

Sample 2  
**How to Research**

Find information about your subject from as *many different kinds of sources* as possible. Use the school library, public library, and the Internet. You will write a letter to a place that may have information to send you. National parks and public museums are especially good about responding to students. **Ten sources are required.**

**Types of Sources and Number Required for Class Project**

Types of Sources	# Required*
<b>Book, or part of a book</b> – Books usually give more depth and context than shorter sources. (Your textbook does not count as a source, although you should read the relevant portions.) Use the Hart Library and the Pleasanton Public Library. In addition to the books on the shelf, you can request books from other libraries through LINK services. A Pleasanton Library card is ideal!	<b>Two required</b>  <b>No limit!</b>
<b>Encyclopedia</b> – These may be online or book encyclopedias from your teacher’s classroom or any library. Several are online. Choose carefully. You may not cite Wikipedia, but if you follow the links at the bottom of their articles, you will probably find other excellent sources.	<b>Limit: two</b>
<b>Periodicals, Magazines, and Newspapers</b> – Any publication citing a month and year (or day, month, year) is a periodical. <i>Cobblestone, Calliope, Boys Life, and Smithsonian</i> often provide excellent background information, and most libraries save copies. Check local newspaper archives for articles about your topic, or about its remaining legacy today. Periodicals from the time of your topic are primary.	<b>One required</b>
<b>Documentaries</b> – These provide context and a broad overview. Public libraries lend these; public television (PBS), and the History Channel offer many choices.	<b>One recommended</b>
<b>Internet Secondary</b> – Your Pleasanton Library card and Hart password provide access to Gale databases, which have excellent articles. Museums, universities, and news organizations (BBC, History Channel) are also reliable. See <b>Internet Tools</b> above.	<b>Limit: two</b> <b>Monitor for quality!</b>
<b>Primary Documents and Images</b> – Diaries, contracts, birth or marriage certificates, letters, military records, baptismal certificates, and property deeds are all excellent primary sources. So are portraits and photographs taken at the time. You may have some within your own family! Do not overlook artifacts like clothing and tools. Check the Library of Congress for a treasure trove of primary sources. Take notes just as you would with a written source.	<b>Two required</b> <b>Unlimited</b>
<b>Pamphlet</b> – Parks and monuments usually respond to requests for information by sending pamphlets containing facts, maps, and other visuals.	<b>Unlimited</b>
<b>Interview</b> – Telephone or in-person interviews with experts are a huge asset to your research. Ask the expert by email first. Submit your questions in writing, verify a convenient time to talk, and then follow up by phone or in person. <i>Professors at Cal State East Bay know about this project and are prepared to speak with students.</i>	<b>One encouraged!</b>  <b>Unlimited</b>
<b>Total Required Sources</b> (including two books, one news or magazine, two primary documents or images)	<b>Ten</b>

\* Students moving on to a NHD competition may want more than 10 sources to be competitive.



## Taking Notes

When taking notes, look for:

- topic background,
- evidence of theme,
- immediate impacts, and
- long-term effects or why it matters today.

Follow the method we practice in class for taking notes. Start with a citation, the correct bibliographical information for that source, at the top of the page. Format is shown on your MLA Guide, or sign up for free **NoodleTools**.

Use the two-column Cornell Notes format, making sure to put **unanswered questions** in the left column. Use the right column for headings and details. Write notes **in your own words**. Include some direct quotes in your notes, especially opinions. (See **Using Direct Quotations** below.) For books and magazines, write page numbers in the left margin so you can locate the information again if needed.

After each notes turn-in, evaluate your sources using the **Annotated Bibliography** worksheet.

## Using Direct Quotations

Word-for-word quotes from experts and eyewitnesses of your topic can give vivid information about your topic and powerful testimony about its effects. Quotes from primary sources are best, but sometimes quotes from expert secondary sources are useful, too. You will definitely want direct quotes when you interview an expert on your subject.

- Look for three or more sentences or phrases by authors or eyewitnesses that help describe the main ideas of your topic or give some valuable opinion about it.
- Copy words exactly, using quotation marks. Quote interviewees *exactly*.

