

Chicago Metro History Fair Documentary Rules

Documentaries are visual and aural productions of students' historical research, analysis, and interpretation which have a narrative structure and are created and presented on videos, DVDs, or CD-ROMs. Websites are not accepted in the Documentary category.

RULE 1

Individuals or groups of no more than five students may produce a documentary.

RULE 2

Projects may not exceed 10 minutes. Time begins when first image or sound appears and concludes after credits.

RULE 3

Documentaries must be research, created, narrated, and produced by the students.

RULE 4

Documentaries conclude with a list of credits for major audio and visuals sources. The simple credits *do not* replace an annotated bibliography. The bibliography and Summary Statement Form must be printed for the judges and *do not* appear on the documentary.

RULE 5

Documentaries should be self-running and students must operate all equipment. No live narration is allowed. Projects that do not comply are ineligible for Finals, State, or National levels.

RULE 6

Topics must be connected to Chicago-even when the national theme is being used. Non-related Chicago topics will not be eligible to advance. Junior Division participants may explore topics in Illinois history.

RULE 7

Plagiarism constitutes grounds for disqualification and report to the school.

PENALTY POINTS (High School only)

- 1 Exceeds time limit: minus 2 points each full minute over 10 minutes (10 point maximum penalty)
- 2 No Summary Statement Form: minus 10 points
- 3 Bibliography not annotated: minus 5 points
- 4 No bibliography: 0 points in the sources category

IMPORTANT COMPETITION NOTES:

Each project submitted to the History Fair must be accompanied by the Documentary Entry form at the time of registration. The best final format for a documentary is videotape. CMHEC can supply a TV/VCR but cannot guarantee a DVD player, computer, or LCD projector/speakers. Due to the multiple standards for DVDs on the market, DVDs do not play on all players, therefore, it is recommended that students bring their own DVD player if the documentary cannot be transferred to videotape. Multiple entries from the same school should be independently available so they may be presented concurrently to different judges (i.e., no sharing of storage devices).

Students have five minutes to set-up and take down their equipment.

GUIDELINES

Spend time watching and analyzing the types of documentaries available on PBS, History Channel, and public release. Pay attention to the elements, narrative, and structure of these documentaries to see how the professionals successfully communicate their ideas through this medium.

A documentary uses visual evidence such as photographs maps, film clips, interviews and other graphic images. Text should be used minimally--subtitles, quotes, and other highlights are appropriate. Narration is not. While technical and creative quality is important, it does not outweigh the need for solid historical knowledge and analysis.

Clips from existing documentaries should be used sparingly; overuse or long segments of footage from a professional productions is discouraged. Most importantly, student documentaries should present their own interpretations.

The Fair Use Doctrine will allow use of materials in student productions shown at History Fair events (thus educational use), therefore, students need not seek formal permissions. However, if the documentary is shown in non-educational settings, then permissions should be sought.

Audio can be a mix of student narration, interviews, and music. Narrators will be more successful if they enunciate and speak in measured tones. Soundtracks are best when relevant to content, and volume does not distract from the voiceover. When using interviews that are hard to understand, students may consider subtitles. Ask different people to listen to documentary to make sure all types of people can understand the audio so that adjustments may be made before the final version.

Powerpoint presentations are not considered documentaries.

There are no penalties for being *under* 10 minutes in length, however, judges usually consider the abbreviated time as an indication that the knowledge and analysis needed further development.

See more Guidelines in Final Product:

http://www.chicagohistoryfair.org/2_finalproduct.html

For more insights, see the National History Day website:
<http://www.nhd.org/Documentary.htm>