A Guide to National History Day

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What is National History Day?

What is National History Day? National History Day is a year long academic program focused on historical research, interpretation, and creative expression for 6th-12th grade students. Students begin this educational journey by selecting a topic to research which fits into the annual National History Day theme. From there, they conduct original research, which they present through the creation of an exhibit, performance, documentary, paper, or website. Students then compete at the regional, state, and national level, should their project be selected to advance. Available to them are scholarships and national recognition for their achievements.

The extrinsic rewards for students are obvious here: monetary awards for their successful projects. But, what is in it for you as a teacher? Not only are there awards presented to teachers for their success, there are also benefits in terms of your students overall success in school.

Recently, a study was completed which presented statistics proving that the National History Day competition benefits students in their academic settings. Some of the research found includes that National History Day teaches students critical thinking, writing, and research skills while boosting performance across all subjects. Not only are NHD students better writers, they also outperform non-NHD students on state standardized tests. Critical thinking skills flourish in the NHD program, teaching students to digest, analyze, and synthesize information. On top of this, NHD also teaches students 21st century college and career ready skills, preparing them for college and beyond. For more details on the study, or to read the complete report, go to www.nhd.org/NHDworks.

Not only will NHD enrich your career as a history educator, it will also benefit your students, engaging them with the historical inquiry process and teaching them important skills, which translate to other subjects and life as a whole.

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1 http://www.nhd.org/images/uploads/NHD1_KeyFindingsbrochureFINAL.pdf
2 http://www.nhd.org/images/uploads/NHD1_KeyFindingsbrochureFINAL.pdf
Scope and Sequence

Organization is a key component to the success of your students in the National History Day competition. The structure of a detailed plan allows students to see the direction they are heading, allowing for thoughtful and organized projects.

It is important when beginning the NHD program to plan out assignments and deadlines for students. The following is a timeline created by Megan Gately at the Arizona Historical Society to help guide you through the NHD competition. This timeline is available at [http://www.arizonahistoricalsociety.org/nhd/docs/NHD_Timeline_Teachers.pdf](http://www.arizonahistoricalsociety.org/nhd/docs/NHD_Timeline_Teachers.pdf). Other timelines are also available on the National NHD site at [http://nhd.org/TeacherGettingStarted.htm](http://nhd.org/TeacherGettingStarted.htm).

**TIMELINE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>September/October</th>
<th>Introduction to National History Day</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Introduce Primary and Secondary Sources to students</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Introduce uncovering bias in sources</td>
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<td>• Introduce how to use the library and Internet for sources</td>
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<tr>
<th>October/November</th>
<th>Brainstorming/Relating to the Theme</th>
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<td></td>
<td>• Present the theme</td>
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<td>• Decode terms and definitions of the theme</td>
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<td>• Relate previously learned material to the theme</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Distribute/present suggested topics from future material and students interest</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Demonstrate how to narrow a topic</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Locate secondary sources</td>
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<td>• Using library and Internet for research</td>
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<th>November/December</th>
<th>Research Skills</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Locate primary sources</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Develop a thesis</td>
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<td>• Preliminary outline of historical argument, thesis, and supporting content</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Introduce citing sources and compiling a bibliography</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• <a href="http://www.arizonahistoricalsociety.org/nhd/docs/research_checklist.pdf">Be sure to check out the Research Checklist through the Arizona Historical Society at</a></td>
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<th>January</th>
<th>Constructing the Project</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Select the category: paper, exhibit, performance, documentary, website</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Begin construct the entry</td>
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<td>Month</td>
<td>Event</td>
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| Finalizing the Entry | • Present the entry to parents and teachers  
• Revise based on feedback |
| February | Regional Contests  
• Check website for submission dates and procedures (in Arizona: [http://www.arizonahistoricalsociety.org/nhd/default.asp](http://www.arizonahistoricalsociety.org/nhd/default.asp); National Website: [www.nhd.org](http://www.nhd.org))  
• **Remember that students need to be registered in advance of the competition! This cost $20 per student! They also need to submit their bibliography, website, and paper in advance of the competition as well!** Check your local NHD website for the exact details of this process. |
| March | Making Changes  
• Revise projects using judges’ feedback  
• Students who are advancing to the state competition should take this time to prepare |
| April | State Competition  
• Remember that papers and URLs must be submitted two weeks before the competition |
| May | Revisions  
• National qualifiers improve projects using judges’ feedback  
• National qualifiers attend Student Prep Workshop |
| June | National Contest |

**OVERALL PROJECT ASSIGNMENTS**

This schedule may seem intense, but we assure you that the results are worth the work! In order to make things flow smoothly (as well as they can in the world of education) we suggest that you have an NHD related assignment due at least once a week. This will help you to make sure that your students are advancing with their projects and are keeping on task. It is difficult to provide one-on-one attention to every student, but setting aside specific classroom workdays will help you assist each student as much as you can. The following is a list of possible assignments to assign to students throughout the school year:

