

The Thesis Statement:

A thesis statement is a central thought that holds your entire National History Day (NHD) project together. In the beginning, we like to call this a working thesis, because as you gather your research, this thought 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.

Sample Statements: Do's and Don'ts

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

Don't: The National Park Service started in 1916 to preserve scenic areas.

Do: Increasing public concern about the degradation of natural places and America's desire to distinguish itself from Europe by highlighting its natural wonders led to the creation of the National Park Service in 1916. Called the "best idea America ever had," the Park Service is charged both with preserving unique scenic and ecological places and making them accessible to the public. The National Park Service set a global standard for resource preservation that has led to similar programs worldwide and changed the way we think about wilderness.

Don't: Canning is an important innovation.

Do: The development canning technology meant that food could be stored for long periods of time, freeing families from year-round food production and laying the groundwork for the rise of industrialization in the 19th century.

Don't: Washington women fought for the right to vote and finally won it in 1910.

Do: After several unsuccessful attempts, Washington women permanently won the right to vote in 1910, starting a wave of state victories that eventually led to the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920, granting women the right to vote. Since then, women have had an increasing presence in public life, a trend that is especially visible in Washington State, which has two women senators, a woman governor and a majority of women state legislators.

Don't: The interstate highway system is an innovative way to move goods and people.

Do: World War II concerns about troops and materiel movements led to the construction of the interstate highway system in the 1950s. This innovative transportation network allows fast movement of people and goods throughout the continental United States, helping to grow the economy, but has also contributed to climate change through increased use of fossil-fuel depending automobiles and the development of the suburbs and longer drive times.

Choose a sample statement and identify:

The Innovation: _____

The Impact: _____

The Change: _____

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 Innovation: _____

The Impact: _____

The Change: _____

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)?