- Copy the author of the quoted words, identify that person's role in relation to your topic, and give the date or time period of the quote. The more exact, the better and the easier to make commentary later!
- Commentary: concise phrase or sentence telling your thoughts about the quote: what inspired it, what impact it had, how it may have influenced others, or what it otherwise showed about your topic.

## Research Letter

You will be asked to write a brief letter to institution or person likely to have information about your topic that might be sent to you, such as a chamber of commerce of a city important to your topic, a state or national park, museum, monument, or other institution with a land address. You may send your letter via email or through the regular mail services. Send as many as you wish to different locations.

- Use business letter format.
- *To Whom It May Concern* is a good salutation or the director's actual name.
- Tell your grade and school, and the topic you have chosen to research.
- Politely ask if information might be sent to you about your topic. If you are writing to an expert, ask if they are willing to be interviewed as part of your research.
- Express your appreciation for whatever the reader of the letter can do to help you.
- *Sincerely* is a good closing. Don't forget to sign your full name and type it, too.
- For mailed letters, address and stamp an envelope to turn in with your letter. Your name and return address go in the upper, left corner. Do not seal the envelope before your letter is graded.
- If you email a museum or other land location, also use the same business letter

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format then print and turn in a copy of your sent email without an envelope.

### **Annotated Bibliography**

(one per group, written by all members)

As you finish notes, record sources online or on the Annotated Bibliography

Worksheet. Include:

- author,
- title,
- city,
- publisher,
- and publishing date or other source information needed according to the MLA Guide, NoodleTools or another service.

This information will be easy to pull together at the end of the project if your source information is all in one place, adding new sources as you use them. *You will not receive credit for textbook or Wikipedia sources.*

In one to three sentences, describe

- what sort of information (primary, secondary, biography, diary, photograph, and so on) you found in the source,
- how the source helped you understand the topic, and as you write your final bibliography,
- how that source was useful in helping your put together your final project.

Remember, you are *evaluating* the information, not taking notes. Was the source biased? If so, how did you balance your research?

On the final copy:

- Make sure you have followed a style guide, either Turabian or MLA.
- Make sure you have two sections: Primary Sources and Secondary Sources. Within each of these sections, alphabetize by author (where available) or by title.

- Make sure that you correct any errors your teacher found in grading your worksheet.
- Make sure that each entry has an annotation.

### **Writing The Thesis Statement**

(one per group, written by all members)

The statement is a claim written after much research, and is the heart of your project. It states what you are proving and connects your topic to the theme. Additionally, the statement should include important effects on people or groups over time, and even in our world today. All your practice writing essays over the years will help you succeed with this important step. Samples and practice materials will be provided online and in class.

A strong statement:

- States an argument
- Connects to topic to theme
- Is proven in your project
- Is the main idea of your project
- Mentions three areas of focus
- Is between 30 and 60 words
- Is one or two sentences

You will display your statement prominently on your exhibit or website home page, or introduce your performance, documentary, or historical paper with it.

### **Creating the Final Project**

See <http://www.nhdca.org> for the full, official National History Day-CA rules in each category below.

**Exhibits - Miniature Museums.** An exhibit is a miniature museum. People look at visuals and objects, while reading a limited amount of text. If you enjoy creating and assembling objects, you will enjoy this option. There is a 500 student composed word limit, but you are not limited to the number of quotes you include on the exhibit.



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(one per group, written by all members; not required for Historical Papers)

**Website.** If you enjoy working online and would like to combine text, images, and even sound, a website can be very effective. National History Day provides an easy web-making tool (<http://nhd.weebly.com/>). There is a 1200-word limit for student-composed text, and a 4-minute total limit for multi-media clips.

**Documentary.** A combination of informative primary-source visuals and a well-written script makes a superb documentary. The time limit is 10 minutes. Only students listed as project participants may operate the equipment, read the narration, and appear on camera. Students have found *iMovie* to be one useful tool; others are also possible.

