



# PERFORMANCE: JUDGING CRITERIA AND RULES

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## PURPOSE OF JUDGING

NHD's goal is to provide young people with a high quality educational experience. It is critical that your interactions with the students be fair, helpful, and positive. Your spoken and written comments are fundamental to the learning process.

## YOUR PROCESS

1. Review all materials sent to you in advance of the contest.
2. Attend the contest-day orientation.
3. With your team, review each entry's process paper and annotated bibliography, then view the performance. Conclude by interviewing the student(s).
4. Return to judging headquarters to deliberate, reach consensus, complete paperwork and write thoughtful, constructive comments.

## EVALUATING PERFORMANCES

A performance is a dramatic portrayal of a topic and its significance in history. It is not simply an oral report or a recitation of facts. Instead, performances should be original and creative, and students should make effective use of the 10 minutes allowed. While performances must have dramatic appeal, that appeal should not be at the expense of historical accuracy.

No matter how impressively the students handle themselves during the interview, please remember that the entry itself should be able to stand alone. Answers to questions should not overshadow the material presented in the entry.

## JUDGING CRITERIA

### ***Historical Quality – 60%***

This is by far the most important factor in judging a performance. It refers to the research, analysis, and interpretation of the topic. The performance should be historically accurate. It should not simply recount facts but interpret and analyze them; that is, the entry should have a strong thesis or argument. In addition, it should place the topic into historical context—the intellectual, physical, social, and cultural setting. The entry also should reflect historical perspective—the causes and consequences of an event, for example, or the relationship of a local topic to larger events. The best entries will use a variety of both primary and secondary sources and will consider multiple viewpoints (e.g., those who suffered as well as those who benefited, males and females, people from different racial, ethnic, or socioeconomic groups, etc.) as appropriate to the topic.

Primary sources are materials directly related to a topic by time or participation. These materials include letters, speeches, diaries, contemporaneous newspaper articles, oral history interviews, documents, photographs, artifacts, or anything else that provides first-hand accounts about a person or event. This definition also applies to primary sources found on the Internet. A letter written by President Lincoln in 1862 is a primary source for a student researching the Civil War era. An article about the Vietnam War published in 2001 and not written by an eyewitness or participant about his or her experience is not a primary source. An interview with an expert (a professor of Vietnamese history, for example) is not a primary source UNLESS that expert actually lived through and has firsthand knowledge of the events being described. Primary materials such as quotes from historical figures or photographs of historical events, when found in secondary sources, can be used effectively in projects; however, these are not considered primary sources.

### ***Relation to the Theme – 20%***

The entry must clearly relate to the annual theme and demonstrate why the topic is significant in history. Do not confuse fame with significance. Local history topics may not be well known but may represent larger trends or events. The performance should draw conclusions about the topic's significance. In other words, the entry should answer the questions, "So what? Why was this important?" It should not be just descriptive.

### **Clarity of Presentation – 20%**

This relates to the entry's stagecraft: the props and costumes, acting ability of the performer(s), creativity and clarity of the script, etc. You also should consider whether the process paper and the bibliography are clear, organized, and well done. Do not be carried away by glitz; simpler is often better. Conversely, do not discount an entry or assume students had outside assistance simply because a performance is of high visual and production quality; many students achieve both superior production quality and superior historical quality.

## **CONTEST RULES**

These are the rules to which all students must adhere in developing their entries. Please note the difference between a simple violation of these rules and a disqualifying offense:

**Rule Infraction:** A violation of any of the rules stated in the *Contest Rule Book*. Judges will take any rule infractions into consideration in their final rankings. Failure to comply with the rules will count against the entry but will only result in disqualification as indicated below.

- Major violations are those that give an entry a substantial advantage over other entries, for example, significantly exceeding time requirements, word limits, and size requirements or having unauthorized outside assistance (e.g., someone else operating editing equipment, etc.). Major violations should result in lower rankings.
- Minor violations are those that can be easily remedied and that do not confer a competitive advantage, for example, putting the school name on the title page, exceeding time requirements by a few seconds, using inconsistent citation formats, etc.

**Disqualification:** Removal of an entry from competition. A project may be disqualified from the contest by:

1. Plagiarizing.
2. Reusing a project (or research from a project) from a previous year.
3. Tampering with any part of the project of another student.

If you feel an entry has reason to be disqualified, contact the contest official.

## **GENERAL RULES**

**Annual Theme:** An entry must clearly relate to the annual theme and explain the topic's significance in history.

- Entries that do not relate to the theme at all should not win.
- If a topic is only slightly related to the theme, take that into account when evaluating. An example would be "Pickett's Migration at the Battle of Gettysburg" for the theme "Migration in History."
- Take consideration in ranking if an entry is merely descriptive and does not analyze the topic's causes and consequences.
- While entries should clearly relate to the theme, they often do not need to address every aspect. For the theme, "Rights and Responsibilities," students could examine rights OR responsibilities; they do not have to include both, though one often leads to the other when fully explored.

**Discussion with Judges:** Students should be prepared to answer judges' questions about the content and development of their entries, but they may not give a formal, prepared introduction, narration, or conclusion.

**Costumes:** In the performance category, students may rent or have reasonable help creating their costumes (e.g., a parent helps a student to use a sewing machine, etc.).

## **REQUIRED WRITTEN MATERIAL FOR ALL ENTRIES**

**Title Page:** A title page is required as the first page of written material in every category. The title page must include only the title of the entry, the name(s) of the student(s), the contest division and category, and applicable word counts. A title page for an entry in the performance category must include the word count for the process paper.

**Annotated Bibliography:** An annotated bibliography is required for all categories. It should contain all sources that provided usable information or new perspectives in preparing the entry. Students will look at many more sources than they will actually use. They should list only those sources that contributed to the development of their entries. Sources of visual materials and oral interviews must be included. The annotations for each source must explain how the source was used and how it helped the students understand their topics.

**Separation of Primary and Secondary Sources:** Students are required to separate their bibliographies into primary and secondary sources.

- While many sources clearly fall into one category or the other, some sources can be either, depending on how they are used. In those questionable cases, the student should explain in the annotation why they classified that particular source as primary or secondary.
- If you disagree with the categorization of a source as primary or secondary, ask about it during the interview and allow the students a chance to explain their rationale.
- If you have doubts about the validity of an Internet source or its classification as primary or secondary, ask about it during the interview.

**Process Paper:** Entries in all categories except historical papers must provide a description of no more than 500 words explaining how the students chose their topics, conducted their research, created and developed their entries, and the relationship of their topics to the contest theme.

- The process paper should not summarize the students' research but should instead explain how they conducted research and developed the entry.

## CATEGORY RULES: PERFORMANCES

**Time Requirements:** Performances may not exceed ten minutes in length. Timing starts at the beginning of the performance following the announcement of the title and student name(s). Any other introductory remarks will be considered part of the overall time. Students will be allowed five minutes to set up and five minutes to remove any props needed for their performance.

- If a performance exceeds ten minutes by a few seconds, please be lenient; students' timing may have been slightly off for various reasons, such as a fallen prop, a forgotten line, or unplanned applause.
- If a performance is more than a few seconds too long, providing an opportunity to include additional information or interpretation, you should take that advantage into consideration by reducing that entry's ranking.
- Please note violations of the time requirements on the evaluation sheets.

**Performance Introduction:** The title of the entry and the names of the participants must be the first and only announcements prior to the start of the performance.

**Media Devices:** Use of slides, tape recorders, computers, or other media within a performance is permitted. Students must run all equipment and carry out any special lighting effects.

**Script:** The script for the performance should not be included with the written material presented to the judges.