

History Fair Teacher Resource Packet

Purpose of a History Fair

- A history fair will provide students with opportunities to
 - learn from the challenge of investigating a topic of interest
 - understand and organize their findings
 - present those findings in the form of a project
- Participation in a history fair teaches a student how to think critically, improve organizational skills, make oral presentations, conduct interviews, and develop assertiveness. This experience will make history come alive and provide a greater awareness of biblical truth.

Parts of a History Fair Project

- **Logbook:** The logbook is a record of everything that the student did throughout his project. It includes how he chose his topic, how he set up his project, and any information collected through research. It also includes his thoughts, his ideas, any changes made to the project, and the results of the project.
- **Written report:** The written report describes the purpose, procedure, results, conclusions, and reference sources and acknowledges any assistance or donated supplies.
- **Display:** The display is a visual presentation of the student's project. It should include the title of the project and visual elements, such as graphs, charts, or photos, and a biblical application.

Developing a Logbook

- Discuss your preferred parameters with the students as they choose their logbook. They will need something that they can continue to use for several months, such as spiral-bound notebooks, journals, or index cards.
- Each logbook should include the student's name and project title. (*Note:* To make an impartial evaluation, some judges ask that entry numbers, rather than names, be used.)
- The logbook should be neat and legible, but information should not be erased. If changes need to be made, the information that is no longer pertinent should be neatly crossed out, not erased.

Selecting a Topic

- Distribute the History Fair Student Packets. Discuss favorite areas of history after the students read the section about selecting a topic. The National History Day Contest is for grades 6–12. If your fair is done as a precursor to this competition, consideration of topics should adhere to the National History Day theme for the year.
- Direct the students to use their logbooks to list the areas from which they would like to choose their topics. Then instruct them to reduce the list to one or two topics of interest.
- Provide textbooks, trade books, and periodicals to stimulate thinking. Refer to websites for themes and dates of the state and national history fairs. Many websites also provide guidance about completing a fair project.

Notes

- Challenge the students to choose one area of interest to investigate further and to identify a specific topic.

Developing Good Research Skills

- Guide the students in the process of developing a good research question. This should be the first step in researching a topic. Discuss examples of good and poor questions.
- Direct the students to write several possible questions about their topics in their logbooks. Evaluate the questions to see whether they meet the criteria for a good question. You may choose to use the History Fair Research Question Rubric to evaluate their questions.
- Provide a list of resources for researching topic information, such as local libraries, the Internet, high-school history teachers, college or university history professors, or other professionals. For example, if the topic is about an archaeological find of pottery, a local art museum curator may be willing to provide information.

Organizing Data

- Review how to make graphs and charts. Display and explain several examples of graphs. Each type of graph can be used to show different kinds of information.
- Both line and bar graphs show comparisons. A bar graph often shows changes of certain conditions over a period of time. A line graph often shows changes over time and is better at showing small changes. A circle graph, or pie chart, shows the parts of a whole.

Developing a Good Display

- Provide examples of good displays, available in reference books. Discuss elements that make the examples appealing and successful.
- Discuss important elements to be included in the display. Provide time and assistance as needed. Explain that the students must decide how they will present their material. (*Note:* A home video or slide presentation may be an option.)
- Guide the students in putting together their reports.

Evaluating the Projects

- Explain that the judges' scores may differ from your opinion and the scores the students receive on their rubrics. A sample judging evaluation for grades 5–8 is included in this packet. Adjust the form for use with lower grade levels.
- Assist the students as they prepare their oral presentations of their projects for the judges. Allow students to practice by presenting their projects to classmates. Encourage them to prepare a short speech or otherwise be prepared to answer questions the judges may ask. Students should be able to explain how they came up with their ideas, any problems they encountered, any help they received, and what they learned, as well as any other aspect of the project.
- Encourage the students to dress nicely and exhibit proper manners as part of their training in public speaking. Remind them to stand up straight and use good eye contact as they address the judges.

Organizing a History Fair

- The following checklist will be helpful if you are responsible for organizing a fair.