**Performance.** A 10-minute dramatic interpretation can be a highly effective way to present your research. Simple costume changes – putting on a hat or removing a pair of glasses – can allow one or two students to play multiple parts. Any great texts you learn for a dramatic performance will stay in your memory for years to come.

**Historical Paper.** If you really enjoy writing and your topic lends itself more to words than pictures, a historical paper may be an excellent choice. Use your best essay-writing skills to produce a paper no shorter than 1500 words and no longer than 2500 words. Instead of using pictures and maps, write 1) an introductory paragraph with the claim made in your thesis statement, 2) about nine body paragraphs with evidence to prove your claim and commentary for each point of proof of your claim and 3) a closing paragraph that emphasizes thesis with commentary. Your bibliography does not count in the word limit, and you will not write a process paper at the end of the project.

## Writing The Process Paper

At the very end of the project, you will write a Process Paper. In it, you describe your research methods and final conclusions. In 500 words or less, you explain:

- **Topic:** why you chose it and project category (exhibit, website, etc.)
- **Research:** methods, special places or people you visited, what you learned from your research methods
- **Creating the project:** processes; problems and solutions
- **Theme:** how your topic relates to this year's theme; your thesis statement should be the basis—just add some evidence to explain short- and long-term effects

Write or type a rough draft first. Proofread carefully. Did you use an interesting style, descriptive vocabulary, correct spelling, grammar, and punctuation?

Next, revise your rough draft and add a title page. Include a creative title plus your heading. *See the Rule book for the correct layout of the title page.*

## Classroom Presentations

You will give a 3-5 minute, informal, graded presentation on your project with emphasis on 1) background of your topic, 2) this year's theme, and 3) impact of your topic.

## Group Projects

**Have you read all of the previous material?** Good! Now you may consider the group option. Carefully read on...

**History Day rules** allow students to cooperate in a group of up to five students in creating an exhibit, performance, documentary, or website. (Individuals write historical Papers only.)

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- You may work with a partner or partners with parent permission. See calendar for contract due date. Contracts are online or available from your teacher.
- **Any student who misses or turns in a late History Day assignment must work as an individual from that point on.**
- Group projects must evenly reflect the work of **all** the students in the group.
- **Research:** Each person in a group will take their own notes on ten or more sources each, and record their sources and annotate them online or on the Annotated Bibliography worksheet as individuals. Talk to each other. Do you have all different sources? All sources will later be combined into one bibliography.
- **History Day letter:** one by each group member to a different institution.
- **Final Annotated Bibliography:** One per group, combining all members' sources. **Impact statement:** one per group; work together!
- **Timeline:** one per group; work together!
- **Process Paper:** one per group; work together!

Each teacher needs a copy of the group timeline, statement, and process paper when they are due.

### Questions?

## Entertainment, Contests, and Competitions

*See Calendar for dates and locations.*

### All are invited to participate!

#### School History Day Display Night

View documentaries and websites, stroll through a gallery of mini-museum exhibits, and enjoy watching performances. Invite your

friends and family, vote for your favorites, and encourage authors of best projects to enter History Day!

#### School History Day Competition

If you win at this after-school event, you can compete at county and maybe go on to state! Local teachers and community members, and possibly History Day alumni will examine your project and interview you. Two projects in each category may go forward to the County Competition. Teacher approval required for competition.

#### County History Day Competition

Winners of our school competition will display their projects alongside the best from many schools in the County. Judges will interview students about their work; two winners per category will be chosen to compete at the State Finals. **Extra credit awarded for attending!**

#### California History Day Finals

Junior Division (middle school) judging will be held on Friday; Senior Division (high school) is judged on Saturday. History Day State Finals provide a unique opportunity to see top-notch student work from around the state. Middle- and high school students present spine-tingling performances of our country's great historical moments; documentaries are prime-time caliber; exhibits are highly professional. Earning a spot at State Finals is an honor! Student travel will be the parents' responsibility; a parent or guardian must accompany the student. **Extra credit awarded!**

**National History Day** takes place in June in College Park, MD.

### Questions?