

Tips for Research

You have your topic. Now what do you do?

1. Get organized! Keep all of your materials in a binder/folder/notebook, and as you locate information and sources, add this new material to your compilation in an **organized** manner.
2. Double check your topic. Is it **specific** enough? Topics that are too broad will be difficult to research and will not make good projects. Again, double check to make sure your topic **fits the theme** of National History Day.
3. Establish a **thesis statement**. This is the main argument that you are going to support with your research.
4. Begin gathering **secondary sources** by reading books, websites, and other materials that will increase your general knowledge and understanding of the topic.
5. Construct a list of 5-10 questions that **you must be able to answer about your topic**.
Examples: *How was this event a turning point in history? What were the short and long term causes of this event? What were conditions like before this event? What were the short and long term effects of this event? How did conditions change after the event?*
6. Use these questions to guide your note taking from your secondary sources. **Make sure that you gather the bibliographical information** from each book, website, etc... It is a good idea to begin your annotated bibliography at the start of your research and add new sources as you continue your research. Alphabetize your sources as you go, and separate your sources into two groups, primary and secondary.
7. As you take notes, **keep a list** of related people, places, and topics. Be sure to note how each of the related subjects affected or interacted with the History Day topic.
8. **Create a timeline** indicating important dates and events.
9. Identify potential primary sources. **This is crucial!** Primary sources are what will make or break your History Day project. Seek out your teachers' help if necessary to identify potential primary sources.
10. Identify other people outside the school who will be useful contacts, i.e. college professors and local historians. Use these contacts to **establish a network of people who can offer useful information or help you locate it elsewhere**. Be sure to do this early on in the research process so that there is adequate time for people to get back to you.

Resources Available to Help You Research

Official Websites for PA History Day:

- PA History Day - <http://pa.nhd.org/>
- National History Day - <http://www.nhd.org/>
- How to create different types of projects - <http://www.nhd.org/TeacherResources.htm>
- How to properly conduct research - <http://www.nhd.org/EightSteps.htm>

Collection of Resources from National History Day:

- List of organizations, institutions, and government entities to research - <http://www.nhd.org/OrganizationsandInstitutions.htm>
- Primary source website collections - <http://www.nhd.org/USHistoryPrimarySources.htm>
- Museums and historic sites - <http://www.nhd.org/MuseumsandHistoricSites.htm>

Major Resources:

- Library of Congress - <http://www.loc.gov/index.html> – the nation’s first major library is still probably its greatest
- American Memory (Library of Congress) - <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/index.html> – the place to turn for pretty much any keyword in American history
- Historic American newspapers (Library of Congress) - <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/>
- DocsTeach - <http://docsteach.org/documents> – great forum of documents separated by major topic / era
- Fordham Internet Sourcebook - <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/> - incredible links to American history on this professor’s website
- National Archives - <http://www.archives.gov/> - the nation’s bookkeeper, turn here for an litany of documents

Local Resources:

- Pennsylvania Historical Society - http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/phmc_home/1426 - go here for all things PA history
- Army Heritage Center - <http://www.armyheritage.org/education-and-programs/educational-resources/soldier-stories.html> - in case you can’t make it to Carlisle

Other Specific Resources:

- African-American Registry – <http://www.aaregistry.org/> - go here for African-American ancestry
- American Journeys - <http://www.americanjourneys.org/index.asp> - incredible collection of documents by search

Additional Resources Available to Help You Research

Other Specific Resources:

- Avalon Project - <http://avalon.law.yale.edu/> - extensive collection of documents by century
- Harper's Weekly - <http://www.harpweek.com/> - go here for much of the material you'd research in the 8th grade topics
- Open Collection - <http://ocp.hul.harvard.edu/> - like the Avalon Project, but Harvard's version
- Our Documents - <http://www.ourdocuments.gov/index.php?flash=true&> - very interactive & user-friendly collection

Citations:

- Citation Machine - <http://citationmachine.net/index2.php> - Probably the easiest way to cite your sources; just check to make sure they come out properly!
- EasyBib - <http://www.easybib.com> – like Citation Machine if you prefer this
- MLA formatting - <http://www.mla.org/>
- Purdue OWL - <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/> - the most extensive collection of how to cite sources for your bibliography

Local Libraries:

- **Bosler Library**
158 West High Street
Carlisle, PA 17013
717- 243-4642
bosler@cumberlandcountylibraries.org
- **East Pennsboro**
98 South Enola Drive
Enola, PA 17025
717- 732-4274
eastpennsboro@cumberlandcountylibraries.org
- **Fredricksen Library**
100 N. 19th Street
Camp Hill, PA 17011
717-761-3900
fredricksen@cumberlandcountylibraries.org

Additional Resources Available to Help You Research

Local Libraries:

- **New Cumberland Library**
1 Benjamin Plaza
New Cumberland, PA 17070
717- 774-7820
newcumberland@cumberlandcountylibraries.org
- **Simpson Library**
16 North Walnut Street
Mechanicsburg, PA 17055
717- 766-0171
simpson@cumberlandcountylibraries.org

Other Local Resources:

- **Army Heritage Center Foundation**
16 North Walnut Street
Mechanicsburg, PA 17055
Phone: 717-258-1102
- **Cumberland County Historical Society and the Hamilton Library**
21 North Pitt Street
P.O. Box 626
Carlisle, PA 17013
717-249-7610
info@historicalsociety.com
- **Gettysburg National Military Park**
1195 Baltimore Pike, Suite 100
Gettysburg, PA 17325-2804
717-334-1124
- **The National Civil War Museum**
One Lincoln Circle at Reservoir Park
Harrisburg, PA 17103
717-260-1861