

Unit 17 Contest Season & Evaluating National History Day Projects

At all levels of History Day competitions, judges are looking at the following criteria, which heavily focuses on the history behind your project.

- **80% Historical Quality:** Historical accuracy, analysis and interpretation, historical context, wide research, uses available primary sources, research is balanced. The work clearly relates topic to theme, demonstrates significance of topic in history, draws conclusions, and reflects student voice.
- **20% Clarity of Presentation:** Uses the category effectively to explain ideas.

Rules Compliance: Project follows general guidelines for History Day as well as category-specific rules

Make sure that you carefully review the NHD Rulebook before entering a competition. There have been a number of changes so even veteran teachers and students should review it. A downloadable pdf of the rule book can be found at the program website (www.lagrange.edu/nhd).

Regions and Contests

National History Day has an optional contest component that allows students to showcase their work to teams of professional judges and receive valuable project feedback. Contests take place in the following progression with students moving up and making edits to their project in between each level. By the time students reach the affiliate and national levels, they will have well-rounded and scholarly research projects ready to share with the world!

Contest Progression: District or School -> Region -> Affiliate (State) -> National

School Contests

School level contests are great culminating activities for students to showcase the projects they have worked so hard on in the classroom, as well as an opportunity for them to share their academic accomplishments with the community, parents, and school administration.

In larger schools, a school level contest is used as a tool to narrow down the number of entries sent forward to the regional competition level. School level contests may not be required for participation in all region contests, though they are necessary for larger schools or regional

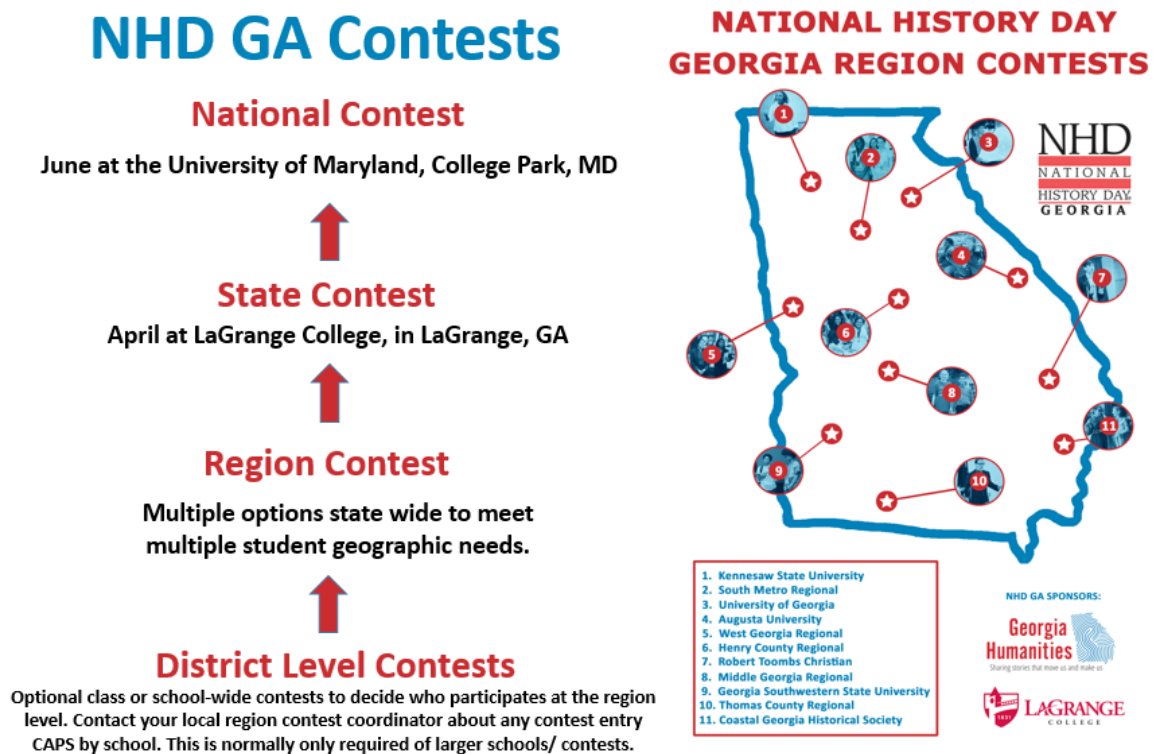
contests with attendance CAP requirements. Contact your local regional coordinator to find out details for your local contest.

Should you choose to hold a school level contest please direct any initial organizational questions to NHD GA Co-Coordinator Kevin Shirley at kshirley@lagrange.edu This is especially important should you choose to host a county/district wide contest, as we have contest management resources we may be able to offer you.

