



# Judging Instructions: PAPER

Thank you for agreeing to serve as a judge for the National History Day (NHD) program. You will be judging the paper category. Some of our nation's finest young people have labored for months preparing their entries and are eager to share their outstanding historical 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. Unlike other categories, paper judging is accomplished largely before the contest.

**Before the Contest:** Read the judging instructions and theme information carefully. You will receive a judging packet which includes the papers and evaluation and other contest forms. Read the papers and write preliminary comments on the evaluation forms. See the sections below entitled "Evaluating Entries" and "Writing Comments." If possible, meet with your other team members before the contest to discuss the papers, review the comments you've written and reach a preliminary consensus about rankings. It is usually easiest to start by deciding which entries to eliminate. It may also be very clear that 3 or 4 will probably entries 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 rankings. Your contest coordinator will provide you with specific instructions about how your contest handles paper judging.

**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 the paper interview room. Interviews are scheduled at 15-minute intervals. Only the student being interviewed is allowed in the room with the judges. While you may discuss any aspect of the paper, be sure to use the interview to clarify any questions you have about the research or any possible rule violations. Let the door monitor know when you are ready for the next student. Please keep to the schedule.

**After Interviewing All the Students:** After all the interviews, return to the judges' room or contest headquarters. Your first task will be to determine if the interviews have changed your preliminary rankings. As with other categories, the paper should stand on its own; interviews should only affect the rankings if you have discovered a rule violation or if the interview helped clear up a misunderstanding you had. The team captain should then fill out the judges' ranking form, which should be signed by all the judges on your team. Double-check that you've completely filled out the evaluation forms, 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.
- 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 the exact same questions. Your questions should focus on the paper. 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?

How did your primary sources help you understand this topic?

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 PAPERS

A paper is the traditional form of presenting historical research and interpretation. In addition to traditional research papers, various forms of creative writing are permitted (for example, fictional diaries, poems, etc.), but must conform to all general and category rules. Papers should be grammatically correct and well written. No matter how impressively the students handle themselves during the interview, please remember that **the paper 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 each other, so that 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 a paper. It refers to the research, analysis, and interpretation of the topic. The paper 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 paper 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 paper's writing quality and overall appearance. Is the paper well organized and logical? Are the sectional divisions and main points easy to discern? Are citations used properly? Is the paper grammatical, spelled correctly, and neatly presented?

**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, or having unauthorized outside assistance. 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, 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**.

Here is a copy of the evaluation form you will use

**NHD NATIONAL HISTORY DAY**

**PAPER**

JUDGING CRITERIA <small>(Judging criteria are explained in the Rule Book)</small>	EVALUATION				
	5	4	3	2	1
<b>Historical Quality (60%)</b>					
• Entry is historically accurate					
• Shows analysis and interpretation					
• Places topic in historical context					
• Shows wide research					
• Uses available primary sources					
• Research is balanced					
<b>Relation to Theme (20%)</b>					
• Clearly relates topic to theme					
• Demonstrates significance of topic in history and/or conclusions					
<b>Clarity of Presentation (20%)</b>					
• Paper is original, clear, appropriate, organized and well-presented					
• Text is clear, grammatical and spelling is correct; entry is neatly prepared					
<b>Rules Compliance</b>					
• Maintains length requirement (1500-2500 words)					
• Includes annotated bibliography					
• Other					

**COMMENTS**  
• Strengths • Areas for Improvement

## 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 papers 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 do need to point out any major flaws in an entry, but couch your criticisms in positive terms, such as: Including your thesis and main points in the introduction will help the reader understand the structure of your paper. Another source you might find helpful is Y. Your paper will flow better if you move the section on causes to just after the introduction. Including more quotations from primary sources will enliven your paper. It was clear from the interview that you understood the historical significance of your topic, but you need to convey that in your paper.

## 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 be clearly 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 Entries:** A paper must be the work of only one student.

**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.

**Interpretation:**

- Students should do all of their research themselves and not share research or bibliographies with other students. In cases where students have shared research with other entrants, it is appropriate for the judges to reduce their final rankings.
- It is up to the judges to decide, when appraising an entry, if adult assistance has exceeded acceptable levels and given the student an unfair advantage over others.
- Advice and guidance is encouraged and acceptable.

**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 clarify 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 comments 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 a student is wearing a costume, ask before imposing a penalty. Students will sometimes wear ethnic clothing that judges mistake for costumes.

**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) except 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. 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.

**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: PAPER

The rules for this category apply equally to both traditional and creative papers.

**Length Requirements:** The text of historical papers must be no less than 1,500 and no more than 2,500 words in length. Each word or number in the text of the paper counts as one word. Notes, annotated bibliography, illustration captions, and supplemental/appendix material do not count in that total. Appendix materials must be directly referred to in the text of the paper. Extensive supplemental materials are inappropriate. Use of appendices should be very limited and may include photographs, maps, charts and graphs, but we strongly suggest no other supplemental materials.

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

**Interpretation:**

- If a paper is only a few words longer than the maximum AND the judges believe the extra words provided no qualitative advantage in terms of the amount of interpretation or evidence included, then the judges may choose to note the infraction on the evaluation sheet without reducing the paper's final ranking. The judges should warn the student that the paper must be shortened before advancing to the next level.
- At the district or regional level, if a paper exceeds the maximum by more than a few words AND the judges believe the extra words gave the entry an unfair advantage, the judges should reduce the entry's final ranking. At the state level, such a paper should not be allowed to advance to the national contest.

**Citations:** Citations—footnotes, endnotes or internal documentation—are required. Citations are used to credit the sources of specific ideas as well as direct quotations. Students may use either the MLA or Turabian citation style, as long as they are consistent throughout the paper. Please note that an extensively annotated footnote should not be used to get around the word limit.

**Interpretation:**

- In some situations, the MLA style may not be appropriate. For example, if a student writes a poem, Turabian is probably a better choice; the MLA parenthetical style interrupts the flow of the poem and does not allow for expository notes. Using MLA in this case is not a violation of the rules. However, if the judges believe that the choice of citation style has affected the overall quality of the paper, they may certainly consider that in establishing the final rankings.

**Preparation Requirements:** Papers must be typed, computer printed, or legibly handwritten in ink on plain, white 8.5 x 11-inch paper with 1-inch margins on all sides. Pages must be numbered consecutively and double-spaced with writing on one side and with no more than 12 characters per inch or no less than 10-point type. Papers must be stapled in the top left corner and should not be enclosed in any cover or binder. The title page should have no illustrations.

**Interpretation:**

- Failure to adhere to the preparation requirements is a relatively minor infraction which should be noted by the judges in their comments. This can be fixed easily and does not provide a qualitative advantage.
- If a paper does not comply with the preparation requirements but is otherwise judged the best, the judges may choose to rate it in the top two or three.

THANK YOU! HAVE FUN!



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