rule infractions into consideration in their final rankings. Failure to comply with the rules will count against the entry but will only result in disqualification as delineated below. Any rule infractions should be corrected before a winning entry competes in the next level of competition.

Interpretation:

- Major violations are those which give an entry a substantial advantage over other entries, for example, significantly exceeding time requirements, word limits, and size requirements or having unauthorized outside assistance (e.g., someone else operating editing equipment, etc.). Major violations should result in lower rankings.
- Minor violations are those which can be easily remedied and which do not confer a competitive advantage, for example, putting the school name on the title page, exceeding time requirements by a few seconds, using inconsistent citation formats, etc. Minor violations can be treated with some leniency, especially at the local levels where you may choose to note them without imposing a penalty. At the affiliate level, enforcement of the rules should be stricter, however, one or two minor violations should not keep an entry which is clearly the best in its category from advancing to the National Contest. At all levels, if two entries are otherwise equal in quality, the entry with fewer violations should be rated more highly.

**Disqualification:** Removal of an entry from competition. A project may be disqualified from the contest

on three grounds:

1. Plagiarizing all or part of the NHD project. Please note that failing to give proper credit is plagiarism.
2. Reusing, individually or as a group, a project (or research from a project) from a previous year, or entering a project in multiple contests or entry categories within a contest year.
3. Tampering with any part of the project of another student.

If you feel an entry has reason to be disqualified, please contact the contest coordinator, who will make the final determination.

## GENERAL RULES

**Annual Theme:** An entry must clearly relate to the annual theme and explain the topic's significance in history.

Interpretation:

- Entries that do not relate to the theme at all should not win, since adherence to the theme counts 20% in judging.
- If a topic is only tangentially related to the theme, you should take that into account when evaluating the entry. An example of a tangential topic is "Pickett's Migration at the Battle of Gettysburg" for the theme "Migration in History."
- If an entry is merely descriptive and does not analyze the topic's causes and consequences, you should take that into consideration when ranking it.
- While entries should clearly relate to the annual theme, they often do not need to address every aspect of the theme. For the theme, "Rights and Responsibilities," students could examine rights OR responsibilities; they do not have to include both, though one often leads to the other when fully explored.

**Contest Participation:** Students may participate in the research, preparation, and presentation of only one entry each year.

**Individual Entries:** A paper must be the work of only one student.

**Development Requirements:** Entries submitted for competition must be researched and developed during the current contest year that begins following the National Contest each June. Revising or reusing an entry from a previous year—whether a student's own or another student's—is unacceptable and will result in disqualification.

**Construction of Entry:** Students are responsible for the research, design, and creation of their entry. They may receive help and advice from teachers and parents on the mechanical aspects of creating their entry, such as typing a paper and other written materials. They may seek guidance from teachers as they research and analyze their material, but their conclusions must be their own. Students may have reasonable help preparing their project. Examples of reasonable help include:

- a teacher instructs students in how to use an editing software program.
- a parent uses a cutting tool to cut the exhibit board or performance prop the student(s) designed.
- a teacher offers editing suggestions on a student's historical paper.
- a parent assists in sewing costumes the student(s) designed.
- a teacher shows students how to build an NHD website.
- students have photographs commercially developed.

Interpretation:

- Students should do all of their research themselves and not share research or bibliographies with other students. Students entering as a group may share their research only with other students in their group. In cases where students have shared research with other entrants, it is appropriate for you to reduce their final ranking.
- It is up to you to decide, when appraising an entry, if adult assistance has exceeded acceptable levels and given the students an unfair advantage over others.
- Advice and guidance are encouraged and acceptable.

**Discussion with Judges:** Students should be prepared to answer judges' questions about the content and development of their entries, but they may not give a formal, prepared introduction, narration, or conclusion.

**Costumes:** Students in the paper category are not permitted to wear costumes that are related to their topic during judging.

Interpretation:

- If you suspect students are wearing costumes, ask them before imposing a penalty. Students sometimes wear ethnic clothing that may be mistaken for costumes.

**Title:** Entries must have titles that are clearly visible on all written materials.

## REQUIRED WRITTEN MATERIAL FOR ALL ENTRIES

**Title Page:** A title page is required as the first page of written material in every category. The title page must include only the title of the entry, the name(s) of the student(s), the contest division and category, and applicable word counts. A title page for an entry in the paper category must include the word count for the text of the paper.

Note: the title page must not include any other information (pictures, graphics, borders, school name or grade) except for that described in this rule.

**Annotated Bibliography:** An annotated bibliography is required for all categories. It should contain all sources that provided usable information or new perspectives in preparing the entry. Students will look at many more sources than they will actually use. They should list only those sources that contributed to the development of their entries. Sources of visual materials and oral interviews must be included. The annotations for each source must explain how the source was used and how it helped the students understand their topics.

