

# NATIONAL HISTORY DAY JUDGING PROCESS

The goal of History Day is to provide young learners with a positive experience, regardless of whether they win. We want all students to have a positive discussion of their scholarship with the judges and get meaningful written feedback.

As a judge, you are the face of History Day for our participants today. It is important that the interview and judging be fair and consistent. **History Day is likely the most difficult project a student has completed.** Converse with students in a way that allows them to feel proud of the work they have done.

## GREET

**Introduce** yourself. A smile goes a long way! Give students a brief **explanation** of the judging process and set them at ease.

Request a copy of their **paperwork** (process paper and bibliography) even if you have already looked at it - and ask about any changes from what was uploaded. Website judges have already viewed this and can start the interview.



## READ

**Skim** the written materials and review the project. You may not have time to completely read the entire packet. Focus on the annotated bibliography.

You will **keep one copy** for your judging team. You can refer back to the packet or your zFairs portal when you return to the judge room.



## VIEW

**Exhibit** judges should read the text of the display. Remember, the students should not give you an oral presentation about their work.

**Performance** and **Documentary** judges should give the signal to begin. Make sure the students introduce themselves and the title of their presentation. As you view entries, make preliminary notes on your judging forms. You will be able to expand on these later.

**Website** judges have already seen the project. The student may refer to the website during the interview, but should not present it for the judges.



## INTERVIEW

Ask the student(s) questions about their project, research, or topic. The interview is a chance for **students to share their understanding** of their topic and process. Student answers do not weigh heavily in your overall evaluation.

**Do not offer suggestions** for improvement during the interview. Take notes! You will be able to include comments in your written feedback, which will be given to students after the contest.

**Thank** the student(s) and keep one copy of their paperwork.



## RANK

Return to the judging room to make your decisions on top ranking projects. Judge teams must **agree on the entries they select** to move forward.

History Day staff will let you know the specific number of projects you are selecting.



## WRITE

Each judge will **write their own comments**. It is vital that you include meaningful written comments in the judging form, and complete the criteria rubric. You may handwrite theses or type them into the zFairs judging portal.

## Final Checklist for Judging a History Day Entry:

- Does this student's work demonstrate historical research and scholarship?
- Does the student make a strong argument, connected to the annual theme?  
Remember: Student views may differ from your own.
- Does the student use the project to support and prove their argument?
- Is this student communicating their ideas in an organized and effective way?

**NHD**  
NATIONAL  
HISTORY DAY

# TIPS FOR HISTORY DAY JUDGES

## JUDGING RATINGS

Judges assess each project against the **evaluative criteria** (categories on the left) and specific descriptors for each **level of achievement** (check boxes across the page in the same row). For each evaluative criteria, select the level of achievement that best describes the project you are viewing. Be sure to **use the descriptors to make your selection**, not only the column headers for level of achievement.

Rating a project against a rubric is different from selecting projects to advance in the competition.

- **Rating a Project:** How a project rates on the rubric is based on the strength of the specific project against the criteria. Do not adjust the ratings of a project to account for which projects are moving on in a contest.
- **Selecting Top Entries:** The project(s) that advance should generally have higher ratings than those that do not. Determining the strongest projects can be more difficult when ratings are about the same and judges should include robust written feedback to help support their decisions. Judges must have consensus in their decision. Event coordinators are unable to “break a tie” - but we can talk it through.

## THE INTERVIEW

At the end of each presentation you will have the opportunity to ask students questions about their entries. Students are excited about the opportunity to talk with you, but may be nervous. Give them time to respond. Do not assume that a pause before responding means a lack of knowledge. Aim for at least three to five questions. Try to ask all groups a similar amount of time worth of questions.



### Appropriate Questions:

- What was a helpful source?
- How does this topic fit the theme?
- What was a challenging part of your History Day experience?
- Is there anything you would like to tell us that we haven't asked about?



### Inappropriate Questions:

- Where do you go to school?
- How much money did you spend developing your project?
- Is this topic in line with your own religious/cultural beliefs?

## Rephrasing Questions:

Many students, and especially those with English as a second language, may ask their judges to repeat or clarify a question. Instead of repeating the question verbatim, try rephrasing it or breaking apart a multi-part question.

## Oral Critiques and Judge Feedback

**The interview is the student's chance to show off their knowledge and experience.** Participants will explain and clarify their work. While we respect the content knowledge of our judges, the interview is NOT an oral project critique or a time to share your insights on the topic.

## WRITTEN COMMENTS

The key to History Day judging is to provide positive, but critical, evaluations of each entry. Begin your comments with the most positive feature of the entry. Critical comments are best phrased as suggestions (e.g. “You may want to...,” “Did you consider...,” or “Other issues important to this topic are...”).

### Constructive commentary is valuable for the students:

- Students who are advancing want to know how they can improve their work
- Students who are NOT advancing want to understand why their project was not selected

You do not need to make detailed comments on your judging form during the interview itself. Make enough notes about the strengths and weaknesses of an entry to allow you to write meaningful comments later.



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