Selecting a topic for your National History Day project can be a difficult task. Your teachers may have special guidelines so make sure you check with them before you start your search. Make sure and ask your teacher if you need to look at a specific time period or select a certain geographic area when choosing your topic for your project.

Remember, picking a topic is an important step in your history day project. You will spend months researching and working with your topic. Here are a few things to consider:

- Does my topic meet my teacher’s requirements?
- Does my topic fit the theme *Exploration, Encounter, and Exchange in History*
- Do I like my topic?
- Does my teacher, school library, or a local library have books on the topic to help get me started?
- Are resources available for my topic? Even local topics can be hard to research.
- Can I get access to the materials I need in time to use them for my project?

When you are thinking about your History Day topic, you might start with a broad or popular subject. Think about topics you like such as the Civil War, the Texas Revolution, Space Exploration, and so on. But don’t stop there!

Students often choose topics that are so general that it becomes impossible to research their subject. Ask yourself, can I research the entire Civil War in just a few months? Of course not. Historians can spend their entire careers researching topics like the Civil War. Much like a historian doing research, you need to focus your efforts and make your topic much more manageable. Your job, like a historian, is to become the expert on your topic. Here are a few examples of how you can narrow topics.

**Area of Interest:** The Civil War  
**General Topic:** Medicine during the war  
**Narrow Topic:** Battlefield medicine  
**NHD Topic:** Treatment of the Confederate wounded following a battle

**Area of Interest:** The Civil War  
**General Topic:** Soldiers life  
**Narrow Topic:** African American soldiers during the war  
**NHD Topic:** The First Kansas Colored Infantry

By narrowing both the subset of people and the location you can pick a topic that will help you focus your research and stand out.
Let’s try it again.

**Area of Interest:** American Indians  
**General Topic:** The Comanche  
**Narrow Topic:** The interaction between German immigrants in Texas and the Comanche  
**NHD Topic:** The Mesuebach-Comanche Treaty of 1847. This treaty was established on May 9, 1847 between the citizens of the Fisher-Miller Land Grant in Texas and the Penateka Comanche Tribe.

**Area of Interest:** World War II  
**General Topic:** The War in the Pacific  
**Narrow Topic:** Chester Nimitz  
**NHD Topic:** Nimitz strategy in winning the war in the Pacific

**Area of Interest:** Art  
**General Topic:** American Modernism  
**Narrow Topic:** Georgia O’Keefe  
**NHD Topic:** The work of Georgia O’Keefe in the Texas Panhandle

**Area of Interest:** Music  
**General Topic:** Rock and Roll  
**Narrow Topic:** Early Rock and Roll  
**NHD Topic:** Buddy Holly and the Roots of Rock

Many other students choose events with which they are familiar. These topics tend to be grossly overused. Each year we see tons of projects on the Alamo, Pearl Harbor, MLK, Jackie Robinson, Gettysburg, The Triangle Shirtwaist Fire, and the list goes on and on. That does not mean that you cannot pick one of the popular topics. What it does mean is that you must find a unique and interesting way of looking at it so that your project will stand out. Here is an example.

**General Topic:** The Alamo  
**Unique:** The Second Battle of the Alamo: Historic Preservation  
Daughters of the Texas Revolution: Preserving the Alamo  
Delaying the Mexican Army: The Battle of the Alamo  
The Decision to Ignore Orders: Defending the Alamo  
Tejano’s and the Alamo  
Surviving the Alamo: Dispelling Alamo Myths

When deciding on your topic, try looking at a well-known event or figure from a different angle and coming up with a more narrow and focused topic.
Here are some sample Texas topics to help get you started:

- Exploring the Frontier: Spanish Mapping of the Texas Coast
- The Founding of San Antonio: Encounters and Exchange in Texas
- Spindletop: Exploring Texas Resources
- Alonso Alvarez de Pineda and the Exploration of Texas
- Alvar Nunez Cabeza de Vaca: Exploring for Gold
- Catholic Missions on the Spanish Frontier: Encountering New Ideas
- Fray Damian Massanet: Cultural Exchange in Colonial Texas
- Jose de Escandon: Cultural Exchange in Colonial Texas
- Antonio Margil de Jesus: Missionary to Texas
- Francisco Hidalgo: Missionary Among the Indians
- Exploration Interrupted: Territorial Disputes between Spain and France in Texas
- Francisco Xavier Mina’s Expedition of 1817
- Encountering New Migration: The Mexican Colonization Law of 1821 and Stephen F. Austin’s Move to Texas
- The Tejano Sound: Cultural Exchange in Music
- Exploration, Encounter, and Exchange: Colonial Settlement in Texas
- Exploration, Encounter, and Exchange: Anglo Settlement in Texas
- Colonial Texas and the Comanche: Exploration, Encounter, and Conquest
- The Deadly Side of Exploration: Encountering New Disease in Colonial Texas
- Buddy Holly: Exploring new Sounds in Music
- Conjunto: Cultural Exchange in Music
- The Cattle Trails: Exploring New Routes to Markets
- Charlie Wilson and Afghanistan: Encountering Communism Through Proxy Wars
- Exploring New Ideas: LBJ and the Great Society
- Barbara Jordan: Exploring New Roles for Women/Minorities in Politics
- Exploring New Freedom: Emancipation in Texas
- Explorations in Medicine: Michael DeBakey
- Encounters of a Different Sort: Buffalo Soldiers on the Frontier
- Exploring New Technology: Texas Instruments and the Portable Device
- Georgia O’Keefe: Exploring Palo Duro Canyon Through Art
- The Fence Cutting War: Encounters of a Violent Sort
- Encountering Mother Nature: the Galveston Hurricane of 1900
- The Texas City Explosion: Exploring Safety in Industry
- Lady Bird Johnson: Exploring New Roles for the First Lady
- NAFTA: Economic Encounter and Exchange in the Modern Era
- La Salle and the Exploration of Texas
- Captivity Narratives: Exchanging Frontier Life for Life Among the Indians
My Texas History Day Topic:

My Teacher has the following restrictions:

_____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

My favorite topic in history is: ____________________________________________

My area of interest is: ____________________________________________________

General topics are:

1. _______________________________________________________________________

2. _______________________________________________________________________

Possible NHD topics are:

1. _______________________________________________________________________

2. _______________________________________________________________________

My library or teacher has the following books relating to the topic:

1. _______________________________________________________________________

2. _______________________________________________________________________

3. _______________________________________________________________________

4. _______________________________________________________________________

I can visit this library or museum to find out more:

1. _______________________________________________________________________

2. _______________________________________________________________________