

## LESSON: INTRODUCTION TO HISTORY DAY

**Essential Questions:** 1. What is History Day? 2. What is a narrative? What are the different parts of a narrative?

**Objective:** At the end of this lesson students will have the basic understanding of History Day and its expectations.

**Grade Level:** 6 – 12

**Time Needed:** 50 minutes

**Materials:** Computer, Internet connection, History Day sample website (listed below) or an alternative you have compiled

### Procedure

**Before Class:** Choose a children's book or story to read to the students. Though this sounds silly for high school students, the intent is to catch their attention with a story. Try to choose a story that has a connection to the current theme so it can be referenced again in future lessons. This will also familiarize students with the theme words.

1. Read the story to the students.
2. When you have finished reading the story, have students write a few notes about what they thought: *What did they like? What stood out to them? What didn't they like? Was this a story they had heard before?* Expand the discussion to stories in general: *What is the intent of stories? Where do they encounter stories in their lives?*
3. Now have them look through the sample website: <http://62437547.nhd.weebly.com>. Have the students read the titles and text aloud. Have them answer the following questions:
  - *What did you like?*
  - *What stood out to you?*
  - *What did you not like?*
  - *What did you know before about this topic?*
  - *How is this like a story?*
  - *How is this not like a story?*
  - *How can we tell if this story is true or not? What is the evidence? (primary, secondary sources)*
  - *What theme connection did you recognize?*

4. Again, share thoughts on the website repeating the process with the introductory story. *What are the facts of the story? What are the characteristics of the story?*
5. Now, have the students compare the introductory story with the website. *What was alike? What was different? Is history just stories?*
6. Though it may be awkward, point out the documentation/bibliography of the story to note how sources can be checked and to make the students familiar with the terminology that will be used throughout the project.
7. Have a conversation about the following question: *What are the differences/similarities between history and a narrative/story?*

### **Lesson Extension/Alternatives**

**Pre-Lesson:** The History Day staff may be available for a “Dog and Pony” show introduction to History Day. This visit above is intended to touch on all points that will be covered throughout the rest of the History Day process. Contact the History Day office regarding the possibility and if there is a fee involved for a visit.

**Lesson Alternative Introduction:** (5 min. or 1 scene) Hand out the first scene of a movie script (maybe one you’ve watched in class). Have the students read parts aloud. Ask the following questions: *What do you know about the story? What are some other terms for story?* (guide them to narrative) Where do we see different kinds of stories? (narratives, tall tales, fables, etc.) What makes a narrative/story interesting? Is it the sources?

**Lesson Alternative Introduction:** Have a student describe a movie they have recently seen. When that student is done, ask other students to add details that were possibly left out. Ask them if what they just described is a story. Ask students, “What is a narrative?” Talk about how movies are visual narratives, and point out that what they did to describe the movie at the beginning of class was telling a narrative. Go back and try to organize the narrative of the movie. Identify background/setting, the building plot, climax, ending/conclusion.

## LESSON: INTRODUCTION TO HISTORY DAY – THEME

**Essential Questions:** 1. What do we mean by the theme? Why do we have a theme?

**Objective:** At the end of this lesson students will understand the basics of the National History Day theme in relation to completing their project.

**Grade Level:** 6 – 12

**Time Needed:** 50 minutes or more

**Materials:** White board, markers, notebook paper, *National History Day Theme Narrative*, *Contest Rule Book*, questions to consider

### Procedure

**Before Class:** To gain understanding of the National History Day theme, discussion in the form of a Socratic Seminar is encouraged. Socrates encouraged his students to continue asking questions and often relayed to them that he did not always know the answer. The discussion modeled below is built around the concept that we do not know the answer to how all topics relate to the theme, but we need to continue researching and ask questions to find the answer.

1. Outline the goals for the day. *What do we want to get out of this conversation?*

- We need to understand what the theme means before selecting topics. In the end, we are going to be looking for History Day topics that have connections to the theme. The theme is a lens by which we view topics. We need to understand what these words mean in order to see how these ideas played a part in history.

2. As a group, students will share a goal they have for the day. One person shares, then the next person will share their goal, and make a connection between the goal they just heard and their own or something related in their classroom. This will hopefully build a shared desire for participation. Throughout the sharing, the facilitator will record the goals on the board next to the other questions already prepared.

