A.T.P. RULES AND REGS

National History Day Submissions

The 2016 Kenneth E. Behring National History Day Contest will be held **June 12 – 16**. Each year more than half a million students just like you participate.

**What will you do?**

You will choose a historical topic related to the annual theme, and then conduct primary and secondary research. You will look through libraries, archives and museums, conduct oral history interviews, and visit historic sites.

After you have analyzed and interpreted your sources, and have drawn a conclusion about the significance of your topic, you will then be able to present your work in one of five ways: as a paper, an exhibit, a performance, a documentary, or a website.

**STEPS**:

**Read the rules**

Before you begin work on an entry for competition, you, your teacher, and your parents should carefully read the [Contest Rule Book](http://www.nhd.org/wp-content/uploads/Contest-Rule-Book.pdf) / [Contest Rule Book in Spanish](http://www.nhd.org/wp-content/uploads/397-084_Contest_Rule_Book_Layout_FNL_SP_rev1_Lo.pdf). Contact your regional or affiliate coordinator to learn if any rules have been revised since the publication of this rule book, and for more information on topics, sources, and deadlines. [Find your affiliate coordinator](http://www.nhd.org/contest-affiliates/affiliates/).

**Understand the Theme**

Each year your research must connect to the [NHD theme](http://www.nhd.org/contest-affiliates/annual-theme/). The theme changes each year so if you do NHD every year, you will not repeat a theme. The themes are chosen to be broad enough to encourage investigation of topics ranging from local history to world history, and from ancient time to the recent past. To understand the historical importance of your topic you need to ask questions about time, place and context; cause and effect; change over time; and impact and significance. You must consider not only when and where events happened, but also why they occurred and what factors contributed to their development.

**Choose a Topic**

Topics for research are everywhere! Think about a time in history or individuals or events that are interesting to you. Start a list. Read books, newspapers or other sources of information and add to your list. Talk with relatives, neighbors, or people you know who have lived through a particular time in history that interests you and add more ideas. Keep thinking, reading and talking to people until you have many ideas that are interesting. Now go back through the list and circle the ideas that connect with the theme. From the ideas that you circled, select one to begin your research. Keep your list because you might need it again. Selecting a National History Day topic is a process of gradually narrowing down the area of history (period or event) that interests you to a manageable subject. For example, if you’re interested in Native Americans and the theme is Leadership and Legacy in History, a natural topic would be treaty rights. Now from there, you would consider the resources you have available to you—perhaps your local historical society—and possibly choose a Native American/U.S. treaty based in your affiliate’s history. Your process might look something like this:

* Theme: Leadership and Legacy
* Interest: presidential power
* Topic: Andrew Jackson and the removal of the Cherokee Nation
* Issue: the refusal of a president to enforce a Supreme Court ruling

\*\*NOTE: Nothing in history happens in a vacuum.  To understand the connections between your topic and the time period, begin reading about the time period and as you read ask yourself questions:

Why did my topic happen at this particular time and in this particular place?

What were the events or the influences that came before my topic?

How was my topic influenced by and how did it influence the economic, social, political, and cultural climate of the time period?

All of these questions will help you to build the story of your topic and grasp the historical significance. This will also help you begin thinking about your thesis.

**Develop a Thesis Statement**  
NHD projects should do more than just tell a story. Every exhibit, performance, documentary, paper and website should make a point about its topic. To do this, you must develop your own argument of the historical impact of the person, event, pattern or idea you are studying. The point you make is called a thesis statement. A thesis statement is not the same as a topic. Your thesis statement explains what you believe to be the impact and significance of your topic in history.

Example:

*Topic:* Battle of Gettysburg  
*Thesis Statement:* The battle of Gettysburg was a major turning point of the Civil War. It turned the tide of the war from the South to the North, pushing back Lee’s army that would never fight again on Northern soil and bringing confidence to the Union army.

