

Process Papers

Students producing entries in the exhibit, media, and performance categories* must also write a “process paper.” This paper introduces your topic, explains how you developed your entry, and documents your research. It is important to do a good job on this part of your entry because it is the first thing that people look at when evaluating History Day entries. The process paper contains three parts: the title page, a research description, and the annotated bibliography.

*The research paper category requires a title page and annotated bibliography, but it does not include a research description.

The process paper must be typed on plain white paper and stapled in the top left corner. It should be assembled in the following order: title page, research description, and annotated bibliography. Do not enclose the process paper in a cover or binder.

Title Page

The title page includes the title of the entry, name(s) of the student(s) who developed the entry, and the age division and category of the entry. Do not include any additional information or illustrations on the title page. It is important to come up with a good title for your entry. A good title will quickly introduce your topic, and it will help the viewer understand your point of view. You should include ideas from the theme in your title.

For example, a title for an entry about Clara Ueland could be:

*A Force for Higher Civilization:
Clara Ueland and the Fight for Women’s Voting Rights in Minnesota*

This title explains the topic and also gives a sense of the argument that Clara Ueland and other suffragists used to argue for their right to vote.

Research Description

The research description is not a summary of the topic. It is an essay of no more than 500 words explaining how you selected the topic, conducted your research, and developed your entry. The research description should conclude with a paragraph describing how the topic fit this year’s theme and why it is important in history.

The research description should include the following four sections: (1) explain how you chose your topic, (2) explain how you conducted your research, (3) explain how you selected your presentation category and created your project, and (4) explain the historical impact of your topic and how your project relates to the History Day theme.

Paragraph 1:

Introduce your topic in the first paragraph and explain the process for choosing it. Did you begin by researching a broader topic and then narrow to your current topic? What sparked your interest in the topic? Did you have a friend, family member, or teacher help you decide? Maybe you saw a television program on your topic? Did you learn about it in a current or previous history class?

Paragraph 2:

Explain how you conducted your research in the second paragraph. What process did you use? Where did you go to find your sources? Did you visit a major library? Did you conduct any interviews? What sources were most useful? What problems did you encounter in your quest to find sources?

Paragraph 3:

This paragraph explains how you selected your presentation category and the steps you took to create your project. Why did you choose the category that you did? How did you actually create your project and what materials did you use? Was there significant meaning behind any of the materials used (i.e. selection of a particular prop, choosing the color scheme for your exhibit, incorporating music from the era in your documentary)? What was the most enjoyable or frustrating part of creating your project?

Paragraph 4:

In your final paragraph you should explain your thesis and how your project relates to the History Day theme for the year. Try to tie in connections to the words of the theme. You should also discuss the historical impact of your topic in this final paragraph.

Annotated Bibliography

A bibliography is an alphabetized list of the sources you used. An annotated bibliography not only lists the sources, but also gives a short description of the source and how you used it in the entry. The History Day bibliography should be separated into primary and secondary sources, and it should be on a separate page from your research description.

Process Paper Examples

For examples of process papers, go to the following website link:

<http://nationalhistoryday.org/ProcessPapers.htm>