**National History Day Topic Essay**

*Due Date: Uploaded to Turnitin.com by 10/27/2019 at 11:59pm. Late submissions will be accepted, but penalized. This is an assessment grade.*

**Directions**

EACH INDIVIDUAL must submit a UNIQUE informative essay to Turnitin.com that explains your topic and makes direct connection(s) to this year’s theme, “Breaking Barriers in History.” Use this worksheet to ensure you have covered the required information in proper format.

**Essay requirements** (4 paragraphs in 2 sections)

*Topic Title* – 5% of grade. This is not the same as a project title. We will worry about that later. Bold and center the topic you are writing about.

PART I: Information - 40% of grade

* *Contextualization* – What was happening in the world/region/area at the time that makes your topic relevant? (In other words, why did it happen?)
* *Summary*– Who was involved? What happened?

PART II: Impact - 40% of grade

* *Theme* – Connect your topic to the theme! How does your topic demonstrate barrier breaking?
* *Significance* **–** Why should we care about your topic? What impact did it have on others? Is this something we still care about today? GIVE IT HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE!

**Essay Format and Scoring**

* 4 paragraphs in two sections (use transitions between paragraphs)
* 400 to 500 words
* Double spaced
* 11 or 12-point font in Times New Roman, Ariel or Calibri
* 1-inch margins
* Word count at end (include title in word count)
* Proper mechanics and grammar – 15% of grade
* Partial citations must be used for direct quotes only (Author, year) Ex. (Christensen, 2017)
* Submit through Turnitin.com by 11:59 pm (one minute to midnight) on day of deadline

**Rubric**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Title – 5%** | **Context – 20%** | **Summary – 20%** | **Theme – 20%** | **Significance – 20%** | **Mechanics – 15%** |
| *Paper has a title that is the subject of the project* | *Paper relates the topic to broader historical events, developments or processes that occur before, during, or continue after the time frame of the topic.* | *Paper demonstrates complex understanding of topic through summary of events, people, dates, details, etc.* | *Paper clearly connects the topic to the annual theme.* | *Demonstrates a complex understanding of the historical development that is the focus of the topic.* | *Uses appropriate grammar and spelling throughout. Paper meets or exceeds all format criteria.* |

***EXAMPLE***

*(This essay is single-spaced to conserve space; please double space your essay. Review and follow all additional essay requirements.)*

**Hejaz Railroad**

PART I

By the mid-19th century, it became increasing apparent that the Ottoman Empire was left with few options to remain viable in the Middle East. Corruption and nepotism coupled with increasing influence of harem politics split loyalties between central authority (the grand vizier) and political loyalty (the sultan). To worsen the situation, European dominance in Atlantic trade dried up traditional Ottoman revenues from the Silk Road. The Tanzimat Reforms (1839-1876) sought to mitigate these problems by industrializing and modernizing the empire using the West as a model. However, it was too little too late. In a last effort to save this vast and diverse empire, an 1800-mile long railway was proposed to unify the industrializing north with the isolated south, reduce traveling risk for Muslim hajjis, and enable central administration to rapidly dispatch military forces wherever needed; in short, to break physical, economic and cultural barriers through transportation.

The Hejaz Railway project began inauspiciously. The price tag of four million Turkish lira was a substantial portion of the annual operating budget for the entire empire. After receiving a loan of 100,000 lira to begin construction in 1900, a Donation Commission was formed to seek funds from Muslims throughout the empire and around the world. This attempt to solidify the Muslim world failed, and the project was largely designed and bankrolled by German corporations. In addition, Ottoman Arabs viewed the railway as Turkish political and economic aggression designed to interfere with Arab self-interests. They responded with raids and vandalism, slowing down progress in the most vulnerable and remote regions of construction. By the time it was completed in 1907, the Hejaz railway was the pride of the Ottoman empire, but it was a tenuous success – one that hinged on the outcome of a looming “Great War” and a shaky alliance with imperial Germany.

PART II

The Hejaz Railway broke economic and political barriers for the Ottoman Empire. By unifying a disparate nation, it was designed to preserve and extend Ottoman autonomy, throw off the yoke of European imperialism, and subdue Arab rebellions. Although innately flawed, the project did provide a much-needed boost to the morale of the “Sick Man of Europe.” Unfortunately, this would lead to overextension in international politics and, ultimately, the destruction of the empire.

The impact of the Hejaz Railway is profound. The alliance between Germany and the Ottoman Empire that was created to build the railroad would ultimately trigger the Armenian genocide in 1917, inspire T.E. Lawrence to rally behind the Arab plea for autonomy, and destroy the empire. The secret Sikes-Picot agreement between the British and the French allowed these nations to divide up Ottoman holdings and create a Middle East based on economic potential instead of cultural unity. Finally, the complete destruction and abandonment of the railway just north of the city of Mudowarra has continued to stymie modern economic growth in Syria, contributing to political instability.

(485 words)