

NHD Process Paper

Our topic, “The Women Warriors of Dahomey” is about an elite military group of women in West Africa who fought wars for the king of Dahomey. They were highly trained and fought in the Franco-Dahomean war, which was the war that Dahomey fought to prevent the colonization of the French. When the project was first introduced, we immediately knew that we wanted to work together, but we did not know what topic to research. Our World History teacher, Ms. Moye, told us about the Women Warriors of Dahomey and we were immediately intrigued. We were amazed how the most powerful military group in Dahomey was composed of women and by the fact that they were disciplined and had to forgo a family.

We conducted our research using key words and looking them up in Google. Our teacher also had a book that she made a copy for us to read. We used the school’s library and DC Public Library research database. To begin our research we read an article that was posted in simthsonian.com and that’s where we got our basic information. To go more in depth, Keily Lopez read the book that Ms. Moye gave her, entitled *The Women Warriors of Dahomey* by Stanley B. Alpern. In reading *The Women Warriors of Dahomey* book, she learned about how the Women Warriors trained and their discipline. She also learned about some of the wars that they fought in and about the Franco-Dahomean war. She learned that they lost only because the French had better weapons. We found two primary sources, one by Frederick E. Forbes and the other by Richard F. Burton. They were both travelers who kept journals of what they saw in their travels through Dahomey.

We chose to do an exhibit board because we knew that we can be more creative with it. At first we were hesitant to do an exhibit board because we don’t like to do them. We felt like

there is less information we can add and it's harder to fix. We had a change of mind because in English class, Keily Lopez and Jason Perla did a project and were very creative. That's when we decided that we would do an exhibit board. We were thinking of doing a documentary or a website, but realized that we didn't have enough time. We then chose to only do an exhibit board, and worked with the art teacher, Mr. Cuevas to create a 3D model of a women warrior based on a primary source sketch. Jason Perla did the introduction and the first subtopic, Precious Ogu did the second subtopic and pictures, and Keily Lopez did the third subtopic; Precious and Keily did the conclusion together. We all contributed to the background image of the exhibit board and the 3D model.

Our topic embodies the NHD theme Triumph and Tragedy in many ways. The Women Warriors of Dahomey had both triumph and tragedy. They were triumphant because they were a strong disciplined elite military women group. They won many wars and gained many territories for Dahomey because of it. They also suffered tragedy because they lost the war against the French. The French wanted to colonize Dahomey but they were against it, so they fought in the Franco-Dahomean war. Due to their loss, they were colonized by the French. The Women Warriors of Dahomey used their agency in many ways. They decided to fight in battles against men even though they knew they could be defeated and could be injured and possibly die. They also used their agency by deciding to follow the requirements the king had set forth; to not get married or have children. Something different they could have done was to not fight in any battles. They knew that there was a high chance that they would be injured or killed, and they could have decided not to fight due to the risks. They didn't have many constraints other than the fact that they couldn't get married or have children. It's significant because as a result of their agency, people to this day are still talking about them and still admire their bravery and fearlessness.