- Have students choose a topic for their research project. Ask them to write this down, why they chose this topic, and how it relates to the NHD theme.
- Have students develop five to six questions that will guide their research. These should be open-ended questions that they will be able to answer once they put together good information. They should not be able to be answered by yes or no.
• Find a primary source and fill out a Document Analysis Guide (located in The Importance of Primary and Secondary Sources section)
  o This assignment can be given multiple times, as students need to have multiple primary sources for their projects.
• Find a secondary source and write down the importance of this source to their project.
  o This assignment can be given multiple times, as students need to have multiple secondary sources for their projects.
• Have students turn in a written copy of their thesis. This can be done in stages. For example, have students turn in a rough draft, a second draft, and a final draft of their thesis.
• Ask students to respond in written form to the following questions:
  o What is your argument?
  o What are the long-term results of your topic?
  o What are the short-term results of your topic?
  o What is the heart of your topic?
  o What are some primary sources that support your argument?
  o What are some secondary sources that support your argument?
  o How does your argument relate to the NHD theme?
• Have students turn in a rough draft, second draft, and final draft of their Process Paper.
• Have students turn in a rough draft, second draft, and final draft of their bibliography.
• Have students peer edit each other's project content.

STUDENT WEBSITES

One way to keep track of all your students' projects is to have everyone create a website, regardless of if they are making one for the competition. Students can easily create a website through www.weebly.com, the preferred website creator for NHD. Once their page is developed, those students who are not submitting a website for NHD can then publish information that they will include on their exhibit boards or in their historical papers, documentaries, and performances. Those who are submitting a website will simply continue work on their project as normal. This will allow you to have easier access to what your students are working on, as well as providing them with an electronic place to organize their materials.

EDMODO

Should you not wish to have students each develop a website, you can create an Edmodo page for your classroom, specifically organized for NHD. Edmodo, located at
www.edmodo.com, is essentially an educational Facebook page for your classroom. It provides teachers and students “a secure place to connect and collaborate, share content and educational applications, and access homework, grades, class discussions and notifications.” This is the perfect platform for NHD! Students can turn in their assignments and engage in classroom discussions on their projects remotely and in the classroom.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Remember that there are a number of resources available for you and your students on the Internet. The Arizona Historical Society has a great page with resources for teachers and students alike at http://www.arizonahistoricalsociety.org/nhd/default.asp. The National website for NHD also has numerous resources available for you at www.nhd.org.

3 http://about.edmodo.com/
The Importance of Primary and Secondary Sources

Let’s start with a basic question. What is the difference between a primary source and secondary source? For some of you the answer to this question may be easy. Yet, consider your students. Do they know the difference between a primary and secondary source? Some of them may, but before they can begin researching for National History Day, they need to have an understanding of what these sources are and what they look like. To assist you when instructing them on these sources, consider these points.

**PRIMARY SOURCE DEFINITION**

A primary source is a piece of information about a historical event or period in which the creator of the source was an actual participant in or a contemporary of a historical moment.  

A typical rule of primary sources is that they were created during the historical period you are studying. Primary sources include:

- Songs
- Objects
- Cultural Artifacts
- Journals/Diaries
- Letters
- Speeches
- Maps
- Autobiographies
- Government documents
- Public Records
- Birth/Death/Marriage Certificates
- Photographs/Paintings/Drawings
- Video Footage
- Historic Sites
- Oral Histories
- Newspapers/Magazine Articles

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4 A Guide to Historical Research through the National History Day Program, National History Day, p. 82
SECONDARY SOURCE DEFINITION

Secondary sources are those that were not created first-hand by someone who participated in the historical era. These are usually created by historians and are normally based on their interpretation of primary sources. Secondary sources are typically written decades, if not centuries, after the historical event took place.

Secondary Sources include:

- Biographies
- Encyclopedias
- Interviews with experts/scholars
- School history textbook
- Media documentaries about a historic event (i.e. a documentary on The History Channel)
- Books written about a topic by a historian
- Films about a historical event which were not filmed at the time

When researching a topic, it is important to look at both the primary and secondary sources available. Primary sources are untainted by time, and are subject to each individual’s interpretation. Secondary sources help researchers to develop interpretations of an event and the primary sources about this event.

PRIMARY SOURCE WEBSITES

National History Day projects are based on independent student research that utilizes primary and secondary sources. While the majority of sources provided for teachers are secondary (textbooks, library books, etc.), the truly unique research comes from using primary sources. There are a number of excellent websites to get your students started on finding such resources that will prompt their interest, or catapult them into intriguing historical topics. The following is list of appropriate websites for students to find primary sources:

Bill of Rights Institute Website: [www.billofrightsinstitute.org](http://www.billofrightsinstitute.org)

Center for History and New Media: History Matters: [www.historymatters.gmu.edu](http://www.historymatters.gmu.edu)

C-SPAN in the Classroom: [www.c-spanclassroom.org](http://www.c-spanclassroom.org)

Digital History Website: [www.digitalhistory.uh.edu](http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu)

The Library of Congress: [www.loc.gov](http://www.loc.gov) (There is also a section of this website devoted to teachers: [www.loc.gov/teachers](http://www.loc.gov/teachers))

The Library of Congress American Memory Website: [www.loc.gov/memory](http://www.loc.gov/memory)
The National Archives Website: www.archives.gov

The National Archives Experience: Docs Teach Website: http://docsteach.org/documents

The National Archives Teachers’ Resources for National History Day: http://www.archives.gov/education/history-day/index.html

PBS Online: www.pbs.org

The Smithsonian Education Website: www.smithsonianeducation.org

Teachers Domain Social Studies Website: www.teachersdomain.org/collection/k12/socst

Virtual Smithsonian Museum Website: http://2k.si.edu/

World History Matters Website: www.worldhistorymatters.org

**There are also many topic specific websites that will benefit your student’s research.

**USING ARCHIVES AND MUSEUMS**

While the Internet is a fast and relatively simple way of doing research, it is also beneficial to introduce students to the world of historical research through archives and museums. If possible, set up an appointment with a local historical library, archives, or museum to demonstrate to students the process historians go through when doing research. Not only will this enlighten students to the actual process of doing research, but it will also help them to see that the Internet is not the only way to conduct research.

One fact to consider is that there are prizes available for NHD topics dealing with local issues. Should students be interested in researching a local topic they can find a number of sources through their local historical society. In Arizona, the Arizona Historical Society provides a number of services to assist teachers and students studying local topics. They will even send primary sources to your classroom for free! For more information on how to schedule local primary sources to come to your classroom, contact Megan Gately at mgately@azhs.gov.

**SECONDARY SOURCES**

While primary sources are a vital part of any successful NHD project, secondary sources have an equally important role as well. Secondary sources give context to primary sources. When looking at a photo from the 1920s or reading a journal entry from the 1860s, context is needed to provide a meaningful interpretation. The idea of presentism comes into play here as well. Students in history classrooms have a tendency to look at history through the lens of the present, taking into account what is already known about the topic they are studying. To create a significant interpretation of history, students and teachers alike must
shed the lens of presentism and look at the historical artifacts as though they have no knowledge of the future from that point in history.

Secondary sources allow students to give historical context to primary sources, hopefully allowing them to discard presentist views and see the historical meaning instead. While it will be easier for your students to find secondary sources on the Internet, book sources are equally important for them to investigate. The Internet can hold inaccurate information, leading students in the wrong direction in their research. Remember to instruct your students to look at your school library, public library, and close university libraries for useful secondary sources as well as researching on the Internet.

**PRIMARY SOURCE INSTRUCTION**

As a teacher, it can be difficult to include primary sources in your classroom. However, while difficult, it is also incredibly important. History is composed of primary sources. As such, your students need exposure to them. Combining these sources with secondary information is the key to a successful history lesson, and, in turn, a successful NHD project. There are many tools available to help guide you in the instruction of primary sources. Some of the best are located on the Library of Congress’ website [www.loc.gov](http://www.loc.gov) and the National Archives website, [www.archives.gov](http://www.archives.gov). The following link will take you to Primary Source Analysis Guides for Written Documents, Photographs, Cartoons, Posters, Maps, Artifacts, Motion Pictures, and Sound Recordings which will benefit students when they are analyzing primary sources: [http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets/](http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets/).

Some questions that teachers should ask students when analyzing primary sources include:

- Where do you think this came from?
- Who wrote/created this source?
- Why do you think somebody created this?
- What do you think was happening when this was created?
- Who do you think was the audience for this source?
- Why do you think this source is important?

More on this type of questioning is available in our Historical Thinking section.

**LESSON PLAN**

The following is a lesson plan from the Library of Congress Teachers’ Resources website, which provides a great activity to help introduce primary sources to your students!
Primary Sources and Personal Artifacts Lesson Plan

Courtesy of the Library of Congress,

Lesson Overview
This lesson plan introduces the practice of using primary sources; where to find primary sources, what they are, how to examine them, and how to construct a context to tell more of the story.

Objectives
Students will:

• Analyze personal artifacts as primary sources;
• Analyze historical primary sources; and
• Connect historical text with primary sources.

Standards
Find out which standards this resource meets

Time Required
One week

Recommended Grade Level
• 6-8
• 3-5

Topic
• Culture & Folklife

Era
• Postwar United States, 1945-present
• Great Depression and WWII, 1929-1945

Credits
Mary A. Ritter

Lesson Preparation
Materials
• Primary Source Analysis Tool

Resources
• Primary source sets
Lesson Procedure

Day 1: Introduction to Personal Primary Sources
Display personal primary source documents and personal artifacts that reflect something important in your own life. Display the artifact and instruct the students to use the [Primary Source Analysis Tool](#) to record their observations of the artifact. Before the students begin, select questions from the teacher’s guide [Analyzing Primary Sources](#) to focus and prompt analysis and discussion.

Students may place a value on the artifact from a reviewer and owner perspective. This leads to a discussion of what brings value, as well as meaning, to an artifact. Help students to distinguish between how an owner would place personal value on the artifact from how a reviewer would place value on the artifact.

Some suggestions for personal artifacts are:

- Published documents—an official document about you, i.e., driver’s license, birth certificate, teaching credential, passport;
- Unpublished documents—a letter written to you, diary, journal;
- Oral traditions/histories—a family story, and
- Visual documents/artifacts—a photograph, drawing, caricature, trophy, locket, or medal.

