

PREPARING DOCUMENTARIES

FOR NATIONAL HISTORY DAY

The DOCUMENTARY category gives students the opportunity to create presentations like those seen on PBS, A&E, or the History Channel. The presentation should demonstrate the student's ability to use multi-media to communicate the research and analysis of their chosen topic. Students will develop skills in using photographs, film clips, graphics, audio tapes, and computers.

BASIC RULES

- 1. Time requirements:** No more than 10 minutes long, 5 minutes are allowed to set up equipment
- 2. Introduction:** Before beginning the documentary, the student(s) must state their name(s) and the title of the presentation only. No other live commentary is allowed.
- 3. Student Involvement:** Students must operate all equipment
- 4. Student Production:** Students must operate all cameras, do their own editing and narration.
- 5. Entry Production:** The entry must be an original production. Students may use professional photographs, recorded music, and archival film footage, but it must be integrated in with their own work and proper credit given within the presentation as well as the bibliography.
- 6. Credits:** A general list of credits must be given at the end of the documentary to list sources of any music, images, and film clips.

7. Computer Entries: Computer programs are acceptable, but they must run within the 10 minute time limit and they must be student operated. Judges cannot operate the mouse to go from one part of the program to the next.

EQUIPMENT

The only equipment provided at the contest is a standard VHS recorder (VCR) and a television set. A screen is also provided.

IF YOU NEED ANY OTHER EQUIPMENT YOU MUST BRING IT.

HOW TO PRODUCE A DOCUMENTARY

1. Select a topic

This is the first step in any type of entry. Students should select carefully, don't just pick the first thing that comes to mind. Try to find something different or unique. For a documentary also keep in mind that you will need lots of images.

2. Research

This is the most important step of preparing any entry for the National History Day program. Try to find as many sources as possible so that you have the information needed to properly analyze your topic. Keep in mind that historical quality is sixty percent of the judging for any National History Day project.

3. Write the script

In the script students should not only tell the story that is an important part of their topic, but also analyze that topic. Try to emphasize those aspects of the topic that most relate to the annual theme. Be sure to explain the impact of the topic in history or why it is important.

4. Collect the images

Students should have a large number of images to avoid repetition. Your images can be still pictures or film clips.

5. Make a storyboard.

The storyboard can have three columns to show images, narration, and notes. The storyboard will help you match your images with the narration. See the example attached.

6. Construct the presentation.

Use computer software or video editing equipment to put together the documentary with images and narration.

7. Add appropriate music

8. Preview and edit