

National History Day

Choosing a Category

Historical Papers

A paper is the traditional form of presenting historical research. Various types of creative writing (For example, fictional diaries, poems, etc.) are permitted, but must conform to all general and category rules. Your paper should be grammatically correct and well written.

How is a Paper Different from Other Categories?

A paper is a highly personal and individual effort, and if you prefer to work alone this may be the category for you. Papers depend almost entirely on words to tell the story, and you can usually include more information in a paper than in some of the other categories.

Historical Performances

A performance is a dramatic portrayal of your topic's significance in history and must be an original production. It should be scripted based on research of your chosen topic and should have dramatic appeal, but not at the expense of historical information.

How is a Performance Different from Other Categories?

The performance category is the only one that is presented live. Developing a strong narrative that allows your subject to unfold in a dramatic and visually interesting way is important. Memorizing, rehearsing, and refining your script is essential, so you should schedule time for this in addition to research, writing, costuming and prop gathering.

Historical Documentaries

A documentary should reflect your ability to use audiovisual equipment to communicate your topic's significance. The documentary category will help you develop skills in using photographs, film, video, audio, computers, and graphic presentations. Your presentation should include primary source materials and also must be an original production. To produce a documentary, you must have access to equipment and be able to operate it.

How is a Documentary Different from Other Categories?

Creating a documentary is different from other categories because of the technology necessary. Before deciding to create a documentary, you should ask yourself the following questions:

- Am I interested in using computers, cameras, and other technologies?
- Can I conduct and record interviews (for the purpose of including film clips in the documentary)?
- Can I find film clips to use in my documentary?
- Are there enough still photographs related to my topic available that I can use in my documentary?
- Do I have access to equipment that will be needed to make a documentary?
- Is creating a documentary the best way to show off my topic?

Historical Websites

The website category is the most interactive of all NHD categories. A website should reflect your ability to use website design software and computer technology to communicate your topic's significance in history. Your historical website should be a collection of web pages, interconnected by hyperlinks, that presents both primary and secondary sources and your historical analysis. To engage and inform viewers, your website should incorporate interactive multimedia, text, non-textual descriptions (e.g., photographs, maps, music, etc.), and interpretations of sources. To construct a website, you must have access to the Internet and be able to operate appropriate software and equipment.

How is a Website Different from Other Categories?

Websites can display materials online, your own historical analysis as well as primary and secondary sources. Websites are interactive experiences where viewers can play music, look at a video or click on different links. Viewers can freely navigate and move through the website. Websites use color, images, fonts, documents, objects, graphics and design, as well as words, to tell your story.

Historical Exhibits

An exhibit is a visual representation of your research and interpretation of your topic's significance in history. The analysis and interpretation of your topic must be clear and evident to the viewer. Labels and captions should be used creatively with visual images and objects to enhance the message of your exhibit.

How is an Exhibit Different from Other Categories?

The exhibit category is three dimensional and is displayed on a physical structure. Exhibits use color, images, documents, objects, graphics, and design, as well as words, to tell your story. Exhibits can be interactive experiences by asking viewers to play music, look at a video, or open a door or window to see more documents or photos.

