

NHD How to: CHOOSE a TOPIC

The Importance of Topic Choice:

You're going to be working on this project an awful lot for an awfully long time. Conceivably, you could be working on this ALL school year; that's 10 months. That's about 5% of your entire life. Furthermore, you will have times when you are making little progress. Obstacles, dead ends, frustrations are inevitable. Pick something that will make your time and effort worthwhile.

DO's

- (1) **Pick something you are interested in.**
- (2) **Consider your personal skills & talents.**
 - a. Language skills
 - b. Personal Contacts
 - c. What do you have or what can you do that most other students can't?
- (3) **Consider local resources**
 - a. What unique stuff do you have access to?
- (4) **Check list of suggested topics on NHD website**
 - a. Even if none of the topics suits you, the list might help your own brainstorming
- (5) **Consider historical significance of you topic possibilities**
 - a. One factor upon which you are judged is significance
- (6) **Consider topic choice in conjunction with category choice**
 - a. Ex. Visuals are often very difficult to get for ancient history topics

DON'T's

- (1) **Pick a topic because you think it will be "easy"**
 - a. This project is not "easy". If you're finding it easy, you're doing it wrong or badly...probably both
- (2) **Pick a current event**
 - a. Difficult to argue historical significance
 - b. (Easy to alienate judges)
- (3) **Pick a pop culture topic**
 - a. How historically significant is a piece of pop culture regardless of how popular it is?
 - b. Even if it is historically significant, you will have difficulty convincing judges as they will assume that it is not
- (4) **Pick a controversial topic upon which you have a strongly held belief**
 - a. Projects are judged on balance and it will be hard to avoid becoming a victim of your bias
 - b. (If controversy is especially heated, it will be easy to alienate judges)