

Worksheet 1: Starting a History Day Project

Use this worksheet to help you organize the information you will need to begin a History Day project. Starting your project is a process that requires many decisions about what you will study and how you will show your work to others, so it is normal for some of your worksheet answers to change as you begin your research.

THEME

This year's theme is: _____ in History!

TOPIC

→ The first step to choosing a topic is to think about a general area of history you find interesting.

General area of interest in history (*example: the environment*):

→ Once you have identified a general area of interest, consider what it is about that part of history that interests you the most. You may wish to do a bit of research to help you decide. The part or parts of your general area of interest that you find most interesting are your broad topic ideas. Use the History Day theme to narrow down your broad topic ideas to one or two that best fit the theme

Broad topic idea(s) (*example: the impact of hydroelectric dams on natural resources*):

→ Consider what issues or questions you would like to explore during your research. Do any of your broad topic ideas inspire interesting research questions that relate to the theme? Do any of them involve important issues?

Issues or questions to be explored during research (*examples: How do hydroelectric dams impact the ecosystems of the rivers they are built on? What types of arguments are made for and against dams?*):

→ Think about the types of good sources that may exist on your broad topic idea(s) and consider whether you will have enough sources available for your research. Ask your teacher or librarian if you are unsure about the likely amount and types of good sources available, as well as where to find them.

Types of sources likely available on this topic (*example: books, interviews, websites, audio/video*):

→ Once you have identified which of your broad topic ideas has the best potential for a great History Day project (historical, interesting, fits the theme, inspires research questions, involves important issues, has available sources), do a bit more research to help you narrow down your broad topic idea to a specific topic. Your topic should be narrow enough that you will be able to research it fully in the time available, and should be clear enough that you are able to analyze the information and draw your own conclusions.

Project topic (*example: Debate over the Elwha River dams and eventual dam removal/river restoration*):

My topic is: _____

My topic is: _____

TYPE

→ Choose the type of History Day project you will use to display your work. The type of project you choose should allow you to make good use of your sources, while also taking into account your skills and interests.

Project type: Exhibit Documentary Performance Website Paper

TEAM

→ You may either work alone or work in a group of up to five students. There are no groups in the paper category.

Group or Individual:

I would like to work in a group with the following students:

I would prefer to work alone.

TITLE and THESIS

→ Each History Day project must have a title. Your title should refer to your project topic and may also include a reference to the theme. Your title will likely change as you develop your project.

Working Title (example: *Freeing the Elwha: Debating the Future of America's Dams*):

→ The thesis is the main argument of your project. Your thesis should include your topic and its relation to the theme. Most importantly, it should be persuasive by making an argument for why your topic is significant in history.

Sample thesis by past History Day students:

The conflict surrounding The Elwha River Restoration is one of the most influential environmental disputes of the last century. Not only does it mark a landslide victory for ecological recovery, but it also calls into question whether the viability of hydropower as an energy resource can justify potential environmental externalities. The Elwha debate sets an international precedent, ultimately redefining the future of America's dams.

Working Thesis: