

PART TWO

ANALYSIS

Now that you've done your research, it's time to figure out what it all means. In this phase of History Day, you are going to be making an argument about the significance of your topic in history. This argument, also called your thesis statement, is the central focus of your entire History Day project!

Thesis Statements

Your thesis statement is the essential element of your History Day project. It will be the centerpiece of any project. It should be clearly included in your website or exhibit. Your thesis should be woven into the beginning and the end of your performance or documentary script. The thesis should make an appearance within the first two paragraphs of a research paper.

Using your thesis as a guide, you will decide what information you need to include in the rest of your project as supporting information and evidence. Everything you include in your project should directly support to your thesis.

Writing a thesis statement can be hard work. You should go through several drafts of your thesis. Don't expect it to be perfect the first time. The worksheet on the following page will give you a few ideas about how to get started.

Remember when we talked about **research questions**? They can also come in handy when writing your thesis statement. The answer to well-written research questions can form the basis for a good thesis statement. Check out the example below about Rosa Parks.

Research Questions	Sample Thesis
Why did Rosa Parks refuse to give up her seat on the bus? What other events were going on in the Civil Rights Movement? What impact did her actions have on the civil rights movement?	In 1955, Rosa Parks was arrested when she refused to give up her bus seat to a white passenger in Montgomery, Alabama. Martin Luther King, Jr. helped organize the 381 day bus boycott that resulted in Supreme Court victory, which earned King national prominence as a civil rights leader and inspired him to organize other non-violent protests.

Remember Your Theme Connection



As you are thinking about developing your thesis statement, it's important to revisit your theme connection. The strongest History Day projects will weave the central ideas of the theme into the thesis as well as the project itself. **You need to discuss both leadership and legacy in your project**, since these ideas work together. Try to include these words in your thesis if possible!

Historical Context

Nothing in history happened in isolation. Every topic was influenced by people, ideas, or events that came before it. The impacts of every topic went on to influence other people, ideas, and events. This relationship of a topic to the environment surrounding it is called **historical context**.

In order to have a full understanding of your topic, you have to investigate its historical context. The chart on page 13 gives you some guiding questions to help figure this out.

WORKSHEET: THESIS STATEMENTS

SAMPLE TOPIC: Rosa Parks and the Montgomery Bus Boycott

WHO: Who was involved? Who was affected? Rosa Parks; citizens in Montgomery, Alabama; civil rights leaders, Montgomery's city government officials.

WHAT: What happened? What was the main event? Rosa Parks refused to give up her bus seat to a white passenger, which violated a law enforcing segregation on Montgomery city buses. She was arrested and went to jail. Civil rights leaders, including Martin Luther King, Jr., organized a boycott of buses and challenged the law as unconstitutional.

WHERE: Where was/were the place(s) it took place? Montgomery, Alabama

WHEN: When did it happen? How long of a time period was it? Parks was arrested on Dec. 1, 1955; the boycott started on Dec. 5 and lasted for 381 days.

WHY: Why did it happen? What caused it? Civil rights leaders wanted to overturn segregation laws.

WHY: Why is it important? What were the outcomes? The boycott forced change in Montgomery and succeeded in overturning the law requiring segregation on public transportation. This success inspired other civil rights protests and helped Martin Luther King, Jr. develop his non-violent strategies to fight segregation.

THEME CONNECTION : Leadership & Legacy in History

- What is the topic's connection to leadership and legacy in history?
- Why is your topic significant in history? What impact did it have? Before the Montgomery Bus Boycott, the impact of the *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision was limited to the segregation of schools. Civil rights leaders used the Montgomery Bus Boycott to expand the protection of equal rights to public transportation. This effectively ended the "Separate but equal" standard established in the *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision. The success of the boycott inspired other challenges to segregation and was a turning point in the Civil Rights Movement as new leaders, like Martin Luther King, Jr., emerged from the struggle in Montgomery.

Put it all together into a thesis statement. In 1955, Rosa Parks was arrested when she refused to give up her bus seat to a white passenger in Montgomery, Alabama. Martin Luther King, Jr. helped organize the 381 day bus boycott that resulted in Supreme Court victory, which earned King national prominence as a civil rights leader and inspired him to organize other non-violent protests.

TOPIC: _____

WHO: Who was involved? Who was affected?

WHAT: What happened? What was the main event?

WHERE: Where was/were the place(s) it took place?

WHEN: When did it happen? How long of a time period was it?

WHY: Why did it happen? What caused it?

WHY: Why is it important? What were outcomes?

THEME CONNECTION: Leadership & Legacy in History

- What is the topic's connection to leadership and legacy in history?
- Why is your topic significant in history? What impact did it have?

Put it all together into a thesis statement.

WORKSHEET: HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Historical context means understanding how your topic influenced and was influenced by other people, events, and ideas. When you think about historical context, you have to consider what happened both before and after the main events of your topic.

