HOUSTONFEST
Research Paper
Critique Sheet – VIRTUAL EVENT

INSTRUCTIONS TO JUDGES

Please read the "Instructions to Judges" provided to you.

RULES – This is a "virtual event."

Entry Limit: 2 research papers per school, with 1-2 authors each (if 2 entries are submitted, they must be by 2 different authors or pairs of authors, i.e., no contestant may work on more than 1 paper)

Length Limits: minimum 700 words, maximum 1000 words, not including Works Cited

Write a research paper in English on an interesting German-Texan cultural and/or historical topic. The topic should not be commonly known: a particular person, family, place, building, business, area, group, settlement, organization, church, tradition, activity, practice, etc. The paper should contribute to a greater understanding of German-Texan history and/or culture. The entry must be typed and double-spaced and have internal documentation with proper in-text citation and a Works Cited page, as per MLA (Modern Language Association) guidelines. Follow the rules in the latest MLA Style Sheet, paying special attention to rules for entering Internet sources. **Use at least three sources, at least two of which must be non-Internet**. Digitally-archived sources originally published in hard copy may be counted as non-Internet sources. **Sources should include primary sources and secondary sources**. Primary sources are evidence in the form of artifacts, photos, letters, interviews, music, charts, illustrations, etc. with a direct connection to the era being studied. They may be personally documented by the contestant(s) (photos taken, interviews recorded) or found in personal collections, archives, libraries, museums, etc. Secondary sources are documents that discuss or analyze primary sources and topics – primarily other academic work. All entries will be checked for plagiarism via turnitin.com or a similar service.

Submission Process:
1. Using MLA Style, include **your name(s)**, **your school**, the **date**, and the **title** of the paper at the top of page 1.
2. To include photographs, other images, and/or audio materials, add an appendix after the Works Cited page. Images may be pasted directly into the document. Audio files should be linked, e.g., via a Google Drive link.
3. Convert the completed research paper, including the Works Cited and any appendix, to a single PDF file and upload it according to the instructions provided. At the 2024 steering committee meeting, additional changes to the rules and/or submission process were agreed upon but the exact wording has not been finalized, so this critique sheet is not fully accurate for 2025 and beyond. It will be updated soon to reflect the changes.

See page 2 for Judging Criteria.

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Contestant(s): _____

School: _____

Judge's initials: _____

CRITERIA FOR JUDGING

1. **Topic and Thesis Statement**: The paper includes an introduction establishing a topic and thesis statement related to German-Texan culture and/or history. The topic should be interesting and lend itself to a compelling thesis. If the topic is well-known, the paper should be deeply researched, include detailed and specific information that is not well-known, and provide the reader with new insight. (0-20 points)

2. **Organization and Style**: The paper is logically organized, develops the thesis, and includes a strong summarizing conclusion. Style and voice should be appropriate to an academic research paper, with an emphasis on clarity, but also show originality. (0-20 points)

3. **MLA Mechanics**: The format of the paper and citations adhere to MLA standards. (0-20 points)

4. **Quality of Information/Evidence of Sources**: The paper includes well-researched, detailed, and historically-accurate information derived from secondary sources and clearly supporting the paper's thesis. (0-20 points)

5. **Use of Primary Sources**: The paper includes at least one cited primary source (see Rules). Visual primary sources are reproduced in the paper, and audio primary sources are linked. (0-20 points)

TOTAL POINTS: (100 possible) _____

MORE COMMENTS TO HELP THE CONTESTANT