3. Explain the Socratic Seminar method. *With your knowledge of the National History Day program, we are going to have an open conversation to keep you thinking about the use of the theme and the program. A Socratic Seminar is based on Socrates and his students having conversations and constantly bringing up more questions to consider. With this method, we are going to set goals of what you would like to achieve and share responses. After setting goals, we will look at the questions and add anything else you would like to consider. We will set ourselves*

*in a circle to welcome conversation. I do not have the answers to these questions. This is a time for us to all explore the theme and History Day further to benefit your classroom.*

4. After explaining the process, read the **National History Day Theme Narrative**. Instruct students to underline, highlight, and write down questions they have regarding the reading they have done.
5. After the reading the narrative, ask students to write down some synonyms of the theme words and jot a few notes to the questions below. When they are complete, start the discussion by asking a question and having a student answer it. The questions will likely either be about the History Day process or about the definitions of words used.
6. With about 15 minutes left of class, or assigned for homework, ask: What questions were answered? Which were not? What other questions did the discussion generate for you?
7. Following the conversation, create a list of possible topics to study and to be added to throughout the next few lessons while choosing topics.

### **Lesson Extension/Alternative**

**Out-of-Class Assignment:** Have the students read the theme narratives either the day before in class or as homework. Have them underline key words and write down key points they would like to remember. Have them answer the questions that will be on the board and come up with questions of their own.

**Small Group Responses:** Consider having the students write answers to the questions after the reading and working in small groups or pairs instead.

**Theme Connection Ideas:** Have students review the narratives and provide basic definitions for the ideas. Once they understand the definitions, students should be encouraged to think about how these ideas play a role in different topics. Using the samples provided – or selecting samples from relevant course content – show examples of successful theme connections. Remind students that they may not know the answers to these ideas when they pick their topic, but should look for these ideas early on in their research process.

**Group Question Generation:** Read the theme narrative prior to the lesson. Mark places in the reading where questions from your students may occur. In class, explain that you are going to create a class list of questions for discussion based on the History Day theme. Read the theme narrative with your students, stopping to generate a list of questions on the board. This should include any questions that students come up with and any questions that you anticipated but did not come up during the reading. After reading the theme narratives, lead a class discussion to try

to answer the questions. For each question you answer, see if you can create another question to add to the list. This can be based on the information from the question just answered, or just a general question about the theme. Essentially, you are modeling the process of generating research questions students will need to use during the research portion of the project. Explain that new information should generate more questions. Before the end of class, have students write a summary of what they understand the theme means to them.

## LESSON: CHOOSING A TOPIC 1 – USING HISTORICAL ERAS

**Essential Questions:** 1. What is an era? 2. What are some synonyms or other words to describe an historical era? 3. How are historical eras usually defined? 4. How do events in history relate to the History Day theme?

**Objective:** At the end of the lessons students will be able to distinguish the vastness in a historical era, distinguishing events within different eras, and the possibilities of interests in each era for topic selection.

**Grade Level:** 6 – 12

**Time Needed:** 50 minutes

**Materials:** *Worksheet: Choosing a Topic 1, Worksheet: Choosing a Topic Using Historical Eras*, textbooks, encyclopedias, timelines, general history books, images, chalkboard/whiteboard, chalk/markers

### Procedure

1. In a whole class setting, ask students if they are familiar with how historians break up history into eras or in the 20th century decades. For up to three minutes, discuss what a historical era is, and why it is used in history. (Dictionary.com definition: A period of time marked by distinctive character, events, etc.).

2. Make a list of eras or significant decades students are familiar with on the board (five to seven eras that fit your students). With these examples, have students name ONE event/invention/figure associated with that era.

- Medieval – Kings and Queens
- Colonization – Tri-corner hats
- Early America - Independence
- Civil War – Slavery
- World War I – Trench warfare
- World War II - Holocaust
- Imperialism – Loss of indigenous culture
- Ancient Rome – Julius Caesar
- Ancient Greece – Olympics
- Pre-Columbian – Native American creation stories
- Make sure whatever era used in the introduction is also included

3. When one item is listed with each era, ask a student who did not share if that is what they would have written for that era. Ask a few other students what other item they would include in the era of their choice.

