NHD NATIONAL HISTORY DAY

Judging Instructions:
DOCUMENTARY

Thank you for agreeing to serve as a judge for the National History Day (NHD) program. You will be judging the documentary category. You will witness outstanding historical research and interpretation developed by some of our nation's finest young people. They have labored for months preparing their entries and are eager to share their research and conclusions with you.

PURPOSE OF JUDGING

The goal of NHD is to provide young people with a high quality, educational experience–whether or not they win a prize. Fair and effective judging is essential. Your evaluations are important to the students who advance to the next round, since your comments help them revise their entries. Most students, however, will not advance. Your feedback is even more important for them, since it is the only thing that they will take home. It is critical that your interactions with the students be fair, helpful, and positive. Your spoken and written comments are fundamental to making the History Day contest a learning process.

JUDGING PROCESS

NHD relies on consensus judging. That means that instead of giving entries numeric scores, you will be ranking them. You will be assigned to a team of 2 or 3 judges, one of whom will be designated the captain. It is important that everyone on your team agrees on the overall rankings of the entries you judge.

Before the Contest: Read the judging instructions and theme information carefully.

Orientation: Attend the judges' orientation at the contest. The coordinator will go over the judging process in more detail and provide you with other important information. You will receive a judging packet which includes your team's evaluation schedule and other contest forms.

Judging: A few minutes before judging is scheduled to begin, go to your assigned room. The judges should sit together at the front of the room. Be very careful about what you say to each other during judging, as people may read a great deal into your most innocent remarks. Entries are scheduled at twenty-minute intervals. Entrants are allowed five minutes for set-up, ten minutes for the documentary, and five minutes for take-down. The team captain should assign one judge to time the entries. Begin timing the documentary with the first sound or the first visual image, including color bars and other visual leads.

For each documentary:
- Ask for the bibliography and process paper during the set-up period, so you can look at them before viewing the documentary.
- During the documentary, jot down some quick notes – questions you have, points which struck you as particularly intriguing or worthy of more attention, ideas for ways to improve the entry, rule violations, etc.
- After the documentary, allow the students to dismantle their equipment before you interview them, so the next entry can begin setting up.
- After the students have removed their equipment, you should interview them. Please see the section below entitled "Interviewing Students."
- Return two copies of the bibliography and process paper to the students. Keep one copy to consult later.

After Viewing All the Documentaries: After viewing all the entries, return to the judges' room or contest headquarters. See the sections below entitled "Evaluating Entries" and "Writing Comments." Your first task will be to determine the final rankings. It is usually easiest to start by deciding which entries to eliminate. Three or four entries will probably stand out as being the best,

although it usually takes some compromising to achieve consensus on how to rank the top entries. Be sure to note any rule violations and decide how that should affect your final rankings. The team captain should then fill out the judges' ranking form, which should be signed by all the judges on your team. Finally, fill out the scores on your evaluation forms, write comments for each entry, and complete any other forms provided by your NHD contest coordinator.

INTERVIEWING STUDENTS

The purpose of the interview is to help you clarify any questions you may have and to provide contact between you and the students.

Tips for Interviewing:

- Try to help the students relax; this is supposed to be a good experience for them. Be friendly and smile. Make eye contact with the students, and if it is a group entry, talk with everyone in the group, not just one person.
- Do compliment the students and express interest in their work.
- You should assume that every entry is the work of the student(s). However, if you have any doubts regarding the development of the entry, use the interview to determine the extent of adult assistance.
- If you have any questions about sources, such as why the students categorized a particular source as primary or about the validity of a source such as a web site, ask the students. Give them a chance to defend their work.
- To keep judging as impartial as possible, DO NOT ASK students about their schools, home towns, family backgrounds, or economic resources.
- Phrases to avoid when speaking to students: I can't believe a student did this. I don't agree with your interpretation. What school do you attend? Where do you live?
- Please don't lecture the students about their topics.
- Do not make any comments about how they did overall or relative to other students. Students, parents, and teachers are all ready to read far more into your comments than you intend.

You should spend roughly the same amount of time on each interview, but you do not have to ask each student or group of students the exact same questions. Your questions should focus on their entry. Here are some sample questions:

- What was your most important source and why?
- What is the most important point you are trying to convey about your topic?
- What is the most important thing you learned from completing this entry?
- Why did you pick this topic?
- What did each member of your group contribute? How did you decide who would do what?
- How did your primary sources help you understand this topic?
- How did you come up with the script for your documentary?
- What were the most important factors which caused ____ (the event in question) to occur?
- What were the most important consequences of this ____ (event/person's actions)?
- Why is this topic significant?

