
MISSOURI
HISTORY DAY

State Historical Society of Missouri
Attn: National History Day in Missouri
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Dear Educator,

This packet is designed to introduce you to National History Day and to serve as a how-to guide for getting started in an innovative program that encourages students to develop creativity, confidence, and critical thinking skills.

Our goal is to make this exploration into history a positive one for both teachers and students! Thus, if you have any questions about how to make National History Day in Missouri a successful part of your classroom, please contact your regional coordinator or feel free to contact me directly.

We look forward to seeing your students' creativity and to exploring history together.

Sincerely,

Danielle Griego

Danielle Griego
Coordinator

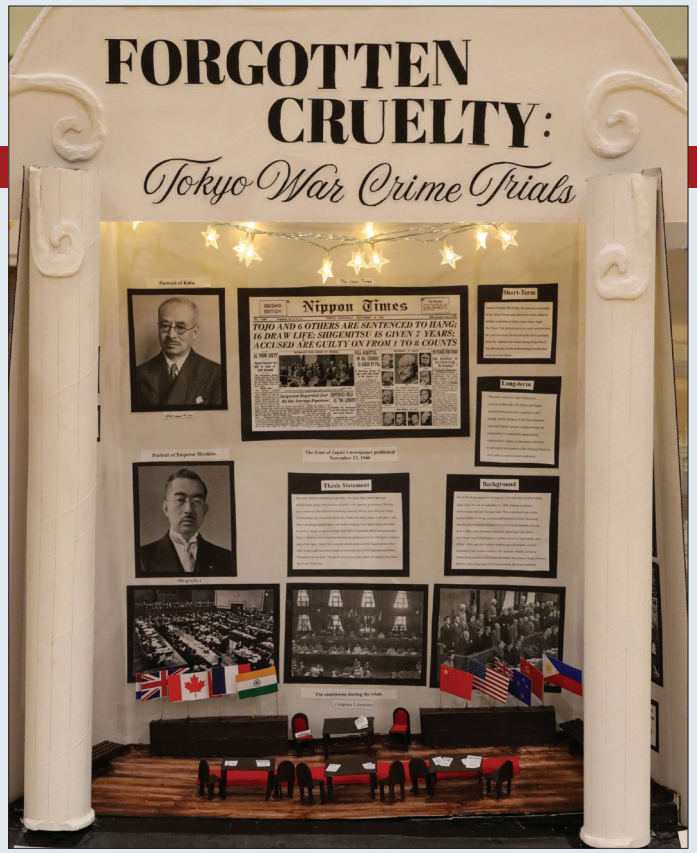


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why participate?

Students develop skills in:
- Research
- Writing
- Problem solving
- Critical thinking
- Use of primary sources
- Interviewing

Educators, National History Day in Missouri:
- Meets State Standards
- Serves as a model teaching tool for active learning
- Acts as an excellent assessment tool
- Integrates the study of history with other disciplines
- Encourages professional development
- Inspires community-wide involvement in student scholarship

what is national history day?

National History Day in Missouri (NHDMO) is the state affiliate of the national educational program. Sponsored by the State Historical Society of Missouri, the yearlong contest encourages young people, grades sixth through twelfth, to explore historical issues, ideas, people, and events.

Students participating in NHDMO conduct in-depth research and analysis on topics related to an annual theme and then present their findings in one of five formats:
- documentary
- exhibit
- performance
- paper
- website

Participants work with both primary and secondary sources to produce sound historical research.

Projects are evaluated at a series of regional competitions before the top projects from each category advance to the state contest in April at the University of Missouri in Columbia. State finalists are then selected to compete at the national contest in College Park, Maryland, in June.

All students—public, private, or home school in grades sixth through twelfth—are eligible to participate in National History Day. They may participate through their classroom, an after-school club, or individually, and may be supported by a teacher, tutor, mentor, school counselor, parent, or other educator.

evaluations

An evaluation of NHD found students who participate:
- Outperform peers on state standardized tests, not only in social studies but also in reading, science, and math.
- Are better writers who write with a purpose and a real voice while marshaling solid evidence to support their point of view.
- Are critical thinkers who digest, analyze, and synthesize information.
- Gain 21st-century skills, learning how to collaborate with team members, talk to experts, manage their time, and persevere.



annual theme

Each year National History Day selects a theme to be the driving force behind students' research. A large percentage of a project's total score is based on the relevance to this theme.