Advice on judge and volunteer recruitment and a sample school contest planning form can be found at the end of this guide section.

Regional Contests:

National History Day Georgia is composed of 11 regional contests located across the state. Students can attend the contest that best fits their geographic needs. For information on where to find your local regional contest, dates, times, and Region Coordinator contest details visit: www.lagrange.edu/academics/undergraduate/majors/history/national-history-day/regional-contest.html



Project Evaluation

At all contests, student projects will be evaluated using the National History Day Project Evaluation Form and NHD Rule Book. You can find examples of evaluation forms for each project category, as well as the student rule book here:

www.lagrange.edu/academics/undergraduate/majors/history/national-history-day/judges.html

The Interview Process

At each level students will be interviewed by a group of judges who will ask students about their work, research, and argument. Some common/potential questions -

National History Day – Possible Interview Questions

The purpose of the interview is to allow the judges to get to know the student(s) and learn a little more about what went into the development of the entries. Information presented by the students during the interviews is not included in the evaluation but may help judges better understand the project. Judges may also ask specific questions about your topic.

- What was your most influential source, and why?
- What is the most important point you are trying to convey about your topic?
- What is the most important thing you learned from completing the entry?
- Why did you pick this topic? What gave you the idea to pick the topic?
- As you did your research, what surprised you the most about the topic?
- What did you find the most difficult about doing research for this entry?
- How did primary sources help you understand your topic?
- How did you come up with the design for your entry?
- Why did __ (the person/people who are the subject) get involved in __ (whatever they did)?
- If you researched an individual, what were the biggest obstacles faced by this person?
- If you researched an event, what were the most important factors that caused this event to occur?
- Why is this topic significant in history?
- What is the modern day impact of your topic on history?
- How does your topic relate back to the theme?
- What is your thesis?
- What primary sources did you find? Where did you find them?
- What websites did you use for research?
- Tell us what each one of you did to contribute to the project. (Groups)
- What difficulties did you face completing your project? How did you overcome them?

- What is the most important skill you think you learned from this process?
- Do you think you have a balanced bibliography? Explain:
- Do you think you placed your topic in historical context? Explain:

The importance of feedback/reflection at each level of the contest structure

All students receive feedback and all students should make and apply changes to their projects at each level of the contest as well as those not competing.

Teachers need to reflect upon their experience and look for ways/opportunities to grow as well.

NHD EXHIBIT
NATIONAL HISTORY DAY

	SUPERIOR	EXCELLENT	GOOD	FAIR	NOT EVENT
HISTORICAL ARGUMENT	☐ Well-formulated historical argument supported by thorough analysis	☐ Historical argument supported by some analysis	☐ Basic historical argument supported by little or no analysis	☐ Weak historical argument with little or no analysis	
WIDE RESEARCH	☐ Integrates body of credible research into a fully developed historical argument	☐ Provides a body of detailed and credible information	☐ Provides a body of credible information	☐ Provides a body of mostly credible information	
PRIMARY SOURCES	☐ Primary sources develop the historical argument	☐ Primary sources support the historical argument	☐ Primary sources illustrate the historical argument	☐ Primary sources are present, but do not connect to the historical argument	
HISTORICAL CONTEXT	☐ Analyzes the short term and long term causes of the historical event(s)	☐ Identifies the short-term and long-term causes of the historical event(s)	☐ Explains the causes of the historical event(s)	☐ Identifies key people, events, and ideas leading to the historical event(s)	
MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES	☐ Analyzes multiple perspectives throughout the historical argument	☐ Demonstrates how multiple perspectives shape the topic	☐ Includes more than one perspective	☐ Provides only one perspective	
HISTORICAL ACCURACY	☐ Historical information is accurate	☐ Historical information includes only minor errors	☐ Historical information includes several errors that impede understanding	☐ Historical information includes major errors that impede understanding	
SIGNIFICANCE IN HISTORY	☐ Draws an evidence-based conclusion about the topic's significance in history	☐ Draws a reasoned conclusion about the topic's significance in history	☐ Draws a conclusion about the topic's significance in history	☐ Attempts to draw a conclusion about the topic's significance in history	
STUDENT VOICES	☐ Student ideas, analysis, argument, and conclusions are original and persuasive	☐ Student ideas are distinct from research	☐ Student ideas reflect research	☐ Student ideas are difficult to discern from research	

STRENGTHS & AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Visit
www.lagrange.edu/nhdjudge to
get a better look at a judge's
evaluation sheet!



