



## Content, Context, and Conclusion: The Three C's of a Successful History Day Project

### **Ohio Standards**

#### **Connections:**

Grades 6-8  
Social Studies Skills  
and Methods

Benchmark A  
Indicator 1

Benchmark B  
Indicator 2

Benchmark C  
Indicator 2  
Indicator 6

Grades 9-10  
Social Studies Skills  
and Methods

Benchmark A  
Indicator 1  
Indicator 2  
Indicator 3

Grades 11-12  
Social Studies Skills  
and Methods

Benchmark B  
Indicator 5

### **Lesson Summary:**

Once students have a grasp of National History Day, have chosen a topic, and understand the basics of historical research, it is time to examine how to successfully complete their projects. Success should NOT be measured by who does or does not place at the school, district, state, or national contests, but by how effectively the students have researched and concluded on their topics in relationship to the annual theme.

In this lesson, students will:

- Learn about historical context and how to incorporate it into a research project
- Understand how to create a balanced research project by looking at both sides of an issue
- Be able to write a thesis statement based on historical research

### **Estimated Duration:**

One or two class periods

**Commentary:** For many students, there are a few basic concepts that make the difference between a good and a great History Day project. By developing these skills, students will also be better prepared for their experiences in higher education. This lesson is the final in a series four.



## Content, Context, and Conclusion: The Three C's of a Successful History Day Project

### **Pre-Assessment:**

Determine where students are in the process of creating their project.

### **Scoring Guidelines:**

Checklist:

- Students have selected their topics
- Student have completed preliminary research
- Students have begun primary research
- Students have started outlining their projects

Dependent on the students' progress, it is advisable to check in with students on their projects.

### **Post-Assessment:**

Assess thesis statements.

### **Scoring Guidelines:**

Score	Criteria
5	Concise thesis statement that relates to the theme and the students' topic, clearly stating what the student's project will examine.
4	The thesis statement relates to the annual theme but may not clearly reflect what the student's project examines.
3	The thesis statement either has no relation to the annual theme or clear connection to the student's project.
2	The thesis is not clear on the student's topic and does not appear to relate to the annual them.
1	The thesis is not a statement of that asserts any facts or ideas.



## Content, Context, and Conclusion: The Three C's of a Successful History Day Project

### **Instructional Procedures:**

#### Content:

More than gathering a bevy of primary sources related to a topic; students also need to look at both sides of an issue. This concept is usually easier to understand with current events. If you've had an in-class discussion where there were different sides to the argument, revisit that moment. Like anything that happens today: the War on Terror, political elections, smoking in public, etc, in history, there were differing opinions in any historical subject or topic.

#### Activity 1:

- Take the two sources with opposing viewpoints and break the class into two groups. Use the Global Warming essays or sources of choice.
- Have the students read their source and answer these questions on the Source Viewpoint Worksheet
  - Who wrote this document?
  - What issue is he/she writing about?
  - What is his or her view on this topic?
  - Do you agree or disagree?
- Have the students hold a mini-debate about the subject, taking the side of the author of their sources.
- Have the students on the same side of the issue stand on the same side of the room.
- Ask a question to get the mini-debate going and give each side a moment to respond. This exercise should only take a few minutes.
- After the debate have the students read the other source. Ask them how reading the other source changed their view on the topic, or help confirm what they already believed.



## Content, Context, and Conclusion: The Three C's of a Successful History Day Project

- On the back of their activity sheet have them answer this question:

How did looking at both sides of this issue help your understanding of this event?

This exercise might also work by warming up with another current topic that the students are familiar with from their day- to- day experience. The provided sources can be substituted with other sources that are related to the classroom content area or of particular interest to the class.

Remind the students of bias in historical documents. See the Analyzing Primary Sources Worksheet for discussion with the class. Discuss with or pass out to students to help them in their research and synthesis of sources for their History Day projects. Remind the students that everyone has a bias and just because it is written in a book, does not make it 100% true. Empower them to question what they read. The students want to avoid citing or quoting someone with a biased opinion without recognizing his or her position

Context:

Definition: The circumstances in which an event occurs; a setting.

Introduce the idea of context to the class:

Why is context so important in a research or History Day project? Because history doesn't happen in a vacuum, everything is somehow connected. In order to better understand a topic, it helps to understand the circumstances surrounding the event. Were there events leading up to the topic that affected what happened, what else was going on in the world and in history at the time of the topic?



## Content, Context, and Conclusion: The Three C's of a Successful History Day Project

### Activity 2:

- Show the Election Day political cartoon, or other source of choice to the class.
- By using a textbook, encyclopedias or other secondary sources, have the student work individually or in groups to determine the context of the subject using the Source Context Worksheet.
- After the students have filled out their sheets, come together to talk about what was learned by providing a context to a topic. Discuss the implications of this in a research or History Day project.

### Conclusion:

Remind the class that each History Day or research project must have a conclusion or thesis statement. The thesis should be a statement that gives the main argument of the project. A thesis statement should include the topic (related to the annual theme) and the assertion that is being made about the topic.

Example:

*After the Civil War, many freed African Americans believed that their children would have substantially better lives and greater opportunities than they had had as slaves. However, their hopes for their children were not fulfilled; in the 1880s, the lives of most African Americans were not much better than those of their once-enslaved parents. ~*

Kansas History Day

[www.kshs.org/teachers/historyday/](http://www.kshs.org/teachers/historyday/)

All projects must include a thesis statement and should be discernable by any viewer, audience member or judge.



## Content, Context, and Conclusion: The Three C's of a Successful History Day Project

### Activity 3:

- Go back to the Global Warming essays.
- Have the students individually or in groups synthesize an argument and write a thesis statement.
- Have the students read their thesis statements and talk about the components of a good thesis.

### **Differentiated Instructional Support**

For high school students- select sources relevant to class or more complicated, to complete the activities.

### **Extension**

Have students bring in articles or sources on opposing viewpoints for discussion.

### **Homework Options and Home Connections**

Assign a due date of the students' thesis statements and an additional ten annotated sources.

After thesis statements have been turned in a revised, it is advisable to assign a due date for a project outline.

### **Materials and Resources:**

For teachers Purdue University Online Writing Lab- Writing a Thesis. [http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/general/gl\\_thesis.html](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/general/gl_thesis.html)

For students American Memory <http://memory.loc.gov>

Ohio Memory <http://www.ohiomemory.org>

Ohio History Central <http://www.ohiohistorycentral.org>



## Content, Context, and Conclusion: The Three C's of a Successful History Day Project

### **Key Vocabulary**

Content- In a History Day project, the content is use of good primary and secondary sources that support a thesis statement and show both sides of an argument.

Context- The events surrounding a topic.

Conclusion- The thesis or synthesis of information and sources that asserts a position on the topic.

### **Technology Connections**

The internet can be used to do research for the Context activity.

### **General Tips**

After the completion of this lesson, continue to assign due dates for other components of the project:

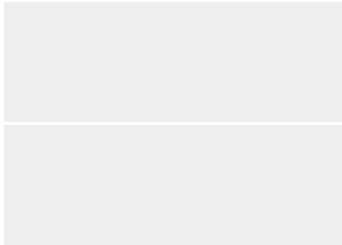
Project Outline  
Process Paper  
Annotated Bibliography  
Final Project

### **Attachments**

Global Warming Essays  
Source Viewpoint Worksheet  
Analyzing Primary Sources Worksheet  
Election Day Political Cartoon



Content, Context, and Conclusion:  
The Three C's of a Successful History Day Project



Source Context Worksheet