

## Week 13

### Organizing and Writing a Thesis Paper

As mentioned in the previous workshop, it is recommended by National History Day in New Mexico that every student complete a writing element before creating their NHD projects. This essay is not all-encompassing; students will continue to research and learn about their topic even after this short essay is written. Rather, it is an opportunity for you as the teacher to gauge the progress each student is making. Students who are interested in doing a group project should each write their own essay. They will be able to begin working in groups after the essay assignment is completed.

This essay presents a fabulous opportunity for cross-curricular teaching, especially at the middle school level. Invite your Language Arts teacher to work cooperatively on this assignment.

#### **Mini-Lesson:**

Explain to your students that they will be writing a short essay about what they have learned so far. After the moans and groans have died down, explain to them that writing will make their project better. It will help them organize the materials they have so far, gather their thoughts, and discover what information they still need to look for in their research. It will also make it easier to decide what type of project they would like to do. And, because every type of project requires some form of writing (documentaries and performances require a script, websites and exhibits have text, papers obviously require writing) writing now will give them a head start on that part of the project.

Once the hard sell is over, help them to organize their ideas. Your school probably has a writing formula that is taught to your students. If you are unsure, check with a language arts teacher at your school. If your school does utilize a formula to teach students to write, use that method here. If not, help your students organize a simple five-paragraph essay. A graphic organizer is included.

Once students have organized the material they have already found researching, they should write a one-two page essay about their topic. They should incorporate the thesis statement they wrote last week in the introduction paragraph. They also should be sure to relate the topic to "Communication in History."

#### **Homework:**

Students should complete their one-two page essays for the next workshop.

# Outlining Your Thesis Paper

Before you write your thesis paper, you must outline your ideas. This will help your thoughts stay organized and orderly. This organizer will help you outline your research.

<p>Introduction:</p> <p>Thesis statement:</p>	<p><b>Introduction</b></p> <p>This paragraph will introduce your topic and thesis to the reader</p>
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<p>Main Point:</p> <p>Evidence:</p> <p>Analysis:</p> <p>Link to thesis:</p>	<p><b>Body</b></p> <p>Each body paragraph should be a <b>MEAL</b>:</p>
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<p>Main Point:</p> <p>Evidence:</p> <p>Analysis:</p> <p>Link to thesis:</p>	<p><b>M: Main Point</b> of the paragraph</p>
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<p>Main Point:</p> <p>Evidence:</p> <p>Analysis:</p> <p>Link to thesis:</p>	<p><b>E: Evidence</b> to support the main point</p>
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<p>Short term consequences:</p> <p>Long term consequences:</p> <p>So What?:</p>	<p><b>Conclusion</b></p> <p>This paragraph ties up your ideas and relates them back to the main thesis.</p>
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**A: Analysis**

**L: Link** back to main thesis

## Week 14

### Conducting an Interview

Oral history is one of the oldest forms of preserving historical information. National History Day projects can be enhanced if students arrange and carry out interviews with primary or secondary sources. Asking your students to conduct at least one interview will teach them several important skills.

- They will improve their speaking and listening skills, especially since they will most often be interviewing adults.
- They will need to organize and prepare for the interview.
- They will learn to be fluid and flexible with their interview.
- They will learn to differentiate between an oral history interview and an interview with an expert.

#### **Mini-Lesson:**

If possible, invite a guest to class for this lesson. You might wish to invite someone who can speak as a primary source about an event, such as a Vietnam War veteran or someone who was involved in the Civil Rights Movement.

Alternatively, you might invite an expert to speak with your class. This gives you the opportunity to customize this class to fit your current classroom topic. Be sure your guest understands that the purpose of their visit is so you can demonstrate the interview process for your class. They will be sharing their experience/knowledge, but it will be framed in an interview format. If you are not able to have a guest join with you, use an interview from the internet to demonstrate an oral history or expert interview. A good primary source oral history interview can be found on YouTube if you search "Lauretta Jackson Oral History 1." The video is quite long, so you will only need to show a portion so students understand the art of the interview.

Before you begin your interview (or show the video), ask students what they think the difference is between an oral history and an expert interview. (An oral history is an interview with a primary source, while an expert interview is an interview with a secondary source). Ask students which they think is more important in NHD research. This is a trick question....both are important.