About Nine Months Prior to the Fair

- ☐ Recruit volunteers, such as teachers and parents, to form a history fair planning committee. Divide the planning committee into two smaller committees: one to coordinate the judging and awards and the other to coordinate the setup and takedown of the fair.
- ☐ Determine a date for the fair. You may choose to have this date be the same as that of the science fair. Check school calendars and other organizational calendars as needed. If the school plans on competing in the National History Day Contest, check its schedule. Saturday is a good day for the event because more parents and friends can visit.
- ☐ Plan a history fair calendar. Work backwards from the date of the fair and make a timeline of dates for students to complete each step of the process. Set a date for registration, for choosing a topic and developing a procedure, and for making the display and writing the report. You may choose to have younger students bring in their projects a few days early and perform a practice fair in their individual classrooms.
- ☐ Determine a registration fee and budget for the history fair. A small registration fee per exhibit or per family may be necessary to offset the costs of building rental, printing, awards, and honorariums for the judges.
- ☐ Choose a location for the fair: a large room or building with multiple electrical outlets and comfortable space for people to view the displays.
- ☐ Decide which grade levels will participate in the fair and whether participation will be required or voluntary.
- ☐ Determine award prizes: ribbons, medals, or certificates. You may choose to provide participation certificates for all the students. Some stores or businesses may be willing to donate larger prizes. The judging committee coordinates getting the awards.
- ☐ Enlist teachers or parent volunteers to guide students in preparing their projects. Determine how much class time will be allotted for working on projects. (*Note:* It is appropriate to devote one class period per week to project preparation during the most active development phase.)
- ☐ Prepare information for parents regarding the rules, dates, and the amount of parental involvement allowed. Include examples of how parents can help the student and what the student is expected to do on his own. You may want to include a cover letter from the school principal. Send this information home at least six to seven months in advance.
- ☐ Design and make registration forms. Keep track of registration information as you collect registrations and fees.

Seven Months Prior to the Fair

- ☐ Announce and promote the history fair. Provide registration forms. Post a registration form or other history fair information on the school website. Generate excitement by making the fair sound fun and interesting.
- ☐ Collect registration forms and fees. Continue to accept registrations until about one or two weeks before the date of the fair. Assign numbers to student projects as registration forms are turned in.
- ☐ Meet with the volunteers; provide a list of the requirements and dates for the fair and explain how they can help the students prepare. (*Note: A good project will take the student about three to six months to complete.*)
- ☐ Discuss recruiting judges with the judging committee. Two or three judges may suffice, depending on the size of the fair. (A single judge should evaluate no more than twenty-five projects if student interviews are included.)
 - At least two judges should evaluate each project. Each judge should have a professional background in the area of history. A good choice would be a history professor or a college student majoring in history.
 - The judging committee should prepare a recruiting letter to send to prospective judges. Someone from the committee should follow up the letter with a phone call.
 - This committee also needs to prepare information about the history fair guidelines and judging rubrics. A sample judging sheet is included at the end of this section on the CD.
- ☐ Meet with the setup committee.
 - The setup committee should reserve the room or building for the date of the fair. You may want to reserve additional days around the fair for setup beforehand and viewing afterward.
 - This committee should also secure tables, chairs, extension cords, and other materials needed for the fair. They should provide directional signs, such as grade levels, topics, and “Please do not touch” or “Refreshments available at the concession stand.”

About Five Months Prior to the Fair

- ☐ Check with the judging committee to discuss the status of judge recruitment. Ask them to order or purchase the awards. Review the judging guidelines and rubrics that the committee has prepared. Send that information to the judges. Discuss and determine compensation for the judges.
- ☐ Create a schedule for the day of the fair.
- ☐ Meet with the setup committee. Discuss the layout of the fair. Allow adequate space for each student’s display. An 8' table is usually sufficient for two projects. Provide chairs for the students while they wait for the judges. Make a floor plan for the displays.
- ☐ Plan an awards program. Provide a time for everyone to view the winning exhibits and their awards after the program.

About Three Months Prior to the Fair

- ☐ Confirm the judges with the judging committee.
- ☐ Obtain supplies for the judges: clipboards, pencils, judging rubrics (two for each student), copies of the fair schedule, name tags, and award summary sheets.
- ☐ Give the setup committee an estimate of how many tables and chairs are needed. Check fire code guidelines for the proper use of extension cords.