National History Day designs the topic as broadly as possible to encompass entries on local, state, national, or world history. Visit **nhdmo.org** to learn more about this year's annual theme.

topic selection

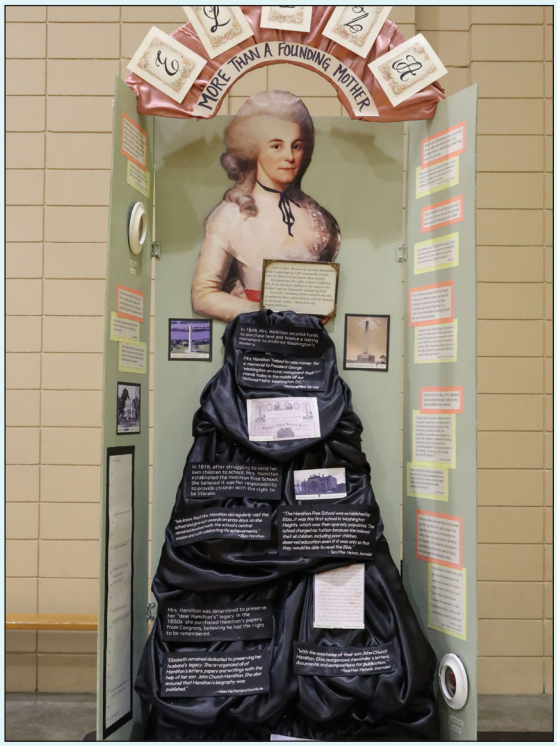
National History Day is designed to allow a large amount of flexibility as students choose project topics and mediums based on their interests. You can help student(s) narrow their options by encouraging them to pick a subject that:

- Clearly fits the annual theme
- Is in-depth and narrow in scope *(It is better to focus on one issue in detail than to cover many issues superficially.)*

Students should first think about what historical events or periods interest them. They can then look to see how that topic might fit within the annual theme.

example project

For example, if a student is interested in women's history, and the theme is *Rights and Responsibilities*, a natural topic might be "the right to equal suffrage." However, it is unlikely that the student will be able to research the thousands of individual suffrage events that took place all over the country.



An additional step is required to help narrow his or her interest and select a specific topic. The focus might be a specific geographic area or time period.

Topic selection process

- **Interest:** Women's History
- **Theme:** *Rights and Responsibilities*
- **Topic:** Equal Suffrage
- **Issue:** *Minor v. Happersett* the US Supreme Court case spurred by Virginia Minor's unsuccessful attempt to register to vote.
- **Title:** "Depriving the Nation of a Qualified Electorate: The Woman Suffrage Case of *Minor v. Happersett*."

divisions

The NHD competition has two divisions based on grade, which are judged separately at every level.

- Junior Division – grades six through eight
- Senior Division – grades nine through twelve

With the exception of papers, students may participate in National History Day independently or as part of a group consisting of two to five students. Students from different grade levels may work together in a group as long as they are in the same division.

During the interview process, judges will ask questions of each team member to ascertain whether they have an understanding of the topic and of the presentation process.

project categories

Five presentation formats are available for students to use to display their research: documentaries, exhibits, performances, papers, and websites. Students compete only against others in the same category and division.

When selecting a category, students should consider:

- Which best fits my interests, skills, or talents?
- Does the topic fit one category better than another? (Are there enough images for an exhibit, action for a documentary, emotion for a dramatic performance?)
- Will the necessary equipment and materials needed for this category be accessible?

Though judges will interview participants, students should not expect to have the opportunity to explain material that is not evident in the presentation. They will not be able to recite a prepared speech but will instead be asked specific questions by the judges. It does not matter what is in the student's head if the judges cannot see it. Thus, it is important to be certain that all pertinent questions are answered in the presentation itself. Consult the NHD rulebook before beginning work on any project.



contest locations

A regional contest is held in the spring at regions around the state. Each region's top three entries in every category will advance to the state contest at the University of Missouri in Columbia in April.

Visit nhdmo.org to locate your region and find the contact information for your regional coordinator. Contest dates and deadlines can also be found at that link.

All successful National History Day entries should be able to stand alone without additional explanation from the students.



"At the end of my first NHD adventure, I have an abundance of wonderful impressions. National History Day helped me to realize that our past really does matter. What we've done before—the mistakes we've made, the successes we've earned—contributes to what we do down the line."—Harper R.

documentaries

When it comes to documentaries, students are encouraged to develop a strong script and use appropriate visuals to illustrate the concepts in the narrative. Many students draw a storyboard of scenes they will be shooting and include a variety of shots, such as interviews, archival footage, and graphics.