Day 2: Student Activity
Ask students to bring their own personal artifacts and display them for their group of three students. Teams of three review each artifact supplied by team members and interpret them to determine information about the owners’ personalities and lifestyles. Each team works together to complete the [Primary Source Analysis Tool](#), answering additional questions from the teacher’s guide [Analyzing Primary Sources](#) at your discretion.

Day 3: Sharing the Results
When the groups' [Primary Source Analysis Tools](#) charts are complete, the reviewers share their results with the class. The artifact owner constructs the context that reveals more of the story. Students may place a value on the artifact from a reviewer and owner perspective. This may continue the discussion of what brings value to an artifact.

Day 4: Introducing Primary Sources from the Library of Congress
Introduce students to a selection of primary sources from the [Primary Source Sets](#). As a whole class, students complete a [Primary Source Analysis Tool](#). The students analyze the primary sources, recording their thoughts on the [Primary Source Analysis Tool](#). Before the students begin, select questions from the teacher’s guide [Analyzing Primary Sources](#) to focus their work, and select additional questions to focus and prompt a whole class discussion of their analysis.
Discuss the value of the historical primary sources with the class, returning as needed to the previous discussion of their own artifacts. Students may write a reflection connecting their own artifacts to their study of the historical primary sources.

**Extension**
The lesson may be extended using the following activities:

- Create slide shows or Web pages illustrating the literary work, artifacts, and 5-W poetry. Add soundtracks of students reading their poetry or music to the slide shows or Web pages.
- Other literary works may be used.

Use direct quotations of phrases and vocabulary from a novel, short story or non-fiction piece that they have read. Students answer the 5-Ws:

- Who;
- What;
- Where;
- When;
- Why, and sometimes
- How.

Students attempt to match these "answers" to both the literary work and the primary source. You may want to write a beginning verse together, and then have them work in teams of three to add one or two more verses. Be sure to instruct them in the skills of capitalization and punctuation for poetry.

Suggestions for writing the poem:

- Students may write individual poems.
- Students may write individual verses selected from assigned pages, and put their verses together with the rest of the class to form one longer poem that encapsulates the entire story.
- Students may work in groups of two or three to write a group poem.
- Students may work in groups of two or three to create a verse selected from assigned pages and put their verses together with the rest of the class to form one longer poem that encapsulates the entire story.

The final creative activity involves arranging the quoted phrases and individual words into a verse or series of verses that link the artifacts to the literary work.

**Lesson Evaluation**
Evaluate student participation and products according to criteria specified by the teacher or generated with the class.
Introducing National History Day in
the Classroom

Introduction
National History Day is an amazing program that allows for students to create their own research project and focus on inquiry within the classroom. However, this is a yearlong process that can be daunting for even the most outstanding students. So, how do we as teachers get our students to buy into the program and really understand what they are doing in the long run? We know that learning goes up immensely when students know where they are going. So how can we show and better yet, get students to understand the project that they are about to undertake?

Concerns
Throughout our experience, it has been evident that one of the biggest problems that our students face in this program is the amount of time that it takes to fully complete the research project. As a result, many students face the time old issue of trying to complete their project in the later stages of the game. As shown above, it is easy to see that a constant vigilance with your students and maintaining a system that focuses on accountability throughout the year can greatly help your students follow. However, getting your students to really shine within this program begins with getting them to understand what you are proposing, and, finally, getting them on board.

The following lesson shows the teacher one way in which he/she can implement the National History Day program. In addition, this lesson will provide strategies that will allow for the teacher to seamlessly provide understanding for students and maintain an attitude of hard work with high expectations.

Lesson: Introducing National History Day into the Classroom

Enduring Understanding
• How do we get our students to buy into what we are teaching?

Essential Questions
• How do we present National History Day to our students?
• How do we make this project make sense to our students?
How do we explain the depth and breadth of a project as complex as National History Day?

Objectives
- Students will understand what National History Day is.
- Students will be able to comprehend the amount of work that goes into National History Day.
- Students will be able to begin to develop ideas about their own National History Day Projects.

Background Information
In order for you to fully explain what this program is to your students, it is important for you to fully comprehend the facets of this program. Part of this understanding comes from a realization of what the basic requirements are for the program. In addition, it is essential that your students fully realize what the basic requirements are as well. We recommend that you have the requirements on a hand out or put them up in your room so that your students can refer to them often.

Basic Requirements
- Process Paper
- Bibliography
  - In correct format
- A project in one of the following categories
  - Exhibit
  - Documentary
  - Website
  - Paper
  - Performance
- Each of these projects must contain an original thesis that relates to an annual theme. This year’s theme is Turning Points in History.
- Students will come up with their own historical question, research that question, come up with a thesis and, finally, present the conclusions of their research in one of the selected mediums.
- Essentially, what these students are doing is creating a mini capstone project. At the university level a capstone project is a project in which a student creates his or her own thesis, conducts research, and then presents that research, usually in the form of a lengthy paper. For those of us who have done that, we know what a toll that can take on a student. So, the question still remains, how do we get students to understand what it is they are actually doing through this project?
Background Information.

In order to get our students to understand what they are doing, we are going to do a miniature version of National History day. This lesson can be done in a couple of days or certainly within one week. We are going to present a student with some questions, allow them to look within a designated set of primary and secondary sources and come up with their own conclusions.