The Month of the Fair

- ☐ Finalize registration one to two weeks before the fair.
- ☐ Pick up awards. Prepare participation certificates, if desired.
- ☐ Assign student projects to display tables on the floor plan.
- ☐ Review the floor plan with the setup committee. Give them the number of tables and chairs needed. Confirm the availability of the reserved room or building.
- ☐ Ask someone from the judging committee to remind the judges of the fair.
- ☐ Recruit volunteers to distribute programs, check in contestants, provide refreshments for judges and contestants, and help with the awards ceremony.
- ☐ Provide an alphabetical list of participants in grade-level order. You may also choose to arrange the list by history content area.
- ☐ Print programs for the fair. The programs should contain a map showing the location of projects by group.
- ☐ Pick up signs needed for the fair.
- ☐ Make labels for the judges' clipboards and the tables.
- ☐ Obtain supplies for the day of the fair.
- ☐ Make sure a camera is available for pictures.
- ☐ Plan and organize refreshments for the judges.
- ☐ Set up tables, chairs, and electrical equipment before the students bring in their projects.

The Day of the Fair

- ☐ Review judging criteria and assignments with judges. Honorable mention awards can be given for originality, creativity, and historic merit along with first-, second-, and third-place awards. A division championship award can be given for each division.
- ☐ Instruct volunteers to check in participants, assist in setting up projects, distribute programs, and assist with refreshments.
- ☐ Photograph the displays and participants.
- ☐ Follow the schedule of the day. Make announcements as needed.
- ☐ Keep a record of any finalists who may move on to another history fair.
- ☐ After the awards ceremony, ask volunteers and parents to help clean up. Keep student projects on display if possible.

After the Fair

- ☐ Send thank-you notes and/or compensation to judges and volunteers.
- ☐ Tabulate the financial report and fair attendance.
- ☐ Discuss ways to improve future fairs.

History Fair Research Question Rubric

Title _____

Category	Possible points	Points earned	
Problem is written as a question.			
Question is specific.			
Question indicates the subject(s) to be studied.			
Question stimulates curiosity.			
Question reflects proper use of grammar and spelling.			
Total			Grade

Comments:

History Fair Judging Form

Name _____ Number _____

Project Title/Subject _____

Display	Inadequate	Needs improvement	Acceptable	Commendable	Outstanding	Comments
Historical significance (15 points)						
Information is organized and well illustrated.	0	2	3	4	5	
Understanding of historical context is demonstrated with accuracy.	2	4	6	8	10	
Records and research (25 points)						
Logbook record is thorough, including a step-by-step description of the plans and procedures used to accomplish the project.	2	4	6	8	10	
Research demonstrates use of available primary and secondary sources.	0	2	3	4	5	
Written report describes how the research was developed and conducted.	0	2	3	4	5	
Bibliography is included in proper format.	0	2	3	4	5	
Biblical application (5 points)						
Biblical references, truths, and applications are related to the history studied.	0	2	3	4	5	
Layout (20 points)						
Display is well constructed, neat, well laid out, and attractive with an appropriate amount of work done by the student.	2	4	6	8	10	
Presentation of information is sequential and complete.	1	2	3	4	5	
Good spelling and grammar are evident.	1	2	3	4	5	
Interview (35 points)						
Knowledge and understanding of concepts are evident.	2	4	8	12	15	
Conclusions and applications from findings are logical.	2	4	6	8	10	
The topic is communicated with confidence, clarity, and enthusiasm.	2	4	6	8	10	
Total score (100 points)						

Comments:

Sample History Project Guidelines

Basic Requirements for Grade Divisions

Grades 1–2

- Logbook of activities involved in preparation
- Display demonstrating good layout and biblical application
- Preparation for an interview with a judge

Grades 3–4

- A bibliography in addition to requirements for grades 1–2

Grades 5–8

- Report with bibliography, logbook, display, and interview. (*Note:* More detail is expected for grades 7–8.)

Creating a Project

Theme

- The student may use the theme for the National History Day Contest or choose his own theme. The student must become knowledgeable enough about the theme to determine a topic of interest related to that theme.

Topic

- The student should choose a person who lived or an event or issue that occurred at least fifty years ago. The topic should be of interest and limited in scope. It is essential to focus the research and interpretation to stay within the guidelines of the judging criteria. (*Note:* See the National History Day site for sample topics.) The following are tips on topic selection.
 - The topic should clearly fit the theme.
 - The topic should be in-depth. It is better to focus on one issue in detail than to cover many issues superficially.
 - The topic should reflect the availability of primary and secondary sources. A local topic is often a good choice, since primary documents are more likely to be available.
 - The topic should allow the student to identify an arguable issue on which he can state and defend a position.