Using technology, students may also create special effects, animation, graphics, and other visuals to incorporate into their ten-minute films. Participants are responsible for operating all cameras and editing equipment themselves.

While artistic expression is a plus, the most important aspect of any entry is its historical quality.

exhibits

A successful exhibit, like all National History Day projects, must be able to explain itself. The exhibit should be organized into segments, which break down the topic into smaller sections. This guides the viewer around the display. It is important that students design an exhibit so that the materials and illustrations are easy for viewers to understand.

The most common form of exhibit is a three-panel display, but students are encouraged to think outside the box. Artifacts or other materials may also be placed on the table between the side panels.

Clear and concise captions identifying items and/or interpreting information for the viewer should not exceed 500 student-composed words.

"It was a blast taking a project all the way from the Kansas City regionals, through the state competition, to College Park, Maryland. From the opening ceremonies to the awards ceremony, that week in June was the best week of my summer!"—Zoe H.





performances

The performance category is the only format in which students present their research live. Participants are asked to capture their audience and successfully communicate findings in a span of ten minutes. Students are encouraged to achieve dramatic appeal while conveying solid historical information. Students should:

- Decide on a group or individual performance
- Make references to the historical evidence
- Use dialogue, quotations, and speech excerpts
- Create a script with a thesis, supporting statements, and a conclusion
- Design costumes, props, a set, and blocking for the actor(s)

"What best gave me a sense of the importance of studying and exploring history was the experience of actually delivering the speech in front of more than 600 people. I was floored to see the knowing looks on the faces of veterans throughout the audience as I spoke naively of battleships and campaigns." —Jay M.

papers

The paper is the most traditional way to present historical research. Various types of creative writing such as fictional diaries and poems are permitted for National History Day, but works must conform to all rules.

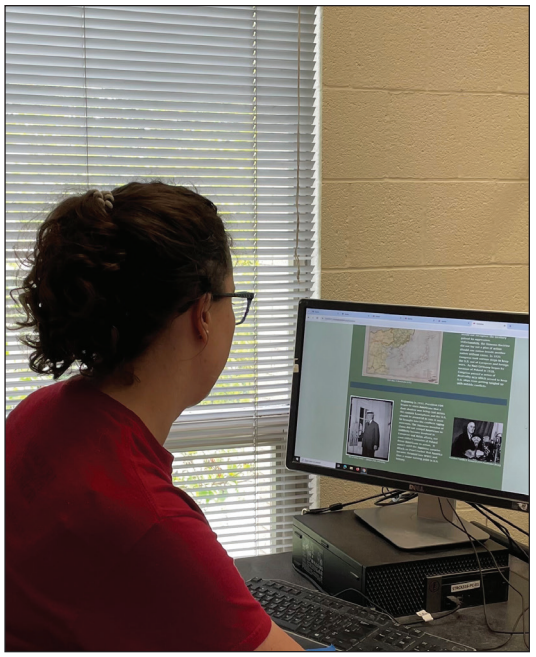
Papers are expected to be between 1,500 and 2,500 words and are submitted in advance so judges have time to read and appraise them prior to the contest day. Please note this is the only category that does not allow for group participation.

Many schools find that a team-teaching method between departments works very well for this category. Social Studies and English departments can cooperate in the supervision of student papers.

websites

The most interactive of all NHD categories, website entries should include no more than 1,200 student-composed words. A site should reflect the student's ability to use technology to communicate a topic's significance in history. In designing an entry, students should include elements that actively engage the audience in the subject. These elements do not need to be technologically complex, but they should allow the audience to participate in exploring the topic, rather than passively viewing information.

All National History Day students are asked to create their websites through the NHD website editor. The historical quality, analysis, and interpretation of the topic must be clear and evident. Websites will be judged in a similar fashion to the paper category—submitting entries ahead of time and allowing the judges the opportunity to review the entry prior to the contest day.





thank you for being an NHDMO advocate!

As an educator, you are often the first connection your students have to National History Day. The guidance and support you provide are essential to the success of our program at the local, regional, state, and national levels. Thank you for helping your students access this unique and rewarding experience!

For more information please visit nhdmo.org and remember to consult the official rule book as you begin the research phase in any project.

Get started today!

nhdmo.org

THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF MISSOURI
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OUR HOME — OUR HISTORY