EVALUATING DOCUMENTARIES

A documentary should reflect students' ability to use audiovisual equipment to communicate their topic's significance, much as professional documentaries do. Students may present their documentaries in a variety of formats, including videos, slide shows, PowerPoint presentations, or other types of multimedia presentations. Whatever presentation format is chosen, students must operate all equipment, both during production and at the competition. If they do not have access to appropriate equipment, they should choose another format. Regardless of how polished the presentation may be, the most important aspect of the documentary is its historical quality. The presentation

should include primary materials but must also be an original production. 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.

The Evaluation Form: Discuss each entry with the other judges before marking your evaluation forms. That way your comments and the ratings you give for each item are consistent with those of the other judges on your team. You need not give exactly the same ratings for each line of the form, but you should be within range of each other. Teachers and students have a very difficult time making sense of the evaluation forms if one judge rates the use of the available primary sources as superior while another judge rates the same as good or if one judge notes a rule violation which is ignored by the other judges.

Judging Criteria:

Historical Quality–60%. This is by far the **most important factor** in judging an entry. It refers to the research, analysis, and interpretation of the topic. The entry 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 should also 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 or ethnic or socioeconomic groups, as appropriate to the topic).

A note on primary sources: 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. **An interview with an expert** (a professor of Civil War history, for example) **is not a primary source.** Quotes from historical figures in secondary sources are not considered primary. Primary sources may be found in a variety of formats: the original documents in archives or in microform formats, facsimile copies, transcriptions printed in books or available on reliable Internet sites, or even films or recordings.

Relation to 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 documentary 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 entry's production quality: the creativity and clarity of the script, the use of visual images, the use of music and other sounds, and the mastery of technical skills. You also should consider whether the written materials–the process paper and the bibliography–are clear, organized, and well done. Do not be carried away by glitz; simpler is often–but not always–better. Conversely, do not discount an entry or assume students had outside assistance simply because a documentary is glitzy; many students achieve both superior production quality and superior historical quality.

Rules Compliance–there is no specific deduction for rule violations, but be sure that all of the judges note them on the evaluation forms. Keep these principles in mind when you are deciding how to handle rule violations:

- Major violations are those which give an entry a **substantial advantage** over other entries. These include plagiarism, reusing an entry from a previous year, significantly exceeding time requirements, or having unauthorized outside assistance (e.g., someone else operating editing equipment, etc.). At all levels of the contest, only plagiarism and reusing an entry should result

in disqualification, while other major violations should result in **lower rankings.** If you have an entry which you believe should be disqualified, inform the contest coordinator and allow the coordinator to handle it.

- Minor violations are those which can be **easily remedied** and which **do not confer a competitive advantage.** These include using the wrong type of paper, 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 level, where judges may choose to simply note them without imposing a penalty. At the state level, enforcement of the rules should be stricter, since students should be familiar with the rules and any transgressions should have been caught at the local level. One or two minor violations, however, 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.**

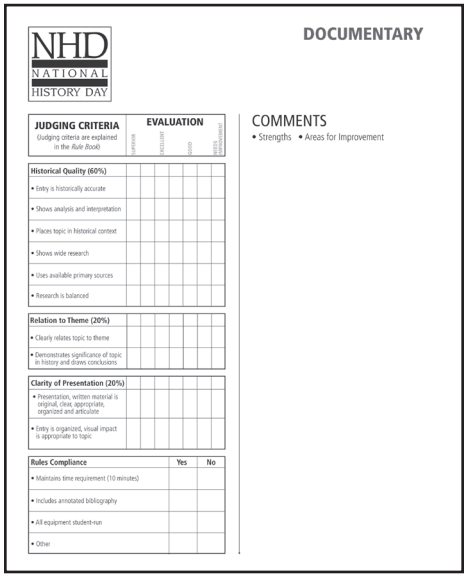
WRITING COMMENTS

In addition to rating each of the areas on the evaluation form, you must write comments. The evaluation forms are a teaching tool, and the comment section allows you to explain to students in a constructive way the ratings they earned and suggest how they might improve their entries for the next level of the contest or how to do better next time. **You must write positive and constructive comments.**

Tips for writing comments:

- Be positive. Find something to praise. Most of the students have worked hard on their entries, and you want to encourage them to try again.
- You should point out any major flaws in an entry, but couch your criticisms in positive terms, such as: You might think about doing X this way. Another source you might find helpful is Z. Moving Y to the beginning would help make your story flow better. Using more photographs would make it more visually appealing. A different choice of music could help heighten the dramatic appeal, especially during (specific part of the documentary). It was clear from the interview that you understood the historical significance of your entry, but you need to convey that in your documentary.
- Do not single out one member of a group for praise or criticism.