Research

- Research must include both primary and secondary sources.

Primary sources are materials directly related to a topic by time and participation. These materials include letters, speeches, diaries, documents, photographs, artifacts, and anything else that provides firsthand accounts about an event or person (see Student Text pp. 72–73). Typically, primary sources carry more weight in the judging process.

Secondary sources usually are published books or articles by authors who base their information on primary sources. An interview with an expert is a secondary source. Quotations from participants in secondary sources are considered secondary sources.

Logbook

- The logbook is a journal of activities and steps performed to accomplish the project and prepare the display. It should list, in order, the steps taken from the project's beginning to its completion and the time spent on each step.

Report (Grades 5–8)

- The report contains a description or summary of how the research was developed and conducted. It should describe the nature of the project and its historical significance in a way that could be easily understood by someone who knows nothing about the project.
- Objectives should be stated clearly to reflect the purpose of the project. The paper should provide an analysis of the data by answering questions such as the following: Were the objectives of the project accomplished? Was there enough information on the topic? How could the project have been improved? What hindrances were experienced in doing the project?
- The paper should be well written with proper grammar and organization. The grade level of the student will determine how comprehensive the explanations and details will be, ranging from a minimum of two hundred words to a maximum of five hundred words.

Plagiarism must be avoided. Plagiarism is using the work or ideas of others in a way that gives the impression that they are original (e.g., copying information word-for-word without quotation marks and footnotes, paraphrasing an author's ideas without credit, or using visuals or music without giving proper credit).

Bibliography

- A bibliography is an alphabetical list of all the books, magazines, pamphlets, websites, newspapers, or people used in researching a topic and writing a report or research paper. An annotated bibliography contains descriptive and evaluative comments on the works cited.

Biblical Application

- Participants are required to integrate biblical truths into their displays to demonstrate appreciation for God's creative work, His control over His creation, and the application of biblical principles to one's life. Such remarks could be included in the concluding statement on the display and in the participant's journal or report.

Interview (Grades 1–8)

- Qualified judges will provide an opportunity for all participants, even the youngest students, to talk about their project and share what they have learned.
- Presenting their projects to other family members prior to the fair will help the students prepare for the interview with the judge. (See judging forms in this section for interview expectations.)

Display

- Most projects use a display board made of foam board, heavy poster board, or lightweight plywood. The board is cut into two or three sections and hinged to fold for easy transport. The project should occupy a space no larger than 48" wide, 30" deep, and 8' high. (Display tables are approximately 32" high.) Tables and electricity are provided for the event.
- The title of the project should be in large letters centered near the top. Graphs, charts, explanations, and photos are attached to the board and displayed on the tabletop. Neatness and use of colors are important. Visual aids should be clearly labeled. The exhibit should describe the project in a logical sequence and include correct grammar and spelling. The best exhibits make the information and findings obvious without the need for reading a lot of small text.

Overview

Typical Fair Schedule	
Time	Activity
10:00–11:30	Registration and setup of displays
11:30–12:15	Lunch and view displays (Visitors are welcome.)
12:30–2:00	Students at their displays to answer questions during the judging process
2:00–3:30	Judging completed and decisions finalized
4:00–5:00	Awards ceremony; ribbons presented
5:00–5:30	Cleanup

Awards Ceremony

- You may choose to award all students with a certificate of participation.
- First-, second-, and third-place awards are given at the discretion of the judges, and a grand championship award is given to the overall winner in each division.
- Honorable mention awards may be given in recognition of originality, creativity, and historical significance.

Follow-up and Feedback

- Displays need to be taken down after the awards ceremony.
- Each student will receive a copy of the judges' comment sheets. The comments should serve as an aid in the learning experience as the project is reexamined at home and discussed in light of the judges' input and other observations.
- General opinions about the fair and the project should be written down to assist in future planning. The student may want to continue the same topic next year, using this year's conclusions as a starting point.

Resources

- In addition to guidelines posted on the Internet, resources such as the following may be helpful in preparing and presenting a history fair project.

Writing and Grammar 7, BJU Press (3rd ed., pp. 329–35)

The Writer's Toolbox, BJU Press (Grades 9–12)