

The Thesis Statement:

A thesis statement is a central thought that holds your entire National History Day (NHD) project together. You'll craft your thesis statement as an answer to your research question. In the beginning, we like to refer to your thesis as a working thesis, because as you gather your research, this statement can evolve. By the time you present your NHD project, however, you should have a concrete thesis that is supported by evidence.

Thesis = Topic + Theme + Impact. In other words, you are not just introducing your topic, you are creating an argument that expresses your topic's significance and demonstrates how the theme plays a central part. You are writing a statement that answers your research question.

Sample Statements: Do's and Don'ts

DISCLAIMER: Even the DO statements are a work in progress.

Don't: Martin Luther King, Jr. was an important person because his tragic death sparked urban revolts across the country.

Do: Martin Luther King, Jr.'s assassination in Memphis, Tennessee on April 4, 1968 was a tragedy for his followers, especially young African Americans. In their frustration, black youths in over 100 cities across the country took to the streets to not only protest King's death, but the continued discrimination that African Americans faced in their communities despite the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1965 Voting Rights Act.

Don't: The Trail of Tears was a triumph for Andrew Jackson and a tragedy for Indians.

Do: After almost a century of territorial disputes between Native American nations and white colonizers, U.S. President Andrew Jackson signed the Indian Removal Act on May 28, 1830 which allowed the president to grant unsettled lands west of the Mississippi River in exchange for Native American lands within existing state borders. While Jackson and other, especially Southern supporters of Indian removal praised the Act as a triumph, Native Americans considered it a tragedy. These tribes were displaced from their tribal lands and forced to march hundreds of miles west to modern-day Oklahoma under brutal and inhumane environmental conditions along what it now known as the Trail of Tears.

Don't: Women deserved the right to vote when they earned it in 1920.

Do: The leaders of the woman's suffrage movement endured many tragedies to ensure the triumphant passage of the 19th Amendment.

Choose a sample statement and identify:

The Person/People: _____

The Idea(s) _____

The Triumph _____

The Tragedy _____

What must be proven in order for this statement to be true?

What evidence will we need to support our claims?

Where might we find this evidence (consider documents, statements, opinions, and other sources)?

Consider your own working thesis and identify:

The Person/People: _____

The Idea(s) _____

The Triumph _____

The Tragedy _____

What must be proven in order for this statement to be true?

What evidence will you need to support your claims?

Where might you find this evidence (consider documents, statements, opinions, and other sources)?