Here is a copy of the evaluation form you will use



NHD NATIONAL HISTORY DAY

DOCUMENTARY

JUDGING CRITERIA (Judging criteria are explained in the *Rule Book*)	EVALUATION: OUTSTANDING	EXCELLENT	GOOD	NEEDS IMPROVEMENT
Historical Quality (60%)				
• Entry is historically accurate				
• Shows analysis and interpretation				
• Places topic in historical context				
• Shows wide research				
• Uses available primary sources				
• Research is balanced				
Relation to Theme (20%)				
• Clearly relates topic to theme				
• Demonstrates significance of topic in history and draws conclusions				
Clarity of Presentation (20%)				
• Presentation, written material is original, clear, appropriate, organized and articulate				
• Entry is organized, visual impact is appropriate to topic				

Rules Compliance	Yes	No
• Maintains time requirement (10 minutes)		
• Includes annotated bibliography		
• All equipment student-run		
• Other		

COMMENTS
• Strengths • Areas for Improvement

GENERAL RULES

These are the rules to which students must adhere in developing their entries.

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

Interpretation:

- Entries which do not relate to the theme at all should not win, since adherence to the theme counts 20% in judging.
- Students will sometimes stretch the boundaries of the theme in order to pursue a topic which particularly interests them. An example is a student doing "Pickett's Migration at the Battle of Gettysburg" for the theme "Migration in History." If a topic is only tangentially related to the theme, judges should take that into account when evaluating the entry.
- If an entry is merely descriptive and does not analyze the topic's causes and consequences, the judges should take that into consideration when ranking it.
- While entries should clearly be related to the annual theme, **they need not address every aspect of the theme.** For the 1998 theme, "Migration in History: People, Cultures, Ideas," students could examine people OR cultures OR ideas; they did not have to include all three. The 2007 theme,

"Triumph and Tragedy in History," presented a different challenge. Triumph and tragedy are often intertwined: what appears to be a triumph from one perspective might look like a tragedy from another. Since students are to consider all appropriate perspectives, most entries that year addressed BOTH triumph and tragedy. In a few cases, however, it was acceptable to focus on one OR the other, rather than both.

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

Individual or Group Entries: An individual documentary must be the work of only one student. A group documentary must be the work of 2 to 5 students. All students in a group entry must be involved in the research and interpretation of the group's topic.

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 own entries. They may receive help and advice from teachers and parents on the mechanical aspects of creating their entries: (1) typing the paper and other written materials; (2) guidance from their teachers as they research and analyze the material, but their conclusions must be their own; (3) photographs and slides may be 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 should share research only with the other members of their group. In cases where students have shared research with other entrants, it is appropriate for the judges to reduce their final ranking.
- Students may receive **reasonable** help from adults on the mechanical aspects of creating their entries, particularly if equipment is potentially dangerous. Nonetheless, students should do as much of the mechanical work as possible.
- The intellectual aspects of the production, such as the actual writing of the script, must be the students' own work.
- It is up to the judges 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 is encouraged and acceptable.

Supplying Equipment: Students are responsible for supplying all props and equipment at each level of competition. All entries should be constructed keeping transportation, set-up time, size and weight in mind. Projection screens for documentaries may be provided if requested. VCRs (VHS format only), DVD players, and monitors are available at the national contest for the documentary category only. Students must provide their own computers and software. Pianos and Internet access are not 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. The purpose of the interview is to help the judges clarify any questions they might have and to provide contact between the judges and students. If a judge has questions about sources, such as why the students categorized a particular source as primary or about the validity of a source such as a Web site, the interview gives the judge the opportunity to ask the students and have them defend their work. The interview also is a chance for the judges to verify that the student did the work. Ultimately, the entry should be able to stand on its own without any additional comment from students.

Costumes: Students are not permitted to wear costumes that are related to the focus of their entry during judging.

Interpretation:
- If you suspect students are wearing costumes, ask them before imposing a penalty. Students will sometimes wear ethnic clothing that judges mistake for costumes.

Prohibited Materials: Items potentially dangerous in any way – such as weapons, firearms, animals, organisms, plants, etc. – are strictly prohibited. Such items will be confiscated by security personnel or contest officials. Replicas of such items that are obviously not real are permissible.

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

REQUIRED WRITTEN MATERIALS 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) and the contest division and category. Note: The title page must not include any other information (pictures, graphics, borders, school name or grade) expect 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. Annotations of Web sites should include a description of who sponsors the site.

Note: Oral history transcripts, correspondence between students and experts, questionnaires and other primary or secondary materials used as sources for the documentary should be cited in the bibliography but not included as attachments to the bibliography.

The Separation of Primary and Secondary Sources: Students are required to separate their bibliographies into primary and secondary sources. Note: Some sources may be considered as either primary or secondary. Students should use the annotations to explain their reasoning for classifying any sources that are not clearly primary or secondary.