4. Explain that this illustrates the broad range of historic eras. Though we often associate one topic or idea with a certain era, there are often many other things happening that are just as important.

5. Give the following instructions: *Today you are going to investigate three historic eras of your choice. You can take examples from opening activity, or use another textbook/timeline to discover an era. Using the worksheet provided, you will fill in the following blanks on **Worksheet: Choosing a Topic 1** about the three eras to become familiar with the time period and possibilities in each era.*

- Social – Relating to society such as class status, friendly relations, and/or customs
- Political – Related to the government, laws, practices, policies
- Religion – Fundamental set of beliefs and practices
- Intellectual – Education of society and new ideas or developments
- Technological – Advancements in technology in all aspects such as transport and agriculture
- Environmental – Interactions and appreciation of what surrounds the community

6. As a class example, pick a second era to categorize. Find a major event/or individual in an era and define which aspect of SPRITE it belongs to. Also, have students start considering how it connects to the theme as discussed in the last lesson. (Example: Era – Civil Rights Movement. Event – March on Washington. SPRITE category – political. Connection to theme – will vary)

7. Have students share their findings with one era. Remind them of the vast amount of possible topics and choices. Add the topics they recommend to the list started in the theme lesson. Keeping a running list available on the board or on a Google Doc for students to reference.

8. For the next lesson, they will need to revisit an era of their choice to further investigate for topic selection.

Other acronyms: PARTIES (Politics, Art, Religion, Technology, Intellectual, Economy, Social), BIG APPLEBED STREET.COM (Business, Individuals, Government, Art & Aesthetics, Physical Health, Psychological Health, Laws/Legal, Ethics, Boundaries, Environment, Domestic Issues, Social, Transportation, Religion, Economics, Education, Technology, Communication, Organizations/Occupations, Medicine)

## Lesson Extension/Alternative

**Increase or Decrease Areas of History to Brainstorm:** For different learners, the number of eras required, or points of SPRITE, can be limited or expanded. For higher-level learners AP has other guides such as: PARTIES (Political, Art, Religion, Technological, Intellectual, Economic, and Social), PERSIA (Political, Economic, Religious, Social, Intellectual, Artistic), and C-GRIPES (Cultural, Geographic, Religious, Intellectual, Political, Economic, and Social).

**Brainstorm Using Historical Eras:** Students could also use a timeline rather than eras. Some good examples are provided in the “Lesson Bibliography” below. Students would identify particular period of time in which they are interested.

- **Worksheet: Choosing a Topic Using Historical Eras**

**Begin with a Familiar Topic:** Instead of choosing an era, have the students choose a topic they are familiar with, then branch out to choose the era that belongs in. Continue with the rest of the activity on a smaller scale with the one topic already related.

## WORKSHEET: CHOOSING A TOPIC 1

For three historic eras of your choice, fill in the following blanks regarding major events or ideas of the time period.

**Historic Era 1:** \_\_\_\_\_

Social: \_\_\_\_\_

Political: \_\_\_\_\_

Religion: \_\_\_\_\_

Intellectual: \_\_\_\_\_

Technological: \_\_\_\_\_

Environmental: \_\_\_\_\_

**Historic Era 2:** \_\_\_\_\_

Social: \_\_\_\_\_

Political: \_\_\_\_\_

Religion: \_\_\_\_\_

Intellectual: \_\_\_\_\_

Technological: \_\_\_\_\_

Environmental: \_\_\_\_\_

**Historic Era 3:** \_\_\_\_\_

Social: \_\_\_\_\_

Political: \_\_\_\_\_

Religion: \_\_\_\_\_

Intellectual: \_\_\_\_\_

Technological: \_\_\_\_\_

Environmental: \_\_\_\_\_

## WORKSHEET: CHOOSING A TOPIC USING HISTORICAL ERAS

As an extension of the previous activity, choose an era from the list below and read about it.

Choose an event that is significant in that era and answer the following questions.

1. Industrial Revolution in Great Britain 1770's to 1850
2. American Civil War 1861 - 1865
3. Progressive Era 1870 – 1920
4. The Enlightenment 1750 – 1800
5. The Ottoman Empire 1299 - 1923

### Historic Era 1:

---

Event:

---

Which SPRITE category does this event belong in? Circle one.

