

RESEARCH (in other words, taking notes from your resources)

You should have amassed a decent set of resources by now. **You are always looking for the perfect resources, so don't stop searching!** As you research from your sources, you can use your secondary sources to find better primary sources.

Remember – historians ask questions! You need to develop research questions for your topic. The questions should NOT be basic (dates, obvious facts, textbook stuff). Instead, the questions need to dig deep into the causes and impact of the actions of your topic. You should ask questions about the

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HISTORICAL CONTEXT of your topic (what was going on?)

SPECIFIC CAUSES leading up to your topic

FACTS about the topic

PERSPECTIVES on the topic

IMPACT of the topic

- When you take notes, it is important that you identify the source of EACH PIECE OF INFORMATION that you write down – especially direct quotes.
- Paraphrase or summarize general information, either in your notes or when you assemble your script, exhibit text, etc.
- Direct quotes are ok to use – in fact, they are essential to a great project. All direct quotes **MUST BE CITED!**
- When should you use a direct quote?
- When you want a primary source quote to explain and support your topic
- When you want a historian or expert to help support your thesis
- When you can't say it better yourself

When you take notes for your NHD project, you must organize your research into subtopics that fit your main topic selection. The subtopics above work well for most single events, like a protest, a war, or a battle. For a longer term topic, you may need to develop different subtopics. Whatever the case, **it is essential that you create subtopics for your selected main topic.**

**ALL NOTES MUST BE CLASSIFIED WITH SUBTOPICS
(THINK BUCKETS)!**

ORGANIZING YOUR RESEARCH

Organization is the key to success in any research project, including National History Day. There are many different methods of organizing your research, and your goal is developing one that works for you (as an individual or group).

Some overall organizational methods include ...

Notecards – Using index cards is a time-honored method of organizing research. For each source, you can create one resource card with the proper bibliographic information. On each card, you can use a shorthand or abbreviated identification of your resource, and then take notes on the card. You can use a different card for notes from different subtopics. Once notes have been taken from multiple resources, the cards can be moved around or manipulated to organize the entire project.

SOURCE – McPherson, Battle Cry, 664-665

IMPACT

- High human cost – 23,000 U casualties, ¼ of army
- 28,000 C casualties, 1/3
- Many wounded left in Gettysburg
- Confed never possesses power and reputation they brought into the battle
- Lee tried to resign, Davis wouldn't accept
- Gburg and Vburg were "crucial turning point"
- Confed War Department clerk – "the news from Lee's army is appalling ... This [is] the darkest day of the war."

PowerPoint – You can use PowerPoint as digital notecards, similar to the method listed above. Doing this electronically allows you to type the text once, cut and paste photos and excellent primary source quotes, and manipulate the notes as well. The main drawback is you must have a computer to take the notes.

SOURCE – McPherson, Battle Cry, 647

CAUSE

- Lee proposes to Davis to invade Pennsylvania
- Lee wanted to inflict a huge defeat in the Union's backyard
- take the enemy out of Virginia, feed troops from the Union food
- strengthen the Peace Democrats in the Union and hurt the Republicans
- push for foreign recognition
- Maybe even get Union to ask for peace and recognize Confederacy

SOURCE – McPherson, Battle Cry, 664-665

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SOURCE – LOC

IMPACT



Gettysburg of the War.

Notesheets – You can take notes on paper or on a GoogleDoc. For each resource, you can use one sheet (or more) and identify the subtopics using a different color highlighter, pen, or symbol. The notes can be kept in a large binder, along with photocopies that are also highlighted with the same system. This may be helpful if you have a lot of printed resources.

Wiki (or another online thingy) – You can electronically take notes on a wiki, which all members of a group can edit. The wiki can be organized into subtopics, and you can include a resource page as well. The wiki may be helpful if you have a topic with many internet resources, since you can provide links right on the wiki. Of course, you must have internet access to take your notes and access the wiki.

NoodleBib – You can take notes on all of your topics on NoodleBib. All of your notes can be linked to a specific resource, you can enter your notes as well as ideas, and you can drag and drop them into an outline. You can also organize your notes into topics and tag them with descriptors. Of course, you must have internet access to take your notes and access NoodleBib.

