



## WEBSITE CATEGORY: JUDGING CRITERIA AND RULES

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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 WEBSITES

A website should reflect the student's ability to use website design software and computer technology to communicate a topic's significance in history. The analysis and interpretation of the topic must be clear and evident to the viewer. The website should utilize interactive elements to draw the viewer in and actively engage the audience in learning about the topic.

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 website. It refers to the research, analysis, and interpretation of the topic. The website 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 website 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 website's appearance and overall presentation. Is the website well-organized? Are the title, sections, and main points easy to discern? Are visual materials and multimedia appropriate in terms of content and location? Do they have clear captions? Is the overall appearance cluttered or pleasing to the eye? Do links and multimedia function properly? Does the website engage the viewer through interactivity (not necessarily high-tech)? You also should consider whether the process paper and the bibliography are clear, organized, and well done. Do not be carried away by glitz; simpler is often better. Conversely, do not discount an entry or assume students had outside assistance simply because a website is of high visual and production quality; many students achieve both superior production quality and superior historical quality.

## **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.

**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 that the student(s) designed.
- a teacher shows students how to build an NHD website.
- students have photographs commercially developed.

**Interpretation:**

- Students entering as individuals 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.
- Students may receive reasonable help from adults on the mechanical aspects of creating their entries. Nonetheless, students should do as much of the mechanical work as possible.
- The intellectual aspects of the production, such as the actual composition of text and the website design, must be the student's own work.
- 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.

**Supplying Equipment:** Students are responsible for supplying all props and equipment at each level of competition. All entries should be constructed with transportation, setup time, size, and weight in mind. Students must provide their own equipment, including computers and software, unless the contest coordinator has specified that certain equipment will be provided at the contest venue. Projection screens for documentaries, websites, and performances may be provided.

**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 website 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. For the website category, the home page is equivalent to the title page. The home page must include the title of the entry, the name(s) of the student(s), the contest division and category, and applicable word counts. The title page/home page for websites must include the number of student-composed words found in the website and the number of words in the process paper.

**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. The annotated bibliography must be included as an integrated part of the website. It should be included in the navigational structure.

**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 all categories except historical papers must provide a description of no more than 500 words explaining how the students chose their topics, conducted their research, created and developed their entries, and the relationship of their topics to the contest theme. The process paper must be included as an integrated part of the website. It should be included in the navigational structure.

Interpretation:

- The process paper should not summarize the students' research but should instead explain how they conducted research and developed the entry.

**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: WEBSITES

**Entry Production:** All entries must be original productions constructed using the NHD website editor beginning at the school level. Students may use professional photographs, graphics, video, recorded music, etc., within the site. Such items must be integrated into the website, and proper credit must be given within the site as well as in the annotated bibliography. Students must operate all software and equipment in the development of the website.

**Size Requirements:** Website entries may contain no more than 1,200 visible, student-composed words. Code used to build the site and alternate text tags on images do not count toward the word limit. Also excluded are: words found in materials used for identifying illustrations or used to briefly credit the sources of illustrations and quotations; recurring menus, titles, and navigation instructions; words within primary documents and artifacts; and the annotated bibliography and process paper that must be integrated into the site. The entire site, including all multimedia, may use no more than 100MB of file space. Note: NHD's website editor does not permit a site to exceed 100MB.

**Interpretation:**

- If a website 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 website's final ranking. You should warn the student that the text on the site must be shortened before advancing to the next level.
- At the regional level, if a website 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 website should not be allowed to advance to the National Contest.

**Navigation:** One page of the website must serve as the "home page." The home page must include the names of participants, entry title, division, applicable word counts, and the main menu that directs viewers to the various sections of the site. All pages must be interconnected with hypertext links. Automatic redirects are not permitted.

**Documents and Multimedia:** The website may contain documents (e.g., newspaper articles, excerpts from written text, etc.), but the documents must be contained within the website. The website may contain multimedia clips (audio, video, or both) that total no more than four minutes (e.g., use one four-minute clip, four one-minute clips, two two-minute clips, etc.). Included in the four-minute total is any music or songs that play after a page loads. Students may record quotes and primary source materials for dramatic effect, but may not narrate their own compositions or other explanatory material. If students use any form of multimedia that requires a specific software to view (e.g., Flash, QuickTime, Real Player, etc.), they must provide on the same page a link to an Internet site where the software is available as a free, secure, and legal download. Students may not use embedded material or link to external websites, other than just described. Judges will make every effort to view all multimedia content, but files that cannot be viewed cannot be evaluated as part of the entry.

**Crediting Sources:** All quotes from written sources must be credited within the website. All visual sources (photographs, videos, paintings, charts, and graphs) must be credited within the website. Brief, factual credits do not count toward the student-composed word total. All sources must be properly cited in the annotated bibliography.

**Required Written Materials:** The annotated bibliography and process paper must be included as an integrated part of the website. They should be included in the navigational structure. They do NOT count toward the 1,200-word limit.

**Stable Content:** The content and appearance of a page cannot change when the page is refreshed in the browser. Random text or image generators are not allowed.

**Viewing Files:** The pages that comprise the site must be viewable in a recent version of a standard web browser (e.g., Microsoft Internet Explorer, Mozilla Firefox, Apple Safari, Google Chrome). Students are responsible for ensuring that their entry is viewable in multiple web browsers. Entries may not link to live or external sites, except to direct viewers to necessary software plug-ins.

**THANK YOU AND HAVE FUN!**

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