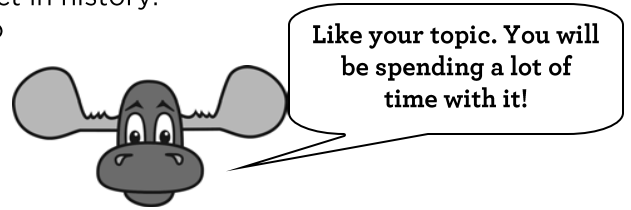


SELECTING A TOPIC

The key to an effective History Day entry is the combination of a good topic with good research. Here are some characteristics to think about in selecting a topic for History Day this year.

- **Make sure it fits the theme.** Your topic needs to have a connection to the History Day theme. You may need to do some preliminary research to figure this out.
- **You are interested in this topic.** You will be spending a lot of time researching. It helps if you are interested and want to learn more. If you're working in a group, all members should agree on the topic.
- **There is research out there about your topic.** Do some preliminary searching to figure out if there are a variety of primary and secondary sources you can find about your topic.
- **Your topic has significance.** In a successful History Day project, you need to be able to make an argument about how your topic was important in history. This doesn't mean you need a world-famous topic. Even local history topics had an impact in history.
- **Your topic is historic.** If you select a topic that's too recent, you're going to have a hard time discussing your topic's long-term significance in history. Selecting a topic that took place at least 20 years in the past will help to ensure you're not focusing on current events.



WORKSHEET: TOPIC BRAINSTORM

A good way to choose a topic is to start with a general area of history you find interesting. This might be something you read about in your textbook or something related to family history. Using the chart below, brainstorm one topic in each category that fits this year's theme, **Leadership and Legacy in History**.

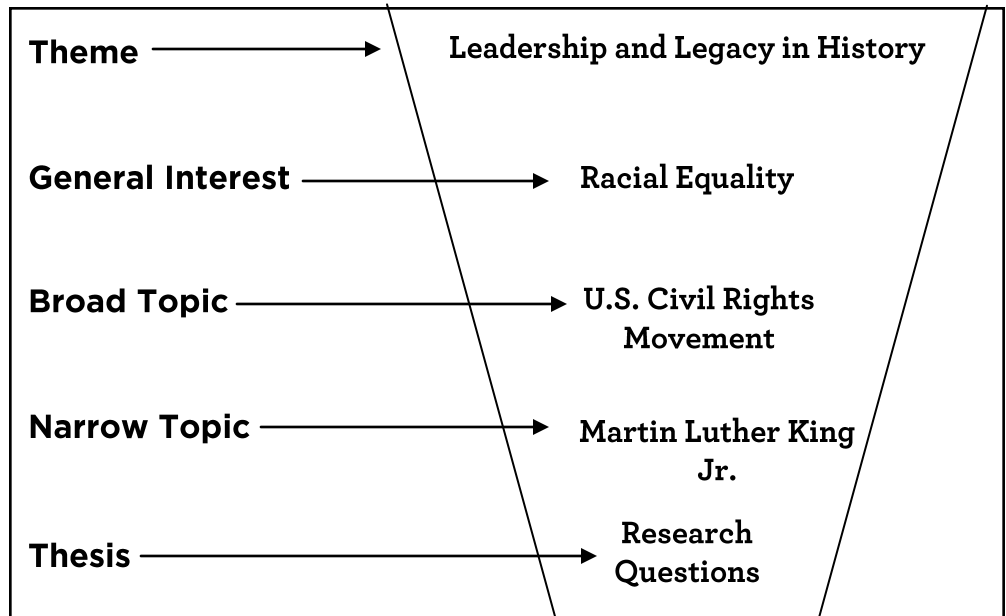
<u>Politics</u>	<u>The Environment</u>
Topic Idea:	Topic Idea:
<u>Civil Rights</u>	<u>Social Issues</u>
Topic Idea:	Topic Idea:
<u>Military History</u>	<u>Religion</u>
Topic Idea:	Topic Idea:
<u>Science & Technology</u>	<u>Education</u>
Topic Idea:	Topic Idea:
<u>Business</u>	<u>Arts, Music & Culture</u>
Topic Idea:	Topic Idea:

NARROWING YOUR TOPIC

Once you know your interest, the next step is to narrow your general ideas into a more focused topic. **Why?** History Day projects aren't huge. If you pick a topic that's too big, you're not going to have enough space or time to include all the information you want in your project.

Consider this example. Your group is interested in **racial equality movements**, but realizes that this topic needs to be narrowed down. Because it is an election year you decide to research "**U.S. Civil Rights Movement.**" However, this topic is still too broad. You have not defined the "where" and "when" for your study.

At this point one of your group members decided it would be best to focus on Martin Luther King Jr.'s involvement on Civil Rights in the United States. After doing some research, you find out that this happened in the mid-1960's and that Martin Luther King Jr. was a major leader of the movement. Your group decides to focus on **Martin Luther King Jr.'s** impact on Civil Rights.



Your narrowing won't stop there. As you dig into this topic you will come up with **research questions** to address. How did Martin Luther King Jr. become a leader for Civil Rights in the United States? How did his leadership style differ from other leaders? How does this topic fit the History Day theme?

WORKSHEET: THE TOPIC NARROWING FUNNEL

Using the funnels below, try narrowing down two of your general interests into more focused topics.

<p>Leadership and Legacy in History</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<p>Leadership and Legacy in History</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
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