



HISTORY DAY IN CALIFORNIA

2008-2009

THE INDIVIDUAL IN HISTORY: ACTIONS AND LEGACIES

History Day in California invites students to research topics related to this year's theme **THE INDIVIDUAL IN HISTORY: ACTIONS AND LEGACIES**. This broad theme will allow students to select and research an endless number of topics, from local to world history. Many of these topics easily align with the California Content Standards for History/Social Science.

A combination of the right person at the right time in history has powerful outcomes, which can be both inspiring and catastrophic. Inspirational individuals ask difficult questions of society and themselves and believe passionately in an issue. Individuals who were activists, world leaders, scientists, or artists followed their fervor and focused their life's work that eventually became a catalyst for events to unfold in history. In each case the decisions and the route that the individual followed ignited a change.

Many individuals in history were not famous – or infamous – and their names are lost to history. But often, such individuals played significant roles in the course of human events. Students may select individuals that illustrate important values, such as courage in the face of great opposition or in striking out in a new direction; selflessness in helping others during a time of disaster; ingenuity in founding or building an institution; patriotism in time of national crisis; or leadership in a cooperative effort to protect human rights or improve the community.

History and the story of individuals and groups of individuals cannot be separated. One person does not stand alone, isolated in time, but is a product of the events and the people that came before and those who were influenced by history. Whether the individual was a diplomat, a politician, or an everyday person, the plight of the individual affects us all. The individual is the force behind history. How does an individual change history? Events that have changed the course of history are often associated with an individual or a group of individuals with same goal.

Students should remember that understanding time and place are crucial to examining an individual's role in history. Sometimes the individual is a catalyst for the events examined. People make history.

The history of science and technology represents another fascinating area of study. Students might investigate not only the effect of an individual on scientific knowledge, technological development, and societal change, but also the impact of science and technology on the individual.

While the final decision of a topic is up to the student, we encourage students to consider topics related to California's Content Standards for History/Social

Science. By selecting a topic from the Content Standards, it will increase the availability and accessibility of secondary and primary sources. Identifying and examining primary sources is an important aspect of a successful History Day entry. These historical pieces of information provide direct evidence of the people, places, events, or ideas being studied. Primary sources are bountiful and include diaries and letters, newspaper reports, legal records, oral histories, and eyewitness accounts.

Regardless of which topic a student chooses, remember that it is the task of the participant to go beyond just biographies and descriptions of specific people or events and demonstrate how that person's actions had an impact on history. Students are expected to gather information, analyze it, and develop their own conclusions as to its historical significance.

Students should keep in mind the **historical context** of the topic – what were the physical, political, economic, cultural and social circumstances of the events or ideas? Why did things happen as they did? Students must examine the **historical impact** of their topic – what has changed as a result? What effects did it have on the surrounding events and atmosphere of the time? Does it continue to have an effect today?

History Day in California participants should make sure that their **research is balanced** – what are the different perspectives about the topic? What varying resources are available about this topic? All students should ensure that their topic **adheres to this year's theme: THE INDIVIDUAL IN HISTORY: ACTIONS AND LEGACIES**.

Finally, every person involved in History Day in California should remember that the greatest reward is in the experience and the knowledge gained by researching, analyzing, and preparing the entry.

HISTORY DAY IN CALIFORNIA 2009 STATE FINALS

April 30th to May 3rd in Sacramento

For more information contact:

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