

History Month

October 2020 – Ideas for Schools

Whatever you are doing in History Month, put it on the school calendar now!

- Keep an eye on the History Month website for potential excursions for students, team-building professional learning for your team, and treats for you.
- Invite your local historical society to talk to students about the history of street names or public buildings in your area.
- If your school is focused on STEM, showcase the history and philosophy of science during History Month. What and when were some of the major scientific turning points? How old is 'the scientific method'? How has the progress of scientific discoveries relied on the progress of engineering and instrument design?
- Set aside some of History Month for Year 9 and 10 students to write and polish essay submissions for the Simpson Prize competition. Great travel prizes to be won, deadline for entries is November.
- Invite your local historical society to create a display or slideshow on the history of your school. Your own school archives might also contain great material. Get your students involved.
- Research and stage a (safe) mock battle with your Year 7 and 8 students. The Viking raid on Lindisfarne in 793? The Battle of Senlac Hill (Hastings) in 1066? The fall of Constantinople in 1453?
- "How did we come to this?" Collaborate with politics teachers and classes to explore the historical people and events that have led to a contemporary political crisis or a successful crisis resolution.
- Ask your school librarians to display and highlight their history and historical fiction collections during the month.
- Invite guest speakers to talk to students about how studying History has prepared them for their careers. Partner with your Careers teacher.
- Collaborate with your school's debating group to run a public debate with an historical theme during History Month.
- Choose a historical debate that your class has been investigating, and on which your class has diverse views. Help students create a performance piece where spokespeople deliver campaign speeches or courtroom closing arguments. Take these into another class and ask those students to vote on which side they found most persuasive.
- Use History Month for an inquiry-led extravaganza. Let students choose an historical subject, individually or in groups, and help them research and explore to their hearts' content.
- Invite your History class to come to school dressed and/or equipped to suit the era you have been studying. Decorate the classroom to match.
- Make 'good news stories from history' your school's focus for History Month. The abolition of slavery in the West, the inter-faith scholarly communities of the medieval East, advances in medicine and public health, etc.
- Book guest speakers from local Aboriginal communities to take students on a tour of the local area, or to speak about local history from an Aboriginal perspective.
- Ask your local historical society to create a prominent display of photos and objects in the library or other public space.
- Encourage your students to find and share fun history memes.
- Invite school leaders, local MPs and Department of Education Regional Office staff to your History Month events. Let's remind them why History matters!
- Hold your school's inaugural History Month awards. Acknowledge excellence, enthusiasm, curiosity and persistence across all year levels.
- Ask for permission to run a guerrilla poster campaign (with your colleagues or your class). Perhaps fabulous quotes from historical figures will appear all over the school during the month. Or primary source letters and posters that relate to a particular era or theme. Or historical images such as photos, advertisements or cartoons. Or old newspaper articles.
- Come to the HTAV Middle Years History Conference during History Month (Friday 16 October 2020) to share what worked and learn from other passionate, skilled History teachers.
- In the lead-up to History Month, pitch a range of lesson plans and activities to your students and let them choose the ones they'd prefer to do during History Month.
- With primary students, research playground games and toys from the past. Get families involved. Then play the games at recess and lunchtimes during History Month.
- Look up your school or suburb on Trove and find out what was happening 50 years or 150 years ago in your local area. Write up the results and submit it to local media for publication during History Month.
- Hold a mock trial of a historic figure whose actions and impact could be interpreted as both positive and negative.
- Run a history quiz for school staff, either online or over lunchtime.



HTAV wants to hear from you!

Did your school, library or class do something to celebrate last year?

Please send us a couple of photos to membership@htav.asn.au, with captions telling us 'who, what and where', and we will showcase some of the great ideas in our Member Bulletin and on the HTAV website.

Don't forget to obtain permissions for students who are identifiable in the photos.

- Set a class assignment for Year 9 or 10 students on a topic from the Premier's Spirit of Anzac Prize competition. Collaborate with teachers in other disciplines to help students respond with an essay, poem, short story, audio presentation, video, musical composition, web page or artwork. Encourage all students to submit their assignments as entries to the competition before the deadline. Create a public display or lunchtime launch of the entries during History Month.
- **Hold a Build a Castle competition for Year 7 and 8 students in the months leading up to History Month. Let students choose their materials and work individually or in groups. Then display the castles in the school hall or resource centre in History Month.**
- Search op shops, markets and your cupboards and drawers for ephemera – primary sources made of paper. Ephemera may be old rail tickets and timetables, postcards, letters, stamps, envelopes, photographs, magazines, concert programs, sheet music, etc. Bring them to class in an old suitcase, and let your students ask historical questions, rate their significance and research their context.
- **Decorate the staffroom with fun images drawn from the history of school education, or 'advice to teachers or students' from bygone eras. Don't neglect amusing school policies, speeches, newsletter articles or dress codes from your own school archives (but run these past your Principal just in case...)**
- Video-record teachers, parents, grandparents and community figures telling a story about their family or personal history. (Remember, things that happened during our lifetimes are 'history' to the students!) Add the stories to the school website during History Month.
- **Encourage or facilitate Year F-12 students in History, Art, Drama, Dance, Music, Media, or Design and Technology to produce a piece that can double as an entry for the National History Challenge. It just needs to be researched and historically accurate, and related to this year's theme. Get entries in by the August deadline, and showcase the entries during History Month. Competition winners will have been notified by then, so you might also have something to celebrate at school assembly. Request an information kit today.**
- Get students to research and publish an 'On this Day in...' list for each day of History Month. Publish as posters around the school, a slideshow on loop in a corridor, or on the school website.
- **Send a note to every student who seems to love History, and/or their parents, to say how much you appreciate sharing your love of History with them. (It could be either an actual note/card, or a notification via the school's learning management system.)**
- Talk to educational tour companies about a history camp in Australia or overseas and invite local media to cover the trip preparations or interview the students about their experiences. Aim for a publication deadline in History Month.
- **Purchase HTAV's historical thinking posters for prominent display during History Month.**
- **Weave historical films into your History Month. For example, track down two films that are relevant to what your class has been studying and invite students and families to a 'double bill' movie night at school, or screen each film over a couple of lunchtimes.**
- Collaborate with English teachers and librarians to help students from Years 5-10 produce a short piece of engaging historical fiction, with a focus on both writing quality and historical accuracy. Submit entries to the HTAV Historical Fiction Competition by the August deadline, and publish the stories on the school blog or website during History Month. Competition winners will have been notified by History Month, so you might have something to celebrate at school assembly.
- **If your school uses music instead of a bell, ask to play historical music or songs throughout History Month. Spotify playlists are a great place to start. Publish the final playlist on the school website with brief notes on the music of the era.**
- Run a year level or school-wide 'dress as your favourite (real) person from history' day, with prizes for the best and most historically accurate costumes. Provide an opportunity for students to talk about who they are and why they chose that person. Take photos, apply a black and white or sepia filter, and then publish them in the school newsletter or website.
- **Collaborate with Home Economics or Health and Human Development teachers to run an historical cooking lesson. What ingredients and equipment did they have, what recipes, and how did things taste? You could even assemble a cookbook of old family recipes and sell it as a school fundraiser.**
- Schedule history-focused reading and conversation for your Professional Learning Community during October.