At every step of this process it is extremely important to be very explicit with your students about how what they are doing will fit into the larger program. We begin with posing some questions to the students. The idea here is to give the students questions that might be ones that they actually come up with in their own projects. Because of the time constraints of when you do this, we recommend that you give the students the questions rather than having them come up with their own. Although this may seem a bit counterproductive, the main idea that we are trying to get across in this lesson is what the project looks like in the long run. There will be time for your students to practice coming up with their own question in the future, but we are focusing on getting them to understand what the project is really about.

For this lesson we will be using the primary source set from the Library of Congress website. We are using a set of primary sources about the creation of the Constitution in the hopes that you teachers reading this might be able to easier implement this lesson earlier into your curriculum. In addition, there are several resources in this resource set that easily show the importance of the Constitution. However, there are numerous sets of primary sources on the Library of Congress website that you could use and that might fit your teaching style better. Here is the site where you can find the sets of primary sources on the Library of Congress website.

http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/primarysourcesets/

In addition, here is the location of the set of primary sources, teacher guide and primary source analysis guide that you might use for this lesson.

http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/primarysourcesets/constitution/

Day by Day

Day 1 (Introductions and Background Knowledge)

Begin class by telling the students exactly what you are going to do over the next couple of days. Be explicit with them. Let them know that you are going to introduce the National History Day program and that they are going to do an activity to help them understand the complexity of this program. Have them ask questions.
Take the rest of the class period to tell the students what you are going to be doing with the activity and providing some background knowledge on the Constitution. You’re your students about the basic tenets of the Constitution, including the branches of government that it sets up, how it was different from the Articles of Confederation and the process by which it was ratified. Remember that what we are trying to get our students to do is to look at the primary sources and see how the creation of the Constitution was a turning point in U.S. History.

Use the historical background section of the Teacher’s guide on the Library of Congress website to help provide background knowledge for your students. In addition, you can also have them do a KWLH Chart to begin the activity and drive this project. A KWLH Chart helps the teacher assess previous knowledge about a topic. The K is for what the student already knows. The W is for what the student wants to know about the topic. The L is for what the student has learned and the H stands for how the students know what they learned.

Finally, have students go home and think of two questions about the Constitution that they didn’t have answered today. This will help them to get into the mood of thinking about creating their own questions for their own projects.

Here are some links to some KWLH Charts:
http://www.vrml.k12.la.us/cc/gr_organ/older/KWLH/KWLH.asp

Day 2 (Essential Questions, Class Thesis and Beginning of Research)

Begin Day 2 by reviewing the background material that was covered in Day 1. In addition, review the process that you explained to the students and explain once again where you are in the process of the mini NHD, as well as where you would be in the larger program so that students get a hang of what you are doing.

Now that your students have gained some background information about the process that the Constitution went through in order to be ratified and what the gist of the Constitution is, it is time to find some driving questions that will push the student’s research. Present these questions to your students without taking or giving answers. We want them to find the answers in the resource sets. Some of these questions might include:

- What made the ratification of the U.S. Constitution a turning point in U.S. History?
- How did the ratification of the U.S. Constitution affect the people of the newly found nation?
- How did the ratification of the U.S. Constitution affect the religious rights of the people in the United States of America?
- How did the ratification of the U.S. Constitution affect the social rights of the people in the United States of America?
Once you have established a question that your class will focus on, have your students begin to look at the set of primary sources from the Library of Congress. We recommend guiding them toward looking at the constitution with the handwritten notes of George Washington to demonstrate the historical significance of the document and then having them listen to the speeches by Coolidge and Harding to show how the document affect people many years after its ratification. Remind them that what they are searching for is an answer to the question and that they have to provide evidence to back up that answer.

Day 3 (Primary Source Research and Thesis)

Again, take the beginning of the day to review what you have been talking about and where you are in the process of the mini NHD program and where you would be in the large scope of things in the bigger NHD program. 

Take the rest of the day to have your students read, look at, listen to and observe the primary sources that are on the web. Encourage or even require them to use the primary source analysis sheets that are on the Library of Congress website. 

At the end of the class, ask some of the students the answers that they have to the questions that they proposed earlier in class. Get a feel for how the class is doing and talk about what a thesis is. Tell them the importance of a thesis and how it fits into the larger project.

Primary Source Analysis Worksheet
http://www.loc.gov/teachers/usingprimarysources/resources/Primary_Source_Analysis_Tool.pdf

Thesis Worksheet

Day 4 (Conclusion and Presentation)

Make sure that you take the beginning of the class period to review where you are in the process of the mini activity and where you are going to go with it today. 

Make sure that everyone has a thesis and the evidence that supports that thesis. Have the students write a conclusion paragraph on what they found and finally, have students present what they found. 

Recap what you just did over the past couple of days by finishing up the KWLH chart that you began at the beginning of the week. Ask the students if they still have questions regarding what the program will be like and use those questions to guide what you work on in the coming months when working on NHD.
Conclusion

This is just one way that you can present this material to your students. There are many other primary source sets as well as many other questions and avenues that you can take when working with this lesson. Above all, remember to be overt with your students. Let them know what this lesson represents in the long run. Although this may seem daunting at first, the challenges and the rewards of the National History Day program will benefit both you and your students in the long run.