Once students understand the difference between the two, introduce your guest and explain that you will be demonstrating an oral history or expert interview. Show the students how you have prepared ahead of time by completing the “Just the Facts”) worksheet and writing interview questions (part of the “Interview 101” packet included). Then, conduct a short interview with your guest about his/her area of expertise. Allow your students to ask some questions, too, pointing out that these are follow-up questions because something the interviewee said led them to the question.

**Work Time:**

Give students a copy of the “Interview 101” packet included. If you prefer, you can offer this information digitally to save on paper, and only print the last three pages, which are activities. Let them use some time to research who they might find to interview. Challenge them to think of primary sources they could interview if that is realistic. Point out that if the subject is older than World War II, they will have a difficulty finding a primary source to interview. Have them look for museums or organizations dedicated to their subject, book authors, and historical societies. This step might be frustrating for some students, and they may require some help locating interview subjects. Beyond helping with this step, students should arrange and conduct the interviews on their own.

**Homework:**

Each student (or group, if you want to allow group interviews) should arrange and conduct at least one interview about their topic. Give them several weeks to complete this, but they should be working on the arrangements this week. If they cannot find someone to interview locally, or cannot get to an interview, allow them to set up a phone interview, or conduct the interview via email or regular mail. Set a realistic date by which they must turn in a transcript or notes from the interview.

# Interviewing for National History Day

## **Picking an Interview Topic**

You have already chosen a topic for your National History Day project. As you learn the details about your event, you will discover details you would like to more about. These questions that arise can lead to great interview topics.

## **Picking Someone to Interview—two types of interviews**

Interviews about your National History Day topic can fall into two categories...oral history interviews and expert interviews.

### **Who remembers?**

An oral history interview is conducted with someone who was a part of the event or has firsthand knowledge of the event. They are a primary source. For example, if you are doing a project about the lunch counter sit-ins held during the Civil Rights Movement, you could interview someone who participated in one of the sit-ins.

You will need to do some research to figure out who from your event might still be living. Contacting a museum, historical society or organization dedicated to your topic might lead you to someone who could be interviewed. Also consider talking with older generations in your own family or community to get ideas.

### **Who is an expert?**

You might not be able to find a primary source to interview, especially if your subject happened a long time ago. Finding someone with firsthand knowledge of the Civil War is not a possibility. Instead, you can find a “talking head”, an expert in the area you are studying. You might look for college professors who specialize in the topic you are learning about, authors of books, or descendents of primary sources. Again, contacting a museum, university or organization dedicated to your topic can help you identify potential interviews. Interviewing experts can be done with any subject, and sometimes secondary source interview can lead you to discover a primary source you did not know about.

**Who should you choose to interview?**

Names of three possible interview subjects (choose at least one oral history interviewee if possible and one expert interviewee):

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_

**Who is your final choice for your interview?**

You should record the name, address, and telephone number of your interview subject, so that you can contact the person, before or after the interview, if necessary. If you contact them by phone or email, ask for full contact information and ask them how they prefer to communicate with you.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Town/City \_\_\_\_\_

ZipCode \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone number: (    ) \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Directions to interview site:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Make an Interview Appointment:**

Circle Day:

Monday - Tuesday - Wednesday - Thursday - Friday - Saturday - Sunday

Date: \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_

Time: \_\_\_\_\_ a.m./p.m.

Remember that the interview is probably an important event to your subject. Set up a special time and date so that both of you can prepare for the meeting and so that you will have time to integrate what you learn into your project. It may be helpful, when you speak with your subject on the phone or through e-mail, to let your subject know ahead of time what you are interested in learning from them. You may even want to send your subject a list of possible interview questions before you meet with him or her. This will help spark the person's memory about the names of people and places that he or she may want to share with you. When you set up your appointment, be sure to get permission from your interviewee to video or audio tape them.

## Confirming your appointment

Prior to your interview, confirm the date and time with your subject. You can do this through a phone call, a post card or an email. Be sure to consider your subject. Many older interviewees may not be proficient with email, or they might not hear well on the phone. Do what you think will make your subject, NOT YOU, feel the most comfortable.

### Post Card/email Confirmation:

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

Thank you for agreeing to allow me to interview.

I will meet you:

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Place: \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to ask some questions about the topic of:

\_\_\_\_\_

I would enjoy seeing and hearing about any photographs, letters, or other keepsakes that you would be willing to share with others.

Yours truly, \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone Number \_\_\_\_\_

## Preparing for the Interview

Consider what you have already learned out about your interview topic. Prepare for your interview by reviewing the "Five W's" of your topic: who, what, when, where and why.

