

Apollo 11: Breaking Barriers of Science, Technology, and Space

Process Paper

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One of the first topics that came to mind for this year's theme in National History Day was the moon landing. It fit the theme perfectly, but this was a fairly broad topic, as we could focus on either the individual missions, the astronauts, or the technical side of the rockets. Our focus was centered on the Apollo 11 mission; its 50th anniversary occurred the summer of 2019 and one of our group members was fortunate enough to see the exhibit in The Museum of Flight located in Seattle, Washington dedicated to this event. We were inspired to retell the story of Apollo 11, 5 decades after the historic landing, but wanted to consider other topics before fully committing to one topic. We explored alternatives such as the creation of the first polio vaccine, Elizabeth Blackwell, and Maya Angelou, however our final decision came to the moon landing and its lasting legacy.

The process of conducting our research began with gathering information from a variety of sources and slowly starting to piece together a bibliography that consisted of both primary and secondary sources. After doing individual research, we combined all the information we had gathered and laid it out on a poster: one column was labeled causes, the middle was labeled event, and the last labeled effects. We sorted all our knowledge to get a sense of what will be placed where and how to tie facts in a coherent way. The amount of primary and secondary sources we used balanced out well and added context to our project.

From the beginning, we knew that this topic required a very interactive experience in order to relay the information; the best category for this goal was clearly the website category. We also wanted it to be very visual, since there is a ton of photo evidence that we could include. The exhibit category was another option, but we worried that the lack of time would affect our project and stifle it from living up to our expectations. The fact that a website is also fairly easy to edit and take stuff out at any time was another added bonus, as there were many changes that needed to be made throughout the process.

Our project relates to the NHD theme in several ways. First, it broke the barrier that was present for centuries, specifically the barrier of what we believed humans could accomplish. The moon landing caused huge technological innovations to be made, which was another barrier that was broken. It paved the way for future lunar missions to occur in the course of the next couple of decades, opening up the path for new scientific discoveries. The moon landing was a grand achievement not just for the USA, but for the entire world. As humans venture to the corners of the universe, future generations can see what we accomplished by taking one single step.