Social Political Religion Intellectual Technological Environmental

How do you think this event connects to the History Day annual theme?

### Historic Era 2:

---

Event:

---

Which SPRITE category does this event belong in? Circle one.

Social Political Religion Intellectual Technological Environmental

How do you think this event connects to the History Day annual theme?

### Historic Era 3:

---

Event:

---

Which SPRITE category does this event belong in? Circle one.

Social Political Religion Intellectual Technological Environmental

How do you think this event connects to the History Day annual theme?

## WORKSHEET: CHOOSING A TOPIC

### Topic Idea

1: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Why are you interested in this topic?
2. What do you want to learn about with this topic?
3. How does this connect to the theme?
4. Why is this important in history?
5. What source did you find? Where did you find it?

### Topic Idea

2: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Why are you interested in this topic?
2. What do you want to learn about with this topic?
3. How does this connect to the theme?
4. Why is this important in history?
5. What source did you find? Where did you find it?

### Topic Idea

3: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Why are you interested in this topic?
2. What do you want to learn about with this topic?
3. How does this connect to the theme?
4. Why is this important in history?
5. What source did you find? Where did you find it?

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## WORKSHEET: FOCUSING HISTORY DAY TOPICS

Topic choices generally start out too broad. We use the funnel to narrow our topics to more manageable ones. Remember: History Day projects are not huge. If your topic is too big, it's going to be challenging to fit everything you want into your project.

1. Start by thinking about the theme for History Day this year.
2. Narrow down to a general area of history that interests you.
3. What are some general topics connected to that area of history?
4. Narrow the broad topic to something more specific. Consider location, person, or event.
5. Your thesis will address specific issues or ideas related to your topic.

### SAMPLE TOPIC NARROWING FUNNELS

#### 1. *Amendments*

##### a. *First Amendment*

##### i. *Symbolic Speech*

*Texas v. Johnson 1989*

*Symbolic speech, no matter how offensive to some,  
is protected under the first amendment*

#### 1. *Civil Rights*

##### a. *Denial of Rights*

##### i. *Jim Crow Laws*

*Loving v. Virginia 1966*

*Violation of equal protection under the 14<sup>th</sup>  
amendment*

1. General Interest

2. Broad Topic

3. Narrow Topic

4. Thesis

## LESSON: CHOOSING A TOPIC 3 – RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND STUDENT CONTRACT

**Essential Questions:** 1. What makes a good research question? 2. How do I develop research questions? 3. How will you be held accountable for your History Day project?

**Objective:** At the end of this lesson students will be able to develop guiding questions to focus their research and sign a contract to commit to their group.

**Grade Level:** 6 – 12

**Time Needed:** 50 minutes

**Materials:** *Worksheet: History Day Self-Reflection, Worksheet: History Day Crew Contract, Worksheet: Research Questions*

### Procedure

**To Teachers:** National History Day rules say that groups can be up to five students, or students can work individually. However, teachers may determine how large or small groups can be, or if students should work in groups at all.

1. As students are doing preliminary reading with their topics, they should begin to think about the research questions that will guide their process. This will give their research process focus, rather than trying to gather every fact they can about their topic. Explain the difference between information gathering questions and research questions.

- **Information gathering questions** will help you to get the basic facts about your topic. These questions are often the “who, what, when, and where” questions.
- **Research questions** get at more of the “why and so what” questions, that address the significance of the topic in history. These questions will often address:
  - Cause and Effect: What were the causes of past events? What were the effects?
  - Change and Continuity: What has changed? What has remained the same?
  - Through Their Eyes: How did people in the past view their world? What were their motivations for their actions?
  - Turning Points: How did past decisions or actions affect future choices?
  - Using the Past: How does the past help us to make sense of the present

2. Walk through the process of writing a research question together for a topic previously discussed. Discuss with students how these questions are more than “yes” or “no” and go beyond just finding facts. Research questions should address “why and so what” issues.

3. Students can continue to research the three topics from the previous lesson and figure out if they want to join a group or not.