**Use Primary Sources**

A primary source is a piece of information about a historical event or period in which the creator of the source was an actual participant in or a contemporary of a historical moment. The purpose of primary sources is to capture the words, the thoughts and the intentions of the past. Primary sources help you to interpret what happened and why it happened.

Examples of primary sources include: documents, artifacts, historic sites, songs, or other written and tangible items created during the historical period you are studying.

**Use Secondary Sources**

A secondary source is a source that was not created first-hand by someone who participated in the historical era. Secondary sources are usually created by historians, but based on the historian’s reading of primary sources. Secondary sources are usually written decades, if not centuries, after the event occurred by people who did not live through or participate in the event or issue. The purpose of a secondary source is to help build the story of your research from multiple perspectives and to give your research historical context.

An example of a secondary source is *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* by James M. McPherson, published in 1988. They are a great starting point in helping you see the big picture. Understanding the context of your topic will help you make sense of the primary sources that you find.

The primary and secondary sources McPherson used are listed in the bibliography. Another researcher might consult these same primary sources and reach a different conclusion.

**Citations/Bibliographies**

To record the information the two acceptable styles of writing for NHD projects are Turabian and MLA. Historians use Turabian but we know that many classes in middle school and high school teach the MLA style. It does not matter which of these two styles you use, but it is important to be consistent. For help with questions about citations, you can check out Turabian or MLA guides from your local library.

**Annotated Bibliographies**

An annotated bibliography is required for all categories. The annotation for each source must explain how the source was used and how it helped you understand your topic. You should also use the annotation to explain why you categorized a particular source as primary or secondary. Sources of visual materials and oral interviews, if used, must also be included.

List only those sources that you used to develop your entry. An annotation normally should be only 1-3 sentences long. [Click here to visit our Annotated Bibliography Resource page for more information.](http://www.nhd.org/bibresource/)

[](http://www.noodletools.com/tools/nhd.php)

Option: [**Use NoodleTools:**](http://www.noodletools.com/tools/nhd.php) NHD and NoodleTools partner together to bring teachers and students the opportunity to organize their research. Teachers can sign up and receive account access for all of their students to help complete their NHD projects. Noodle Tools can help students track their sources, take notes, organize their ideas, and create their annotated bibliographies. The program allows the teacher to see the progress the students have made and offer direct electronic feedback.

*Below is a list of links designed to help students, teachers, parents, administrators, and visitors in a variety of ways. Click on a resource for it to expand. Note that NHD does not maintain or necessarily endorse any of these sites, and is not responsible for their content:*

[• Organizations and Institutions...](http://www.nhd.org/entering-contest/)

[• Museums & Historic Sites...](http://www.nhd.org/entering-contest/)

[• National Libraries, Archives & Directories...](http://www.nhd.org/entering-contest/)

[• U.S. History Primary Sources and Major Websites...](http://www.nhd.org/entering-contest/)

[• World History Primary Sources and Major Websites...](http://www.nhd.org/entering-contest/)

[• Photos, Maps and Other Images...](http://www.nhd.org/entering-contest/)

[• Music...](http://www.nhd.org/entering-contest/)

**PRESENT YOUR WORK**

Now that you understand the rules and the theme for National History Day, and have chosen your historical topic, it is time to choose how you want to present your work. But what are the categories? And how are they different? Here are the five possible categories.

**Categories**

* [Documentary](http://www.nhd.org/entering-contest/creating-an-entry/documentary/)
* [Exhibit](http://www.nhd.org/entering-contest/creating-an-entry/exhibit/)
* [Paper](http://www.nhd.org/entering-contest/creating-an-entry/paper/)
* [Performance](http://www.nhd.org/entering-contest/creating-an-entry/performance/)
* [Website](http://www.nhd.org/entering-contest/creating-an-entry/website/)

**Process Paper**

A process paper is a description of how you conducted your research, developed your topic idea, and created your entry. The process paper must also explain the relationship of your topic to the contest theme. For more information on the Process Paper and other rules, review the [Contest Rule Book](http://www.nhd.org/wp-content/uploads/Contest-Rule-Book.pdf) .