### Your Job is to Record and Interpret History

- Write and ask good questions.
- Get good stories that are told in an interesting way.
- Examine and understand the different beliefs, interests, hopes and fears in follow up questions.
- Evaluate your evidence to make conclusions.

### “Just the Facts”

In your own words, write quick notes from the research you have already done that answer the following about your topic.

#### **Sample Title: Sit-in Movement of the 1960s**

Who	Started by college students across the country, the sit-in movement later was coordinated by SNCC (the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee).
What	An act of civil disobedience by African Americans who sat down at segregated lunch counters and refused to leave until they had been given service.
Where	The sit-in movement began in February, 1960.
When	Started at a Woolworth’s store in Greensboro, North Carolina, but quickly spread across the southern United States.
Why	To gain equal treatment for African Americans at lunch counters and other establishments that refused to serve customers on account of their race.

## **Writing Interview Questions**

**MEMORY/KNOWLEDGE + EXPLANATION + JUDGMENT =SUCCESSFUL INTERVIEW**

You will be asking three types of questions during your interview. First, you will ask memory or knowledge questions. Next, you will ask a series of explanation questions, followed by several judgment questions. Do not be afraid to change the order of your questions and add a follow-up question if something the interviewee says leave you wanting more information. **Do not waste the time you have to interview with basic questions you have already answered in your research.**

### **Memory questions for primary source interviews:**

After you have decided on a focus topic and done some background reading, you should carefully consider and write down the questions that you plan to use in your interview, using your own worksheet or the one provided with this manual. Your interview should begin with several memory questions. First, memory questions should help relax your subject and get them in a mood to reminisce. Second, these questions will help you gather information about your subject’s personal experiences. You will get the best answers if you ask your interview subject to talk about his or her own experiences, so encourage your interviewee to provide personal stories, or sad and funny memories that you will not find in the standard school books.



### **Knowledge questions for secondary source interviews:**

If you are interviewing an expert secondary source rather than a primary source, you will be focusing on what they have learned about the subject. Your initial questions will be designed to allow the interviewee to share what he/she knows about the subject.

### **Explanation questions**

In order to learn as much as possible from the interview experience you should write several questions that will encourage your subject to expand and explain their feelings and ideas. The second stage of questions should encourage your subject to dig deeper into the stories to explain why things happened and how they relate to other events.

### **Explanation question starters:**

- What caused this event...?
- Why did this happen...?
- What happened next...?
- Can you describe the scene in one word...?
- Can you compare two events...?
- Explain the reason for...?
- Can you describe the scene...?
- Can you explain a photograph...?

### **Judgment questions**

The last group of questions should offer your subject a chance to talk about the “big picture” by telling about what was good or bad, important or less important. These questions should be asked last because they allow the interview subject a chance to sum up and make conclusions. Remember that this is your subject’s opportunity to give his or her own opinion—you may or may not agree with the conclusions. **Do not argue the point with your subject!**

### **Judgment questions examples:**

- What was the happiest (funniest or saddest) memory?
- What was your biggest accomplishment?
- What actions would you change if you had a chance to re-live those years again?
- What mistakes did people make during this period or event in history?
- What should people today remember about this time/event?
- What conclusion can you draw about this event?
- What is your point of view regarding this?

### **Follow-up questions**

Even with your best efforts some people may need some extra questions to encourage them to tell the full story. Don't be afraid to leave the questions you have written down to ask a follow-up question, but then return to your prepared interview.

#### **Follow-up question examples:**

- Why was this important?
- How did the story begin or end?
- Can you clarify....?
- Is it correct that....?

#### **Closing questions:**

Asking a few final questions will help you wrap up the interview.

#### **Closing questions to ask:**

- Is there anything else you want to tell me about ....?
- Did I forget to ask any important questions?
- Do you know anybody else who I might be able to interview about this topic? Can you help me contact them?

## **Conducting the Interview**

### **Proper Attire**

You want your interview subjects to relax and tell their best stories. Your clothing should not distract your subject from the purpose of the interview. You should be neatly dressed in comfortable clothes.

### **Practice**

If you are not familiar with the audio- or videotape recorder you will be using, you should practice at home.

### **Arrive early**

It is important to arrive a few minutes early for your interview. This will give you a few minutes for introductions and set-up.