Materials

Primary Source Sets

http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/primarysourcesets/

Primary Source Set for the Constitution

http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/primarysourcesets/constitution

Teachers Guide for the Primary Source Set

The Importance of Thinking Historically

Introduction
A large part of what National History Day does is it gets students to think historically. This is most certainly one of the best benefits about the program; but also one of the biggest challenges for our students to fully grasp and do correctly. Thinking historically can be one of the most difficult skills for our students to grasp, but thankfully there are tons of resources out there for both teachers and students to understand this skill.

What is Thinking Historically?
What is historical thinking? What is this term that we use and how why is it important in the 21st century? Teachinghistory.org defines historical thinking as the reading, analysis, and writing that is necessary to develop our understanding of the past. The past is difficult to understand and the ways in which we read history helps us to understand what happened in the past. There are five components of historical thinking that help us answer the question of, “How do we know what we know about the past?”

1. Multiple Accounts and Perspectives
2. Analysis of Primary Documents
3. Sourcing
4. Understanding Historical Context
5. Claim-Evidence Connection

The second thing to realize is that thinking historically is a skill and like any skill it takes practice to do it well. Do not expect your students to get this right off the bat. Instead, work historical thinking skills into your existing lessons so that they can get as much practice as possible.

Resources

Historical Thinking Matters
There are many resources available to the teacher to help students understand what historical thinking is. However, one of the best is historicalthinkingmatters.org. This website is devoted to providing teachers with numerous sources that will help students understand what it means to think historically. In addition, this site has a useful presentation that you can show to students to help them understand what historical
thinking is and how they might use it today. This presentation focuses on a couple of important skills like sourcing, contextualizing, close reading and corroborating.

In addition, another great source is the "What does it mean to think historically?" page from historians.com. Here is the link:


Take a look at this website from The Historical Thinking Project as well. Many of the main concepts and ideas are explained here.

http://historicalthinking.ca/

Here is another great link for a free poster from teachinghistory.org that helps explain historical thinking:

http://teachinghistory.org/nhec-blog/24174

**The 5 C's of Thinking Historically**

This site explains the five C's of thinking historically. Those five C's are, **Change over time**, **Context**, **Causality**, **Contingency**, and **Complexity**. These are all skills that your students need to be aware of when looking at primary and secondary sources. It is important for them to be well versed in the skills of thinking historically, especially if they are to succeed at the National History Day program. Use these websites and the resources that they provide to teach your students how to think historically can be a detective. In addition, there are several good articles by Sam Wineburg and Robert Bain that help flush out this idea.

Here are some more websites and resources that might be helpful when introducing and practicing this skill to your students.

http://historicalthinking.ca/

Also, check out this website that is from the Stanford History Education Group which talks about *Reading Like A Historian*, by Sam Wineburg.

http://sheg.stanford.edu/
In addition to several websites and online articles that explain, discuss and analyze the process and importance of historical thinking there are several activities that you can do in the classroom to help your students work towards becoming proficient in the skill of historical thinking. Here are a couple that you can use with your students.

**See/Think/Wonder**

Choose an object or artwork and look quietly at it for a few moments. Then discuss the following questions. Take time with each question.

1. What do you see? (Make many observations)
2. What do you think about what you see?
3. What do you wonder?

Make sure that when you first do this with your students that you model it for them. Giving them the chance to see how you do it and what type of questions that you are asking will guide them in their own questioning process as well as inspire them to come up with their own inquiries.

**Claim/Support/Wonder**

- Make a claim about the object or artwork.
  - Claim: An explanation or interpretation of an aspect of the object or image.
- Identify support for your claim
  - Support: Things you see, feel, and know that support your claim.
- Ask a question related to your claim.
  - Question: Alternative explanations, counter-evidence, puzzles, or challenges that could call your claim, or its support, into question.

**Creative Questions**

Brainstorm a list of at least 12 questions about the image or object. Look for different kinds of questions. If you like, use these question-starts to help you think.

- Why…?
- What are the reasons…?
- What if…?
- What is the purpose of…?
- How would it be different if…?
• Suppose that…?
• What if we knew…?
• What would change if…?

Review the list and star the questions that seem most interesting. Then select one of the starred questions and discuss it for a few moments. (If you have time, you can discuss more than one option.)

As the activities above state, you can use any object or piece of artwork. We recommend that you use something simple the first time that you do this with students. In my college course, my instructor used a corn chip. It was very simple and something that we all could relate to, but it yielded an enormous amount of questions. Use something that all of the students can relate to and that all have some experience with. After your students have had some more experience with historical thinking, begin to use more difficult objects, like artwork.

**Garbology**

Another activity that you can do with your students is called **Garbology**. This activity is a great way for students to practice their skills at inquiry and making conclusions based upon evidence. The instructions for the activity are at the end of the guide.

**Conclusion**

Remember above all that historical thinking is a skill and is something that needs to be practiced. Do not expect your students to instantaneously pick up this skill and perform it with ease. Use these activities and weave them into your existing curriculum so that your students will have consistent practice with this complicated skill. Remember also to be overt and plain with your students about what you are teaching them and what you expect of them when working on historical thinking. Although this process may be challenging, this skill is extremely vital, not only for the National History Program, but also for the student’s life in general. The rewards will most certainly outweigh the challenges.

