

Process Paper:

After first learning about the National History Day Competition, our group tried brainstorming about topics that we could use. We wanted a topic that was narrow enough for practicality yet broad enough to provide extensive research. In addition, we wanted our topic to be local so that we could obtain several useful primary sources. Furthermore, our group wanted the topic to be vague enough to escape ennui of the judges, yet at the same time, be somewhat well-known. The topic that fit all of these requirements was the Great Seattle Fire.

Once our topic was selected, we divided up the fire into four aspects: the fire itself, the aftermath, the relief provided, and the rebuilding efforts. Our group then assigned one aspect to each group member. After our research was organized, we began to really find beneficial information. We began by trawling through the Internet and soon scrounged up innumerable secondary sources. Next, our group checked out two definitive books on the fire and took detailed notes on the presented information. To attain primary sources, our group traveled to the Seattle Underground and saw, firsthand, the destruction caused by the Great Seattle Fire. We also managed to obtain an interview with a Seattle Underground Tour Guide which was used in our project. Our group then spent a day at the University of Washington examining books and newspapers reporting the fire. Here, we also took extensive notes on magazines written shortly after the conflagration. Having immersed ourselves with immense knowledge of our topic, our group completed the research phase of our project.

After obtaining the necessary knowledge about our topic, our group began to create the actual presentation. Choosing our project category turned out to be extremely

simple because the group voted unanimously to create a documentary. Using the sources and information gathered over the past month, we developed a preliminary storyboard of the documentary and then wrote a rough script based on this storyboard. Once the script was completed and edited, our group met every Wednesday and worked on the voice-over for the documentary. As we took turns narrating the script, the group simultaneously worked on compiling an annotated bibliography and determining useful videos and photos that could be used in the documentary. After everything was merged and edited, the documentary was completed.

Our project on the Great Seattle Fire relates to the theme: Triumph and Tragedy because the fire was just that; a triumph and tragedy. The tragic aspect of the fire is obvious because an entire city burned to ashes. The subtler triumph aspect is seen in the generosity of surrounding cities and improvements made to city in the aftermath of the fire. Having learned from the disastrous conflagration, Seattle laid the foundations for a healthier city and molded itself into what it is today. The Great Seattle Fire reflected persistence and recovery for the rest of the world. It not only shaped the excellent future of Seattle, but also assisted other nations in becoming truly successful.