An essential component of a successful History Day project is a solid thesis. A thesis is what you will prove in your project. (The word 'thesis' originates from the Greek word for "proposition"). Your thesis is your argument, your point, your reason for all of your research. You have to have one!

While a thesis is usually associated with written papers, you will need to have a thesis in whatever form of project you choose to produce for the History Day competition. In a documentary video, a performance, and exhibit, or a website, you will also need a thesis!

In your research, your thesis may come at the beginning, the middle, or near the end of the process. Your thesis may also be modified or change completely as you research and complete your project.

So what makes a good thesis? Maybe the best way to answer that question is to ask yourself the simple question "What's the point?" What are you trying to say, to argue, or to prove in your research? What's the big deal about your topic? Why should someone read / watch / listen / point and click around your research?

Here's an example...

- Let's say that you have chosen "*The Children's Crusade in Birmingham in 1963*" as your topic. What are you going to prove about the topic? What's the big deal?
- As you research, you find out that young children (as young as seven) marched to protest the segregation in Birmingham and the treatment of protestors by the local government. You decide your thesis will be "*Children participated in the Children's Crusade against the local government in Birmingham in 1963*". Is it a thesis? No – but it's a start. Get more specific. Make an argument. Prove a point.
- As you research, you find that the Children's Crusade had an impact in the desegregation of the city and the publicity of the Civil Rights movement nationally. You change your thesis to "*The Children's Crusade was important in the desegregation of Birmingham in the 1960s.*" Good thesis? Not yet, but you are getting there.
- Get more specific. Why were they important? How important? Use some vocabulary to solidify your thesis. After more research, you finally arrive at "*The sacrifices of young African Americans in the Children's Crusade and the resulting media coverage were essential to changing the public opinion of the Civil Rights movement in the 1960s*". It may be a mouthful but it's shaping up!

A FEW HINTS IN DEVELOPING YOUR THESIS:

- 1) Remind yourself of the theme, "Rights and Responsibilities in History"**
- 2) Think about what specific parts of your topic fit with your theme.**
- 3) What are you trying to prove about your topic? What is your argument?**
- 4) As you develop and write your thesis, make sure it applies to the theme.**
- 5) Your thesis can change as your research progresses.**

NHD Notes and Organization Evaluation

By Friday, December 6, you should have met with Taft and presented your organization and thesis to him. You will need to set up a 5-10 minute appointment in order to do this by signing up on the online registration form – first come, first serve. This form will be available in a few weeks. At the meeting and in an email, you should also present your working thesis statement.

Ugh	Okay ...	Nice job!	Oh yeah!!
<p>Individual or group does not meet at all or very late</p> <p>No subtopics are identified or used as a focus for research</p> <p>Little (0-1) if any resources have been analyzed and notes recorded</p> <p>Notes are not evident</p> <p>No resources are identified in notes</p> <p>No obvious organizational system is used</p> <p>No thesis submitted</p> <p>Individual or group is way behind in research</p>	<p>Individual or group is late in setting up meeting</p> <p>Subtopics are identified but not used as a focus for research</p> <p>Few (2-3) resources have been analyzed and notes recorded</p> <p>Detailed notes are not evident</p> <p>Few resources are identified in notes</p> <p>Organizational system is confusing or inconsistent</p> <p>Individual or group is just starting to research</p>	<p>Individual or group meets within the assigned time frame</p> <p>Appropriate subtopics are identified and used for research</p> <p>Many (4-5) resources have been analyzed and notes recorded</p> <p>Detailed notes are evident</p> <p>Some resources are identified in notes</p> <p>An organizational system is utilized</p> <p>Thesis is direct and well worded</p> <p>Individual or group is on their way to success in research</p>	<p>Individual or group is proactive and chooses to meet early</p> <p>Appropriate subtopics are identified and are key to organized research</p> <p>Many resources (6+) have been analyzed and notes recorded</p> <p>Notes are very detailed</p> <p>All resources are identified in notes</p> <p>An organizational system is utilized and widespread</p> <p>A well-thought thesis demonstrates extensive analysis</p> <p>Individual or group is well on their way to success in research</p>

THESIS -