	SUPERIOR	EXCELLENT	GOOD	FAIR	NOT EVENT
WRITTEN MATERIAL AND VISUALS	☐ Presents written material that is appropriate to the topic and easily understood	☐ Presents written material that is appropriate to the topic and can usually be understood	☐ Presents written material that is appropriate to the topic but is difficult to understand	☐ Presents written material that is not appropriate to the topic or not understandable	
	☐ Provides clear and concise text that does not contain grammatical or mechanical errors	☐ Provides text that contains minor grammatical or mechanical errors	☐ Provides text that contains several grammatical or mechanical errors	☐ Provides text that contains major grammatical or mechanical errors that impede understanding	
	☐ Provides visual sources that enhance the topic	☐ Provides visual sources that are appropriate to the topic	☐ Provides visual sources that are somewhat appropriate to the topic	☐ Provides visual sources that are not appropriate to the topic	
TECHNICAL	☐ Presents all visual material clearly	☐ Presents most visual material clearly	☐ Presents some visual material clearly	☐ Presents visual material that is not clear	
	☐ Structures exhibit through segmentation and orientation	☐ Mostly structures exhibit through segmentation and orientation	☐ Attempts to structure exhibit through segmentation and orientation	☐ Little attempt to structure exhibit through segmentation and orientation	
	☐ Selects font, formatting, and color that strongly enhance readability and are highly appropriate to the topic	☐ Selects font, formatting, and color that adequately enhance readability and are appropriate to the topic	☐ Selects font, formatting, and color that begin to enhance readability and are somewhat appropriate to the topic	☐ Font, formatting, and color do not enhance readability or are not appropriate to the topic	

Exhibit is 4'0" wide x 7'2" tall x 3'0" deep or 3'0" in diameter or diagonal.

Exhibit contains no more than 500 student-composed words.

Visuals and quotes are credited on the exhibit.

Media devices (optional) total run time is 5 minutes.

Process Paper is submitted.

Annotated Bibliography is submitted.

Process Paper word count is listed on the Title Page.

GENERAL COMMENTS

☐ Yes ☐ No
☐ Yes ☐ No
☐ Yes ☐ No
☐ Yes ☐ No
☐ Yes ☐ No
☐ Yes ☐ No
☐ Yes ☐ No

☐ Not applicable
☐ Yes ☐ No
☐ Yes ☐ No
☐ Yes ☐ No

Judge Recruitment Advice for School Level Contests

Should you choose to host a school level contest, finding judges for your very first contest will require time. It gets easier as years go by and judges return, but there will always be a need to recruit at least some judges. With regional contests taking place between February and March, it is recommended for school level contests to take place prior to February, and to begin recruiting judges at least two months or more in advance. Assemble a list of potential judges, prepare an invitation letter/e-mail to send out. Always invite more people than needed. If multiple judging groups may or will be needed in some categories, then increase the number of invitees accordingly. With the invitation, it is a good idea to request their assignment preferences.

Whom to ask? Historians are a necessity, as are educators. The best three-person judging team is a combination of people with different strengths: a historian, an educator and maybe another of the two. Consider museum professionals, librarians, archivists, specialists in particular formats (e.g., web design, documentary), and former NHD students who are now at least college-aged. There will be VIPs to invite, such as sponsors, trustees, local politicians, etc. Teachers make excellent judges, but it is extremely important to place them in categories where they DO NOT have competing students. Also, look to teachers and administrators in schools that are targeted for future participation. Serving as judges is often all that is needed to hook them to the program.

Volunteer Advice for School Level Contests

Volunteers are a critical asset both before and during the contest. They can be very useful in helping staff with limited time to distribute materials to schools, manage registration, assemble packets, monitor judging rooms, manage your contest headquarters, and just about every other task.

Tip: At the contest, be sure to have people specifically designated for technical support in the documentary and website rooms. Something will invariably go wrong with a student's sound or equipment. Having skilled people on hand immediately will save precious minutes and soothe fragile nerves. Your host facility may provide this support.

National History Day Georgia

School History Day Contest Planning Form

Date of School History Day:

Task	Who is Doing It	Date Needed	Completed
Find & reserve appropriate space			
Decisions about judging process, food, tours, awards, etc.			
Community publicity and invitation to guests			
Produce a banner? Order food? Order awards?			
Recruit judges, greeters & hosts			
Class tour schedule and sign-up			
Make a program			
Organize judging materials			
Set up --students submit projects day before --exhibits are organized and possibly numbered --times are assigned for performances and documentaries --banner --program --refreshments			
Judge orientation			
Judging and interviewing			
Tabulate results			

Announce results and celebrate			
School registration and digital submissions for advancing students			

This guidance document was produced using the Chicago Metro History Fairs Guidance Document for School Fairs