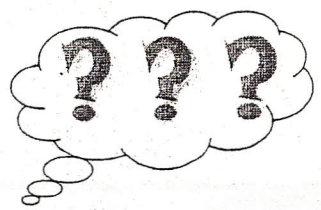


Deconstructing the Process of Becoming a Student Historian Developing and Communicating an Historical Argument in Five Easy Steps

Doing a NHD project is like becoming a historian. You get to be the expert on your subject. But in order for people to be convinced by what you say, you have to clearly communicate your message and provide persuasive evidence to back it up. Historians call this making an "argument" or an "interpretation." Where does this all begin?

Step One — So I've got this "historical hunch"...



The first step in the process is to develop a "historical hunch" — or a historical question or preliminary hypothesis — that gives you a reason to research. First and foremost, what sparks your interest? You're going to be working with this subject for a long time, so it should be a story that you want to learn and tell. Your story won't just be a list of what happened and when, but *why* and *how* these events happened and why the story *matters*— to you and to others. The NHD theme will help you tell the story in an interpretive way. When you're defining your "historical hunch," here are some things to ask yourself:

- Is this story historically *significant*?
- How did it *influence* other people/ideas/events throughout time?
- Is it *historical* (as opposed to current events)?
- How does it relate to the *NHD theme*?

Step Two — Now what do I do with it? Finding and approaching sources

Research is the key that will help you develop your own voice and the ability to tell a compelling and convincing story of the past. A firm research base will:

- show use of a wide *variety* of sources
- *deeply explore* available sources
- understand and use appropriately *primary* (original, first-hand) sources to develop own ideas
- use *secondary* sources to understand the ways that historians and others understand the subject
- reflect a *balance* of various *viewpoints* and *perspectives*

