

# ALABAMA HUMANITIES ALLIANCE

## Research, Research, Research

### Write a Thesis Statement

After identifying a topic, define a thesis statement. Your thesis statement explains what you believe to be the impact and significance of your topic in history. Your project should make a point about its topic. You will need to develop your own argument for the historical impact of the person, event, pattern or idea you are studying.

### Analyze Primary & Secondary Sources

Once you've established your thesis statement, you will need evidence to support your argument. Primary and secondary sources help tell historical narratives and enrich our understanding of the topic at hand. As a general rule, remember that primary sources are items that were either created during the time period or created by individuals who experienced the event first-hand. Secondary sources interpret and analyze the historic moment or individual. Below are the differences between primary and secondary sources.

### Primary Source

Something written or **PRODUCED DURING THE TIME PERIOD** you are investigating, including online digital copies.

- First Person accounts such as: diaries, letters, autobiographies and newspaper articles published during the time period.
- The original published results of a research study, scientific experiment or clinical trial
- Status updates, texts, tweets, originals blogs or Reddit AMAs
- Creative works or artifacts from a specific time period, such as photographs, artwork, maps, etc.
- A recording or transcript of a live interview, speeches, quotes, songs, etc.

### Secondary Sources

Something **NOT PRODUCED FIRST-HAND** during the time period you are investigating. Interpretations of past events.

- History textbooks, biographies, general historical works, historical documentaries
- Newspaper articles, magazine articles, and media reviews of events created well after they occurred
- Scholarly journals articles; encyclopedias, atlases and other reference books
- Prints of artwork, retweets, online comment sections, pins on Pinterest
- Recordings or transcripts of interviews with historians, speeches or lectures that interpret historic events

## Finding Primary and Secondary Sources

Many resources can be found in your own community. Ask for help with research at local libraries, historical societies, museums and archives. Resources can also be located online when not found locally. Many larger institutions have excellent collections of digital artifacts available. The National History Day website has a list of several such links. Below are a few of our favorites to get you started!

[Alabama Department of Archives & History](#)

[Digital History](#)

[Encyclopedia of Alabama](#)

[Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History](#)

[W.S. Hoole Special Collections Library, University of Alabama](#)

[Library of Congress Manuscripts & Mixed Materials](#)

[Library of Congress Prints & Photographs](#)

[National Archives](#)

[PBS Learning Media](#)

[Schomburg Images of African Americans from the 19th Century](#)

[Smithsonian Institution](#)

[United Nations Photos](#)

## Present Your Research

The National History Day contest allows for students to present their research findings in one of five categories. Read below to better understand which category would best suit your research.

### DOCUMENTARY

**Do you find yourself critiquing every movie you watch? Do you love to tell stories using imagery and sound? If you answered yes to these questions, documentary is the category for you!**

- Documentary entries may not exceed 10 minutes.
- You must state your names and the title of your entry for the judges before playing your documentary.
- Media requiring audience participation is not allowed.

You may work alone or in groups of up to five.

The tools below should help to clarify expectations and define scoring criteria for History Day documentaries. You can also use them to judge and revise your work.

[Documentary Rules  
Verification Checklist](#)

[Documentary Evaluation Sheet](#)

## Exhibit

**Do you find yourself doodling on the sides of your notes? Do your friends come to you for creative advice? If you answered yes to these questions, exhibit is the category for you!**

- Exhibits may be no larger than 40 inches wide x 30 inches deep x 6 feet tall.
- Word count is a maximum of 500 words.
- Visual primary sources such as maps and images may be included.

You may work alone or in groups of up to five.

The tools below should help to clarify expectations and define scoring criteria for History Day exhibits. You can also use them to judge and revise your work.

**Exhibit Rules  
Verification Checklist**

**Exhibit Evaluation Sheet**

## Paper

**Do you best express yourself through writing? Do you prefer writing over speaking in front of a crowd? If you answered yes to these questions, paper is the category for you!**

- Both traditional research and creative writing papers are accepted.
- Word count should be between 1500 and 2500 words.
- Paper is the only category that does not require a Process Paper.

You must work alone. There is no group category for papers.

The tools below should help to clarify expectations and define scoring criteria for History Day papers. You can also use them to judge and revise your work.

**Paper Rules  
Verification Checklist**

**Paper Evaluation Sheet**

## Performance

**Do you love being in the spotlight? Do you enjoy speaking in front of a crowd? If you answered yes to these questions, performance is the category for you!**

- Performances may not exceed 10 minutes.
- Performances must open with an introduction including a title and the names of participants.
- Use of media within performance is allowed when operated by students registered with the performance.

You may work alone or in groups of up to five.

The tools below should help to clarify expectations and define scoring criteria for History Day performances. You can also use them to judge and revise your work.

**Performance Rules  
Verification Checklist**

**Performance Evaluation Sheet**

## Website

**Do you love working with the latest technology? Do your friends come to you for technical advice? If you answered yes to these questions, website is the category for you!**

- Websites must be created on [nhd.weebly.com](http://nhd.weebly.com)
- Multimedia clips cannot exceed 4 minutes in length.
- Total visible word count must be posted on the home page and cannot exceed 1200 words.

You may work alone or in groups of up to five.

The tools below should help to clarify expectations and define scoring criteria for History Day websites. You can also use them to judge and revise your work.

**Website Rules  
Verification Checklist**

**Website Evaluation Sheet**