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5 The above activities are adapted from the *Artful Thinking Program*, Harvard Project Zero [http://pz.harvard.edu/at/](http://pz.harvard.edu/at/)
The Thesis Statement

A thesis statement is a central thought that holds your entire National History Day (NHD) project together. Early in the research process we like to call this a working thesis; as you gather your information, this thought can, and probably should, evolve. By the time you present your NHD project, however, you need to have a concrete thesis that is supported by evidence.

Thesis = Topic + Theme + Impact. In other words, you are not just introducing your topic, you are creating an argument that expresses your topic’s significance and demonstrates how the theme plays a central part.

Sample Statements: Do’s and Don’ts

Don’t: Martin Luther was born in 1483. He started the Reformation. (Fact)
Do: Beginning in 1517, Martin Luther sparked widespread debate against Roman Catholic religious practices, especially the sale of indulgences, corruption, and the emphasis on salvation through good works. When diplomacy with the Papacy failed, Luther’s arguments succeeded in igniting a religious movement, creating a new sect of faith, and later bringing change to the Roman Catholic Church.

Don’t: Indians fought over Alcatraz Island. Why do you think they would do that? (Rhetorical)
Do: American Indians under the banner of “Indians of All Tribes” debated with government officials over political and social discrimination. In protest, the group reclaimed Alcatraz Island in 1969 as Indian land. Though the group’s primary goals failed to reach fruition through active diplomacy, protestors succeeded in spreading awareness to the American public and consequently ignited the modern American Indian Movement.

Don’t: Had the Continental Congress voted against the 3/5 Compromise, America could have avoided a Civil War. (“What if?” history that cannot be supported with evidence)
Do: When members of the Constitutional Convention started laying the groundwork for a new American government in 1787 debate ensued over slaves and their place in a representative government based on population. The resulting 3/5 Compromise succeeded in ending the initial conflict, allowing the 13 states to move forward as a unified nation, however, by failing to come to a definitive conclusion over the issue of slavery, Constitutional framers established the United States of America with an unstable base that would continue to cause discontent until it exploded into civil war.

Don’t: The 1960’s presidential debate was the first to be shown on television and was really important. Want to know why? Read more below. (Fact/Rhetorical/incomplete)
Do: Senator John F. Kennedy’s ability to master television as a communication medium during the 1960 presidential debates helped secure him the presidency over Vice President Richard M. Nixon. Access to live, visual information succeeded at shifting viewer’s attention from the issues to more superficial attributes such as poise, appearance, and style, undermining the importance and long-standing tradition of open debate. Consequently, Kennedy’s victory marked a new era of political campaigning and changed the way voters understand and receive their candidates.

Don’t: Adolph Hitler was an evil man that killed a lot of Jews. (Opinion)
Do: Following the “Great War,” Adolph Hitler blamed Germany’s downfalls on the country’s Jewish population causing discrimination, violent action, and a mass exodus of European Jewry. Various parties with social, political, and economic interests, including U. S. Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes, initiated debate over immigration to the Alaskan Territory in 1938. The failure to reach a diplomatic compromise resulted in an end to negotiations; closing an opportunity for population growth in Alaska and leading to the death of many, such as the Jews of Neustadt, Germany who believed the United States’ last open frontier to be their only remaining hope for refuge.
THE GARBAGE PROJECT
ADAPTED FROM THE "STUDIES IN ARIZONA HISTORY" TEXTBOOK

Archaeologists learn about the past by studying artifacts. Many times, the items left behind are from ancient garbage piles. By using the same techniques and examining modern trash, we can learn about modern society.

GETTING STARTED

OBJECTIVES
- to show students how deductive reasoning works in studying artifacts
- to illustrate that different assumptions can change interpretations and that removing key pieces of evidence can change interpretations
- to enable students to gain an understanding of why archaeologists are tentative in their conclusions
- to show students that the garbage they leave behind contains artifacts that can be analyzed just as archaeologists analyze other artifacts from the past

STANDARDS ADDRESSED
Grades 4–5 1SS-E1 (PO2), 1SC-E1 (PO3, PO4), 2SC-E4 (PO1), 2SC-E5 (PO1, PO2, PO3)
Grades 6–8 1SC-E3 (PO2), 2SC-E4 (PO1), 2SC-E5 (PO3)

MATERIALS
- paper grocery bags, two per household
- items from the Household lists
- Household lists can be copied and handed out to the student groups instead of collecting the items. However, using real objects increases the amount of information students will have for analysis and increases the interest and level of involvement of the students.
- paper and writing instruments for students to record their findings

TIME
The lesson can take as little as 50 minutes and as long as 90 minutes, depending on extensions and involvement of the group.
Archaeologists learn about the past through the study of artifacts. Often this involves sifting through ancient garbage. We can learn about modern societies using the same techniques. The University of Arizona has an ongoing program called The Garbage Project, directed by Dr. William Rathje, that has studied landfills from different cities. In this lesson students will have an opportunity to analyze fictitious, but feasible, household items and draw conclusions about human behavior based upon their observations. In this exercise there are no right or wrong answers, just logical deductions.

