

National History Day

Initial Research: Chasing the Secondary Sources



	First Choosing and Narrowing a Topic	Second Understanding the Story: Gathering Information	Third Interviews and Analysis
Research Description	In the beginning of an NHD project, you are trying to find out how your topic fits within the theme. You'll need to know what happened and when, who the key people are, etc. At this stage of your research, you will probably be narrowing your topic and determining the exact focus of your research.	Once you have a grasp on the facts of your topic, you are ready to ask the how, why and what questions that will help you to understand both the context and the turning point in history you are studying.	The advanced stage of secondary research occurs when you know enough about your topic to research multiple perspectives, to search out debates over the meaning of your topic, and to trace the significance of your topic in history.
Types of sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Online tertiary sources ▪ Textbooks (tertiary sources are never cited in an NHD bibliography) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Secondary books by historians ▪ Magazines and Newspapers ▪ Biographies ▪ Documentaries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Scholarly articles ▪ Interviews with historians and experts
Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What happened? ▪ When? ▪ Who were the key people involved? ▪ What else was happening in history at the same time? ▪ What are the keywords that will lead you to other sources? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Why did these events happen? ▪ What are the causes and effects? ▪ What were the motivations and concerns of the people involved? ▪ How does this topic fit within the big historical picture? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What key questions do historians have about this topic? ▪ What do you think matters about this topic? ▪ What argument are you going to present about its significance in history? ▪ What core issues and themes do you still need to research? ▪ What is the long-term historical significance of your topic?