### **Set Up**

If you are videotaping your interview, the camera should be set up on a tripod. Put the camera as close to the interview subject as possible and do a sound check before proceeding to make sure you have good audio. You might want to also use an audio recorder that you can set near the interview subject in case you have

sound issues. If you have a camera operator ask him or her to keep the camera as still as possible. Use the zoom button only when a close-up seems to help the audience understand the story being told. (Do not put the camera more than ten feet from the subject unless you have a special microphone that is attached to a jack.)

### **Identify the Tape**

You will want to be sure to identify your interview. Speaking clearly, say, "My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am interviewing \_\_\_\_\_ on the topic of \_\_\_\_\_. The time is \_\_\_\_\_ a.m./p.m. and the date is \_\_\_\_\_."

### **Conducting the Interview**

Briefly explain your National History Day project to your subject so they understand the purpose of the interview. Be professional as you conduct your interview. Ask each question from your list and wait respectfully for an answer. (It may take your interviewee a moment or two to compose an answer, so don't worry if there is a silent pause.) Give your full attention to the person giving the interview. Do not take notes...you can go back to the tape to do this (If you are working as a group and are completing the interview together, assign one person with quick, readable handwriting to be the note taker.)

Nod and smile to show that you are listening and understand the story. If you don't understand, ask a follow up question. Remember this probably will be your only chance to get these stories on tape.

### **Active Listening:**

You can show your interview subject that you are listening and understand his or her story by paraphrasing (repeating in your own words) an important part of the interview. This will let your storyteller know that you are listening and understand their stories.

### **Example:**

Interview Subject: "My assignment during the sit-ins was not to leave the lunch counter until we had been served. This meant that we had to keep our seats and remain nonviolent, even when people started yelling and throwing food at us."

Your paraphrase: "You were determined to stay at the lunch counter until you had achieved your goal."

### **Checking the Tape:**

There is nothing worse than getting home to find that your recording device malfunctioned. Be sure you have clear audio and video. If there is anything you think you would like to re-record, do it while you are there. For instance, perhaps a certain story the subject told would work well as a part of your documentary, but when they told the story, they sneezed in the middle. You can explain that you would like to use that story in your project, with their permission, of course, and ask if they would mind re-recording that portion of the interview.

### **Gaining Permission:**

It is important that you ask your subject permission to use their interview as part of your project. Ask your subject if he or she wishes to erase or add any comments before you leave. Once both of you are satisfied, ask your subject to sign a permission form. This is an important final step because this will allow you to include the interview in your project.

### **Ending the interview**

As you end your interview, ask your subject if they know any other people you could contact to interview. You never know where this question might lead. Ask your subject if you can contact them if you have any further questions, and ask what is the most convenient way to contact them (remember...their comfort, not yours!) Before you leave, smile and say, "Thank you!"

### **Sample Permission Slip**

I give my permission for:

\_\_\_\_\_ (student interviewer) to use my taped interview as part of a National History Day project. I release all claims and rights to this tape.

\_\_\_\_\_ (interview subject)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### **After the Interview**

#### **Transcribe the tape:**

You might wish to transcribe the tape. Some students will include the transcripts of interviews as part of their NHD exhibits, although this does not usually influence the judging. You may just transcribe sections you found to be particularly meaningful.

**Take notes:**

After the interview, return to your tape and take notes about what you learned.

**Send a Thank you note:**

Write a thank you note after you view or listen to the tape. Quote or refer to an important part of the interview in the note to let the subject know that you spent the time to listen and think about his or her story. If your project wins and goes to state or nationals, consider sending a follow up note to let them know.

## **Alternate Ways to Interview**

Perhaps you cannot interview the individual in person. They might live in another city, or you just are not able to schedule a time that works. Consider interviewing over the phone or via email. While you will not have a video-taped interview, you will still be able to gain valuable information about your topic.

## **Using the interview in your project**

There are several ways to use an interview in your NHD project.

- **All categories:** use the knowledge you gained as part of your research base. You could also refer to your interview when you speak with the NHD judges. Remember to give credit to you interviewee in your bibliography.
- **Exhibits and papers:** incorporate quotes from your interviewee into your project.
- **Documentaries and websites:** use the text of quotes as visual elements of your project. You can use clips from your interview as part of your documentary or website (remember that media clips in websites can only be 45 seconds in length).
- **Performances:** incorporate ideas or quotes from your interview into your script.

# "Just the Facts"

**Title:**

Who	
What	
Where	
When	
Why	

# Interview Questions

## Memory/Knowledge Questions

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Follow Up Questions:

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## Worksheet: Explanation Questions

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Follow Up Questions:

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Judgment Questions

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

Follow Up Questions:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_