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 students should explain in the annotation why they classified that particular source as primary or secondary.
- If judges disagree with the categorization of a source as primary or secondary, they should ask about it during the interview and allow the students a chance to explain their rationale.
- If judges have doubts about the validity of an Internet source or its classification as primary or secondary, they should 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 Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* or (2) the style guide of the Modern Language Association of America (MLA). **Regardless of which manual is used, the style must be consistent throughout the paper.**

Interpretation:

- If judges at the district/regional or state level believe the style is incorrect or that it is used inconsistently, they should note that in their written comments, being as specific as possible, so that students may make corrections.

Process Paper: Entries in all categories except historical papers must include three copies of the following written materials: (1) A title page. (2) A description of no more than 500 words explaining how the students conducted their research and created and developed their entries. The process paper should include the following four sections: (a) explaining how the students chose the topic, (b) explaining how the students conducted the research, (c) explaining how the students selected the presentation category, (d) explaining how the project relates to the NHD theme. (3) An annotated bibliography. **These materials must be typed or neatly printed on plain white paper and stapled together in the top left corner. They should not be enclosed in a cover or binder.**

Interpretation:

- The process paper should not summarize the students' research but should instead explain how they conducted the research and developed the entry. It should also explain the relationship of their topic to the theme.
- While the rules provide specific directions regarding the type of paper and fonts to use, failure to observe these requirements is a minor violation. The judges should note the noncompliance on their comments, but they should not downgrade an entry on this basis.

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: DOCUMENTARY

Time Requirements: Documentaries may not exceed 10 minutes in length. Students will be allowed an additional 5 minutes to set up and 5 minutes to remove equipment. Timing will begin when the first visual image of the presentation appears and/or the first sound is heard. Color bars and other visual leads in a video will be counted in the time limit. Timing will end when the last visual image or sound of the presentation concludes. This includes credits.

Interpretation:

- At the district level, if a documentary exceeds ten minutes by a few seconds, judges may be lenient and not penalize the entry if they believe the entry gained no advantage by the extra seconds.
- At the district or regional level, if the documentary is more than a few seconds too long, providing an opportunity to include additional information or interpretation, the judges should take that advantage into consideration by reducing that entry's ranking. At the state level, such a documentary should not be allowed to advance to the national contest.
- Judges should note violations of the time requirements on the evaluation forms; especially at the district or regional level, it is important to stress to the students that they need to fix their entry to comply with the time requirement before the next competition.

Introduction: Students must announce only the title of their presentation and the names of participants. **Live narration or comments prior to or during the presentation are prohibited.**

Student Involvement: Students are responsible for running all equipment and carrying out any special lighting effects for their entries at the contest.

Student Involvement and Production: All entries must be student-produced. Students must operate all equipment. They must provide the narration, voice-overs and dramatization for their entries. Only those students listed as entrants may participate in the production or appear on camera.

Entry Production: An entry must be an original production. Students may use professional photographs, film, slides, recorded music, etc. within their presentations. However, they must integrate such items into the presentation and give proper credit within the presentation as well as in the annotated bibliography. Slides may be professionally developed. Students must operate all editing equipment used in the production of their presentations. Note: Using objects created by others specifically for use in the entry violates this rule, but using photographs, video footage, etc., that already exist is acceptable.

Interpretation:

- Students may have assistance in learning how to operate the editing equipment they use, but they should be the ones who actually operated the equipment used in the production of their documentaries. It is not acceptable for students to have supervised someone else using the equipment; they must operate the editing equipment themselves. Failure to do so constitutes a major violation and should result in a lower ranking.
- If students do not have access to equipment which they can use themselves, they should choose to do another type of documentary or enter a different category.
- Any items created SPECIFICALLY for the entry should be the students' work. Students should shoot pictures themselves, although the film may be professionally developed. Students should conduct all interviews specifically for the entry. Please note that this restriction does not apply to images, interviews, music, etc. originally created for purposes other than the particular History Day entry.
- The students should address the development of their entry, including production and editing, in the process paper; you may also question them about it during the interview.

Credits: At the conclusion of the documentary, students should provide a general list of acknowledgments and credits for any featured music, images, film/media clips, interviews or other sources. These credits should be a brief list and not full bibliographic citations. All sources (music, images, film/ media clips, interviews, books, Web sites) used in the making of the documentary should be properly cited in the annotated bibliography.

Displays: Added exhibits of visual or written material are not allowed.

Computer Entries: A student-composed computer program is an acceptable entry. Students must be able to run the program within the 10–minute time limit. Interactive computer programs and web pages in which the audience or judges are asked to participate are not acceptable; you are not permitted to participate in the students' presentation by operating any equipment. Students must provide and be able to run their own computers and software. Internet access will not be available.

Interpretation:

- The programs may not in any way require the participation of the judges. Web sites do not usually comply with these requirements, because they are by their very nature interactive. Judges evaluating Web sites would have to make choices about what to view and in what order, so rather than displaying the students' interpretation and analysis, the entry would reflect your values and knowledge.

THANK YOU! HAVE FUN!

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