**Separation of Primary and Secondary Sources:** Students are required to separate their bibliographies into primary and secondary sources.

Interpretation:

- While many sources clearly fall into one category or the other, some sources can be either, depending on how they are used. In those questionable cases, the student should explain in the annotation why they classified that particular source as primary or secondary.
- If you disagree with the categorization of a source as primary or secondary, ask about it during the interview and allow the students a chance to explain their rationale.

- If you have doubts about the validity of an Internet source or its classification as primary or secondary, ask about it during the interview.

**Style Guides:** Style for citations and bibliographic references must follow the principles in one of the following style guides: (1) Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses and Dissertations: Chicago Style for Students and Researchers* or (2) Joseph Gibaldi, *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*. Regardless of which manual is used, the style must be consistent throughout the project.

**Process Paper:** Entries in the paper category do not include process papers.

**Plagiarism:** Students must acknowledge in their annotated bibliographies all sources used in their entries. Failure to credit sources is plagiarism and will result in disqualification.

## CATEGORY RULES: PAPERS

**Length Requirements:** The text of historical papers must be no less than 1,500 and no more than 2,500 words in length. Each word or number in the text of the paper counts as one word. This includes student-composed text as well as quotes from primary or secondary sources. Notes, annotated bibliography, illustration captions, and appendix material do not count in that total. Appendix material must be referenced in the text of the paper. Extensive supplemental materials are inappropriate. Use of appendices should be very limited and may include photographs, maps, charts, and/or graphs only. NOTE: Oral history transcripts, correspondence between students and experts, questionnaires, and other primary or secondary materials used as sources for the paper should be cited in the bibliography but not included as attachments/appendices to the paper.

Interpretation:

- If a paper is only a few words longer than the maximum AND you believe the extra words provided no qualitative advantage in terms of the amount of interpretation or evidence included, then you may choose to note the infraction on the evaluation sheet without reducing the paper's final ranking. You should warn the student that the paper must be shortened before advancing to the next level.
- At the regional level, if a paper exceeds the maximum by more than a few words AND you believe the extra words gave the entry an unfair advantage, you should reduce the entry's final ranking. At the affiliate level, such a paper should not be allowed to advance to the national contest.

**Citations:** Citations—footnotes, endnotes, or internal documentation—are required. Citations are used to credit the sources of specific ideas as well as direct quotations. Students may use either MLA or Turabian citation style, as long as they are consistent throughout the paper. Please note that an extensively annotated footnote should not be used to get around the word limit.

Interpretation:

- In some situations, the MLA style may not be appropriate. For example, if a student writes a poem, Turabian is probably a better choice; the MLA parenthetical style interrupts the flow of the poem and does not allow for expository notes. Using MLA in this case is not a violation of the rules. However, if you believe that the choice of citation style has affected the overall quality of the paper, you may certainly consider that in establishing the final rankings.

**Preparation Requirements:** Papers must be typed or computer printed on plain, white 8.5 x 11-inch

paper with 1-inch margins on all sides. Pages must be numbered consecutively and double-spaced with writing on one side and in 12-point font. Papers must be stapled in the top left corner and should not be enclosed in a cover or binder. The title page should have no illustrations.

Interpretation:

- Failure to adhere to the preparation requirements is a relatively minor infraction that you should note in your comments. This can be fixed easily and does not provide a qualitative advantage.
- If a paper does not comply with the preparation requirements but your team believes that it is otherwise the best, you may choose to rate it in the top two or three.

## THANK YOU AND HAVE FUN!

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EVALUATION

JUDGING CRITERIA

(Judging Criteria are explained in the Rule Book)

Superior	Excellent	Good	Needs Improvement

COMMENTS:

Strengths / Areas for Improvement

Please comment on all 3 areas: Historical Quality, Theme, and Presentation

<b>60% Historical Quality</b>	Entry is historically accurate • Uses data correctly						
	Shows analysis and interpretation • Presents an argument • Goes beyond retelling						
	Places topic in historical context						
	Shows wide research • Uses various types of sources						
	Uses available primary sources appropriate to topic						
	Research is balanced • Includes multiple perspectives						

<b>20% Relation to Theme</b>	Clearly relates topic to NHD theme						
	Demonstrates historical significance of topic and draws conclusions						

<b>20% Clarity of Presentation</b>	Historical Paper is: • Original      • Organized • Clearly written      • Well presented • Appropriate						
	Grammar and spelling are correctly used throughout the paper.						

<b>Rules Compliance</b>	Maintains length requirement (1,500-2,500 words, includes student-composed words and quotes)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Word count is included on title page	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
	Includes annotated bibliography	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Includes citations (footnotes, endnotes or internal documentation)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No