4. If students would like to work together but cannot choose a topic, the following questions may be helpful:

- a. Which topic do each of you like? Why?
- b. What do you want to find out about your topic?
- c. Is there any way your topics are related?
- d. What are the benefits of working together?
- e. What are the drawbacks of working with a partner or in a group?
- f. Why do you want to work together?
- g. Ask individually: How flexible are you with your topic choice? Are you determined to do this topic, or can you research whatever?

5. It is important for students to be interested in their project because they will be working on this for quite some time. If they do not like a topic, or cannot find one that fits the theme, VHD or your local library can supply a list of relevant, local, or interesting topics.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**WORKSHEET: HISTORY DAY SELF-REFLECTION (CONFIDENTIAL)**

1. How would you prefer to work? Circle one: **Alone**    **In a Group**

Why?

---

---

2. Describe two or more roles that you usually play in a group. For example: Motivator, peacemaker, cheerleader, organizer, hard worker, creativity specialist, occasional slacker, technology guru, fun coordinator, finisher, etc.

---

---

3. What types of people generally like to work with you? Why types of people do you generally like to work with? Why? \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

4. What qualities make someone a good group member? List at least five.

---

---

---

5. What traits do you want to avoid when selecting a History Day partner? List at least three.

---

---

6. Name some students you might consider working with for History Day. Please give first and last names.

---

---

---

## WORKSHEET: HISTORY DAY CREW CONTRACT

Contract Due Date: \_\_\_\_\_

If you are in a group, list all group members below. Include yourself as number one. Your list **MUST** include the same people as each of your crew member's lists. If you are working alone, include only your name as number one.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

Type of Project: \_\_\_\_\_

Project Due Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Choose your group carefully. The group agrees to share equally in all work and expenses. Money may not be spent unless all group members are consulted. Only those students named on this form are considered group members. All members must turn in a copy of this form signed by an adult to participate as a group.

Student's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Each group will need a pocket folder in which to keep their research. Groups may need other supplies later, depending on how they choose to present their findings.

I understand that all students are **REQUIRED** to complete a History Day project. I understand that this project will be graded as a part of their Social Studies grade. All of the work will be done **IN CLASS**. I also understand that once groups are chosen, there will be **NO** switching.

Adult Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

**WORKSHEET: WHO DO I WORK WITH – IF ANYONE? The History Day  
Ship-on-the-Sea Analogy**

This week you will begin a “journey” in History. This “journey” is called National History Day. Each of you, in a sense, is a “ship” on this journey. Before you leave the harbor you need to determine what will accompany your “ship” for the next three months.

Some of you will make good choices and bring extra “sails” for your ship. These “sails” are good partners you choose to work with. “Sails” are great to have because they represent quality people who will work hard and share the load in a way that really makes your ship faster, more efficient, and more enjoyable.

Others of your will make poor choices and instead of choosing “sails” to bring along, you will carry “anchors.” These “anchors” represent people who oftentimes choose to be one of the following:

- Lazy and don’t help much
- Comedians who provide a lot of laughs but little effort
- People looking for you to “carry” them through the project

These “anchors” take up room and slow your ship down. In fact, “anchors” can sink your “ship,” and then you will not complete a quality History Day project. Some “anchors” can turn into sails if they are on a quality ship, but that risk is yours to take. You may offend an anchor by leaving him or her behind, but it is oftentimes the best decision to make. Stand firm, mates!

“So I should always avoid “anchors” and gather “sails,” right?” Well, there is one more option; you can sail alone. Sometimes a ship’s sails can get tangled and not work very well together. If you decide to sail alone, there is only one sail, and it sails the boat very easily. It is not complicated, and there are few distractions to impede your progress. Students who work alone on History Day are accountable only to themselves, so there is no confusion. The project’s success or failure is totally up to the individual. There is no one else to blame! Sailing alone can be very rewarding and is a fine means of travel.

Choosing the right group, or choosing to work individually, is one of the key elements of managing a quality History Day project. It is one of the first decisions you must make, and it is certainly one of the biggest. You will be able to choose your group, but in the end you “sail” or “sink” together. Once you sign the commitment sheet and leave the harbor, all your “sails” or “anchors” will be on board for the entire trip – and you cannot “throw them over the side” once you are underway. Bottom line: there will be no switching groups.

**Bon Voyage and smooth sailing on your History Day journey!**