

Bucks Mont Regional National History Day Contest 2026 **Introduction for Teachers**

What is National History Day?

National History Day (NHD) is an annual nationwide academic enrichment program for students in grades 6-12 that encourages thoughtful historical research, project-based learning, and a dose of friendly competition.

NHD gets students out of the classroom and into the world as historians. They are doing research and tracking down information about historic people and events. This research leads them to craft a thesis and build original conclusions shared through their different projects. NHD supports and reinforces critical writing, reading, and research skills for students.



The Bucks County Historical Society, which operates the Mercer Museum & Fonthill Castle in Doylestown, PA, coordinates the NHD contest for students in Bucks and Montgomery counties.

How Does NHD Work?

Contest Progression:

The contest progression for NHD starts on the local school level. NHD can be part of a school's curriculum or can be voluntary for students. Students, guided by teachers, work on NHD projects that they will submit at the regional level.

The Bucks Mont Regional NHD Contest is the regional competition. Winners from this competition will advance the Pennsylvania State Contest.

Top entries from the Pennsylvania State Contest then go to the National Contest.

Contest Divisions and Categories:

Students have the choice to communicate their historical argument and research as a project in one of five categories:

- Documentary
- Exhibit
- Paper
- Performance
- Website

Students can participate as individuals or groups, except in the paper category.

Categories are also divided by two divisions:

- Junior division: 6-8 grade
- Senior division: 9-12 grade

Contest Theme:

All students design their project in relation to a common theme. The NHD National Office selects a theme each year that students at every level of competition are required to use to guide their research and historical argument.

To coincide with the commemoration of the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, NHD's 2026 theme is **Revolution, Reaction, Reform in History**.

“Do students have to focus on all three words—revolution, reaction, reform?” No, students do not have to focus on all three aspects of the theme. It depends on the topic. If the topic involves all three, then students should be sure to include all three.

- For more information about the annual theme, read the [2026 National History Day Theme Book](#) written by the national office.
- Additional information can be found on the [2026 National History Day Theme Video](#).
- To help students get started selecting a topic related to the theme, distribute the [2026 National History Day Theme Brainstorm Sheet](#).

Judging Process:

Teams of volunteer judges evaluate the student's projects based on evaluation forms created by the national office.

Judges review and rank the projects, and ultimately provide written feedback to the students. Students who advance to the state and national levels can use that feedback to edit their project for the next level of competition.

In the 2026 Bucks Mont Regional Contest, students will meet in person with judges on **Saturday, March 28, 2026** at **Delaware Valley University** to discuss and share their projects with volunteer judges.

2026 Buck Mont Regional National History Day Contest- Important Dates

Teacher Registration Begins	Friday, Nov. 21, 2025
Student Registration Begins	Monday, Jan. 5, 2026
Student and Teacher Registration Closes	Monday, Feb. 23, 2026
<u>All</u> Student Projects Due Virtually	Monday, Feb. 23, 2026
In Person Regional Contest – Delaware Valley University	Saturday, March 28, 2026
PA State Contest – University of Scranton	April 25 – 26, 2026
National Contest – University of Maryland	June 14 – 18, 2026

NHD Resources for Teachers and Students

Researching and designing an NHD project takes a lot of work and resources. Below is a list of helpful worksheets, videos, and webpages to help you and your students get started. The [official National History Day website](#) also has helpful resources for students and teachers.

1. Teacher Resources:

- [“Help I’m a New NHD Teacher”](#) video series produced by NHD staff

2. Student Resources:

- [“NHD Quick Tips”](#) video series produced by NHD staff
- [“NHD Rules”](#) video series produced by NHD staff
- [“Quick Digital Research Tips”](#) video series produced by NHD staff
- For website category only: [NHDWebCentral Instructions](#) and [“NHDWebCentral Instructional Videos”](#) video series produced by NHD staff

3. [Official National History Day Contest Rule Book](#): Please make sure you and your students read the full rules prior to students beginning their projects.
4. [Guide to Student Research and Historical Argumentation](#): This comprehensive teacher guide, written by NHD and the Library of Congress, includes resources, activity sheets, and more.
5. [Finding, Analyzing, and Constructing History: A Research Guide For Students](#): This comprehensive guide, written by NHD and the Library of Congress, is filled with hints, tips, and activities for students.
6. [Pennsylvania Topics](#):

Why Should You Choose a Pennsylvania Topic?

There are a multitude of Pennsylvania stories relating to *Revolution, Reaction, Reform in History*. Any of these stories would be the starting point of an excellent NHD research project for students. Students can, of course, choose a national or world topic for their NHD project, but choosing a state project (or even a Bucks or Montgomery County project) gives students the opportunity to explore local history

The following Pennsylvania history topics may be of interest to NHD students this year.

- Events:
 - 1787 Constitutional Convention
 - 1791-1794 The Whiskey Rebellion
 - 1829-1971: Eastern State Penitentiary
 - 1902: Anthracite Coal Strike
 - 1971: *PARC v. Pennsylvania*
 - 1984: *Pennhurst State School and Hospital v. Halderman*
- People:
 - Eliza Kennedy Smith (suffragist)
 - James Forten (abolitionist)
 - Lucretia Mott (abolitionist and women's rights activist)
 - Octavius Catto (civil rights activist)
 - Robert Purvis (abolitionist)
 - Thaddeus Stevens (abolitionist)
 - The Doan Gang (revolutionary war)

We strongly encourage your students to select a topic that speaks to their interests and passions.

Questions?

For more information, please contact historyday@mercermuseum.org.