

“Now Showing: Harry Houdini Stars in
Breaking Physical, Social, and Supernatural
Barriers”

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Process Paper

Before choosing our topic, we both knew we wanted to do something related to Wisconsin. We began to brainstorm ideas and discovered that Harry Houdini started his career in Appleton. We were initially pulled into the topic because of Houdini's legacy as a performer and magician, but neither of us knew much about him. As we started to look into it, we realized the enormous impact Houdini had on several different aspects of life in his time. This was our idea of the perfect project because of the numerous barriers Houdini broke in both society and technology. In addition to that, we wanted to do this project because of the mystery behind Houdini. It pulled us in, and we were excited to learn about Houdini and his accomplishments.

We started our research journey by learning the basic overview of Houdini's life. We began research on his childhood, family, career, escapes, accomplishments, and campaign against false mediums and spiritualism. His campaign against spiritualism caught our eyes as one of the main barriers he broke, so we put a lot of research into it. We also reached out to authors, professors, and museums that could help us learn more. Using the information from those, as well as books and internet research, we documented our most important aspects and began to further develop them. After researching numerous aspects of Houdini's life, we began to form our argument and organize our ideas.

Once we chose our topic, we brainstormed possible presentation ideas. Originally, we planned to put on a performance but quickly realized that was not a feasible idea; as we are not actors. Then, we moved to an exhibit. We stayed with that plan for a few weeks until we realized that the idea would not work out either. We figured it would be difficult to find time to meet up more than a few times. That left us with two options: a documentary or website. Although a documentary would be fun to put together, neither of us have the equipment necessary to make one. So, we finally decided to create a website, and it turned out to be rather exciting.

Our project relates to this year's theme for more than just the obvious reason. Not only did Harry Houdini break physical barriers through his daring escapades, but through exposing false mediums, encouraging his fellow members in SAM (Society of American Magicians) to help with the World War I effort, being the first person to fly a controlled and powered plane over Australia, and more. He opened the curtain hiding the truth about spiritualism, connected the entertainment industry in America with the War, and completely shattered flight records in Australia. Harry Houdini was not just a person who entertained the masses, but a respectable historical figure.