

National History Day in Ohio Tip Sheet:

# Thesis Statements

## What is a Thesis Statement?



A thesis statement is 1-3 sentences which ties together your topic, the annual theme, and its historical impact. The thesis is not an introduction to your topic, but rather introducing your argument as to why your topic is historically significant and fits within that year's theme.

## General Tips

- Begin writing your thesis after you have done your preliminary research.
- Expect to modify your thesis as your understanding of your topic deepens.
- Your thesis answers WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHEN, and WHY.
- Use theme words.
- Don't be too wordy.
- Be careful not to exaggerate or make sweeping statements.
  - "\_\_\_\_\_ changed the world forever"
  - "\_\_\_\_\_ was the most important reform in history"
  - "Because of \_\_\_\_\_, life improved for everyone"
- Don't use words when you don't fully understand their meaning.
- Make sure **EVERYTHING** in your project is directly related to your thesis. If it doesn't directly relate to your thesis, then it shouldn't be part of your project.
- Don't use "I."



## Websites

### History Day Expert on Writing a Thesis:

<http://historydayexpert.blogspot.com/2011/01/writing-successful-thesis-statement.html>

### New York History Day:

<http://nyshd.blogspot.com/2009/11/developing-thesis-and-other-writing.html>

### Harvard Writing Center:

<http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~wricntr/documents/Thesis.html>

### Minnesota "What's your Point?":

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6\\_LFIHp-61I](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6_LFIHp-61I)



# Annotated Bibliography

## What is an annotated bibliography?

A bibliography is a list of citations, stating where you found the information you used in creating your project. This includes books, newspapers, images, and any other source you may have used. For NHD, the sources are divided into primary and secondary sources. The annotation is 1-3 sentences describing the source, why it is categorized as primary or secondary, and how this source helped develop your project.



## During Research Process

- Keep track of all the sources.
  - This can easily be done using note cards, a notebook, or a word processor.
  - For websites, write the date you accessed them.
- Make sure the website you are using has reliable information and a good reputation.

## Putting an Annotated Bibliography Together:

- Don't wait until the night before to put together your bibliography.
  - Formatting is always more time consuming than you think!
- Subdivide primary and secondary sources (Newspapers, Books, Photographs, Websites, Films, Interviews, etc.)

## Which style should I format my process paper and citations?

You may use either MLA or Turabian. It **does not matter** which you choose, just **be consistent**. See your local librarian or English teacher for paper citation guides.

MLA:

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/06/>

Turabian: [http://www.press.uchicago.edu/books/turabian/turabian\\_citationguide.html](http://www.press.uchicago.edu/books/turabian/turabian_citationguide.html)

## A Note on Tertiary Sources (Wikipedia, Google Images, Encyclopedias, Almanacs)

- Tertiary sources maybe a collection or distillation of primary and secondary sources. Think of citing a Google Image search result like citing the library in which you found a book.
- **DO NOT** cite these as sources, but these sources are not a bad place to start your research. Dig deeper than the home page; at the bottom of the page has a list of references and links to legitimate academic sources.

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# Annotated Bibliography

## Note on annotations

Make sure you provide substance in your annotation. What information did you learn from the source? It did provide evidence to support your thesis? How did it help your project? Why did you include this source in your project?

## Examples of Good v. Bad annotations

### Bad Annotation

U.S. Const., amend. I

*I used this to find the wording of the first amendment for my documentary on free speech.*

### Good Annotation

U.S. Const., amend. I

*The first amendment prohibits any law "abridging the freedom of speech." In the case of Tinker v. Des Moines the students felt the school violated their constitutional right to free speech by prohibiting them from wearing black armbands to protest the Vietnam War.*

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### Bad Annotation

"Better Protection for All School Children" Marion Daily Mirror. March 7, 1908.

*I used this newspaper article to learn about the Collinwood School fire.*

### Good Annotation

"Better Protection for All School Children" Marion Daily Mirror. March 7, 1908.

*This article described the reaction to the Collinwood School fire and reform attempts it sparked. Ohio Representative Mooney proposed a bill in Ohio to require wider hallways, fireproof structures, and doors that swing outward for fire escapes.*

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### Bad Annotation

Kent State University Student Demonstration Photographs. Kent State University. Kent State University Police Department Records. May 4 Collection, Box 28, Folder 53.

*These images really helped with my project.*

### Good Annotation

Kent State University Student Demonstration Photographs. Kent State University. Kent State University Police Department Records. May 4 Collection, Box 28, Folder 53.

*These images were useful for my performance. I used them to learn about the dress and clothing style in 1970 which helped me put together my costume when I portrayed a student protestor. In the photographs you can also see the protest signs the students carried which allowed me to learn about their arguments. I also recreated one of the signs for my performance.*

# Evaluating Internet Sites

Just like with print sources, it is important to be critical of the Internet sources you use to develop your project.

## Questions you should consider when examining sources:

- Who wrote the web page? Were they qualified to write it?
- Who published it?
- Who is the intended audience?
- What is the writing style?
- When was this information last updated?
- What does the URL tell you?
  - .com signals a company, while .org is a non-profit, and .gov is a U.S. government agency



You are looking for **accuracy, authority, objectivity, currency, and coverage!**

## University Research Guides

University of California-Berkeley Libraries' Evaluating Websites:

<http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/TeachingLib/Guides/Internet/Evaluate.html>

University of Maryland Libraries' Checklist for Website Evaluation:

<http://www.lib.umd.edu/guides/webcheck.html>

Ohio State University Libraries' Internet Research Techniques:

<http://liblearn.osu.edu/tutor/>

New Mexico State University Library Examples of Good versus Bad Websites:

<http://lib.nmsu.edu/instruction/evalexpl.html>

## Website Directories

Infomine: <http://lib-www.ucr.edu>

Librarians Index to the Internet: <http://www.ii.org>

Internet Scout Project: <http://scout.cs.wisc.edu>

NHD in Ohio List of Reliable Sites:

<http://www.ohiohistory.org/historyday/pdf/internetsources.pdf>

Directory of Historical Organizations in Ohio:

<http://www.ohiohistory.org/resource/oahtm/directory/>





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# Process Paper

## What is a Process Paper?

The process paper is a vital part of the judging. The process paper allows the judges to see the hard work you put into researching your project and helps them determine the depth of your understanding of the material. The process paper must be **500 words or less** (4-5 paragraphs), and there are 4 required sections for a process paper:

**Section 1** should explain how you chose your topic

**Section 2** should explain how you conducted your research (where did you go to research, what type of sources did you use, highlight some of your best research)

**Section 3** should explain how you selected your presentation category and created your project (we don't need to know that you cut and glued pictures to your board. Instead focus of how you decided on the layout; do the colors or shapes you choose represent something? Use this section as a blueprint for the judges on how to read your board, view your documentary or website, etc.

**Section 4** should explain how your project relates to the NHD theme and why your topic is important in history.

## What should be Included on the Title Page?

- **Keep it simple.** The title page should **ONLY** include: your project title, your name(s), the contest division, and your category.
- **Do NOT** include your age, grade level, teacher's name or school name.

## Checklist:

- Eliminate typos and silly grammatical or factual errors.
- Use plain, white, 8 ½" x 11" paper.
- **Do NOT** include covers or artwork.
- Staple together title page, process paper, and annotated bibliography in the upper left hand corner.
- Bring **4** copies of your process paper for the judges.

