

Triumph Out of Darkness: The Legacy of Louis Braille

Raquel Brouwer

Junior Division

Individual Exhibit

Student-Composed Words: 500 words

Process Paper: 500 words

Process Paper

My topic is Louis Braille's invention of the raised dot system of communication for the blind. I became interested in my topic in the spring of 2018 when I was partnered with a blind boy in robotics club. I noticed that it was difficult for him to do things. I wondered how he was able to do basic tasks in his daily life. When National History Day started, I found myself coming back to the topic of the visually disabled. One thing I found interesting was that even though the system Braille was very popular, the inventor Louis Braille was given very little recognition for the amazing language he had created. Therefore, I decided that Louis Braille and his tactile writing system would be my main topic.

I utilized many sources while conducting my research. Unfortunately, I quickly realized that finding primary sources would be a challenge, because Braille did not become popular until after Louis' death. I found many facts from photos and also used the online sources that were provided by my librarian. I looked at *Chronicling America* newspapers to find information about Louis and the blind. I mainly used *Britannica School* for finding primary sources and used books to find secondary sources. I contacted Mattix and Bryce, two blind students, to hear what they had to say about being visually disabled. I also interviewed Tricia, a blind mother of two. My most beneficial sources were my interviews with Mattix and Tricia. Their statements helped

me understand how much Braille has impacted the lives of the visually disabled and how Braille has given them the same opportunities sighted people take for granted.

I selected my presentation category as exhibit because I wanted my presentation to be tangible since Braille is all about touch. Once I had chosen to do an exhibit, I worked with different sketches until I chose my design. My title was partially made out of raised dots to replicate Braille. For my frames, I used the pages of the Braille version of “Out of the Darkness: The Story of Louis Braille”, a book from which I found lots of information. The colors of the French flag, Louis’ birthplace, are represented in the cardstock underneath my writing. The best part of my project is that I am able to teach others about an important figure that has tragically been forgotten. I enjoy being able to educate more people, including myself, about the importance of accessibility for the blind.

My thesis states that Louis Braille’s life began with tragedy at a young age and he was able to triumph in spite of his disability. At 16, he triumphantly created a system for the blind. Tragically, his name has been forgotten. Now less people are using Braille which is resulting in lower literacy rates for the blind. I think that my topic ties in with this year’s theme, “Triumph and Tragedy” because Louis Braille has had many tragedies, but ultimately triumphed in the end. Louis Braille changed the world for the blind.