Like detectives, archaeologists use clues from artifacts to reconstruct human behavior. By studying garbage, we can apply the same reasoning to the study of modern societies.

LESSON SETUP

1. Collect all items listed on the Household List. Substitutions can be made. All items must be emptied and cleaned. Make sure all can rims are free of sharp edges.
2. On the day the project will be done, distribute items into four paper grocery bags marked with “household number 1-4 A.” (1A, 2A, etc.)
3. In four separate grocery bags, place the remaining two household items that will be introduced after each group makes the first conclusions. Make sure to mark the bags “household number 1-4 B.” (1B, 2B, etc.)
4. Divide the class into four groups. If the class is large, you can duplicate the households. Instead of four groups, you would have eight. It doesn’t matter that the households are duplicated. Different groups will come to different interpretations and conclusions.

LESSON OUTLINE

1. Ask students “How do archaeologists know what they know?” List their answers on the board for the entire class to see. Discuss each answer as it is given.

2. Ask students to consider why one archaeologist may come to a different conclusion than another if examining the same artifacts.

3. Bring in one item with which the students are not familiar (such as a grapefruit spoon, a tool, an old TV channel dial, etc.). The item can be broken, old or new, or just unfamiliar to the students. Pass the item around the classroom. After everyone has had a chance to view and touch it, have students discuss the artifact. What are some of their conclusions, assumptions, and interpretations? How are they making their interpretations? On what evidence are they basing their conclusions?

4. Read and/or discuss Motel of the Mysteries. You can also use excerpts from the book to illustrate misinterpretation of evidence. If the book is unavailable to the class, be sure to illustrate how analysts, when assuming too much, can easily misinterpret information that leads to wrong conclusions.
5. Instruct the students about what is going to happen. Each group will receive one household bag. As a group, the students must make interpretations and come to conclusions about the people of the household. Questions to consider are:
   a. What can students deduce for absolute certainty about their household?
   b. Can students tell the age, gender, and number of household occupants?
   c. Is it possible to figure out the social status (including occupation and education level)?
   d. Are the occupants poor, middle class, or wealthy?
   e. What other information can students deduce from the household items?
6. Ask students to record the reasons for their deductions. Are some items more helpful in determining the answers than others?
7. Have students break into their pre-assigned groups.
8. Each group should choose a spokesperson to report on the findings of the group.
9. Allow groups ample time to analyze the artifacts in their bag. The teacher can determine the proper amount of time by circulating around the classroom and listening to the group discussions.
10. Once the interpretation phase is over, ask the spokesperson from each group to go to the front of the class. The spokesperson should introduce the items from the household bag and show the class each item. The spokesperson should report the group’s interpretations and conclusions. A class discussion should follow regarding the group’s interpretations. Does anyone have anything to add? Does anyone question any of the group’s interpretations?
11. Continue until all groups have reported their findings.
12. Once spokespersons return to their groups, hand out the second part of the household bags. The two remaining items must now be figured into the group’s original interpretation of the first bag of household artifacts. Repeat the reporting step, as the spokesperson reports on how/if the additional items changed their interpretation and why. Have the added items changed any of the original interpretations? Make the analogy between the missing information and the damage pothunters do to archaeological sites. When evidence is missing, it is impossible to know the entire story.

PASS IT ON!

Use the following page as a handout (if not using real objects for the activity) or use as a list in order to locate objects for each household.
**HOUSEHOLD #1**
1. broken hearing aid or hearing aid batteries
2. diet soda can
3. large enchilada sauce can
4. small green chili can
5. plastic tortilla bag, preferably brand name (not hand-made)
6. broken Barbie doll
7. baby food jar with small screws in it
8. action figure toy
9. sawdust (can be placed inside a Ziploc bag)
10. computer floppy disk

**HOUSEHOLD #1 ADDITIONS**
1. *Wall Street Journal*
2. empty pill bottle labeled Nitroglycerin Tablets

**HOUSEHOLD #2**
1. plastic name badge on pin
2. pizza box
3. used lipstick: the most “in” color
4. hair spritz or hairspray
5. macaroni and cheese box
6. toy bear losing stuffing
7. worn women’s tennis shoes: Size 7
8. SunTran bus passes/transfers
9. empty vitamin bottle
10. cat litter bag

**HOUSEHOLD #3**
1. wine bottle
2. steak bones
3. recipes clipped from a magazine
4. used deodorant container
5. empty film cans
6. *Sports Illustrated*
7. used deck of cards; preferably partial deck
8. empty cigar box
9. photographs of a basketball game

**HOUSEHOLD #3 ADDITIONS**
1. worn, run pantyhose
2. African American hair braid and extension conditioner

**HOUSEHOLD #4**
1. brown rice box
2. empty can of water chestnuts
3. soy sauce bottle
4. worn sandal
5. plastic water bottle
6. worn cloth shopping bag
7. hair tie
8. empty vitamin bottle
9. empty package of garden seeds

**HOUSEHOLD #4 ADDITIONS**
1. *Consumer Reports* magazine
2. broken high-heel shoe