

State History Day Comments We Can All Learn From

Content

- much improved from regionals (!!!)
- good choice of topic
- make sure the significance of title is clear
- good use of theme of “conflict and compromise” (the theme for 2008)
- state the “compromise” better
- conflict/compromise was a little weak
- good analysis of the effect of the compromise
- don’t say “here’s how our topic matches this year’s theme”—make it obvious without being overt
- could use more about the context of the conflict/give the larger historical context
- more context and background information about history prior to event
- good explanation of progression of events
- look at why the struggles from this period of history are important today
- look at constitutional issues (with atom bomb)
- compare Soviet invasion of Afghanistan to our own
- don’t get bogged down in details of tactics—focus on geo-politics
- more analysis of long-term impact
- development of conclusions was masterful and very subtle
- develop your conclusions more—were some opinions more valid than others?
- nice, tight conclusion
- extensive research uncovered all viewpoints
- well-rounded
- make sure you use the exact right words (no one argued vs. no one fought)
- don’t overuse adjectives
- very moving
- when presenting to judges, allow each other to finish speaking—don’t interrupt each other
- extensive knowledge quite evident in interview
- you increased my knowledge

Bibliography

- limit use of encyclopedias—they are a good place to start but follow on from there
- good job using only available primary sources—letters
- check that sources really are primary—must be actual document (online archive) not from inside a book or other collection
- transcripts are not primary sources
- consider grouping sources by type
- be cautious about giving full faith to *any* government’s publications—even our own!
- show citations for quotes
- use online resources at the National Archives and the Library of Congress

Web Site

- standard navigation is easy to use
- good size of text on neutral background
- content inside clear frame focuses attention
- make sure that one or more visual is at the top, not all clustered at the bottom of each page
- sidebar quotes work very well
- image and data (info-graphics) complement text
- audio adds an atmospheric touch (don't have it playing constantly, though)
- things to consider: interactive quiz with instant key, movie clips, and/or animated map
- make all visuals "pop" to large size

Documentary

- simplify video title screen
- make sure the narration is crisp and clean
- make sure narration matches visuals—hit them spot on (don't make us wait for image to come up/don't make us wait for explanation of visual)
- don't repeat images
- be careful to use legit images
- interviews in film were especially profitable
- integrate interviews into video flow
- good use of incidental music

Exhibits

- very well constructed
- organization is a little difficult to follow
- don't make the viewer hunt for the thesis statement or conclusion
- organization was easy to follow because the nation's flags as background coded panels tied to quotes/personalities
- nice big type and photos
- colors make it stand out
- conveys historical period
- like the architectural element of design
- beautiful set up/incredible "interior design"
- timelines and pictures are good
- add more quotes
- map shows before and after/cause and effect ("a picture is worth a 1000 words")
- charts very clearly show conflicts and compromises
- glossy pictures were visually appealing
- spinning panel very clever and interesting element
- rotating sides must remain inside 40" width limits
- don't let the glue show
- circular exhibits make it hard to keep all the pieces in mind/to see the big picture
- could have been taller—make use of your available space