



## Welcome to National History Day-CA!

During the 2021-22 NHD program year, students across the country will research topics related to a

theme established by National History Day. This year's theme is **Debate and Diplomacy in History: Successes, Failures, and Consequences**. The theme is intentionally broad. This allows you to select a local, state, national, or world historical topic of interest to you, also meeting any school requirements you may have. You will live with your NHD project for a long time, so pick a topic that interests you!

### Understanding the Theme

The first step in developing an NHD project is to understand the theme. You might begin by investigating the definitions of the key words in the theme. While the theme seems straight forward, you should understand that you do not have to analyze both debate and diplomacy unless your topic includes both. You will have to research and analyze the successes, failures, and consequences of your topic, whether you focus on debate, diplomacy, or both. First, take some time to consider the definitions of the theme words.

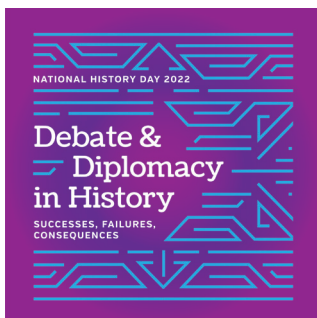
#### Debate is:

- A formal discussion
- A dispute
- An argument

#### Diplomacy is:

- A negotiation aimed at reaching an agreement
- Dialogue between countries
- The management of international issues

A debate doesn't always end in diplomacy, but diplomacy often comes after a debate over something.



Next, determine if your topic includes both or just one of the theme words. This will drive your research in specific directions. While the decision is yours on whether to cover one or both of the theme words, your judges will expect you to cover both if there is an obvious connection. Carefully consider what the debate/diplomacy is, how it was resolved, and the lasting impact or change that occurred because of the debate or diplomacy.

### The Historical Consideration is Important

Debate and Diplomacy: Successes, Failures, and Consequences is a historical theme that reveals itself across space and time. As you examine the changes that were caused either directly or indirectly by your topic, you will want to highlight the circumstances that allowed the original event, action, or idea to become significant. Significant changes can impact how people interact with each other, govern, work, and view the world around them. If the debate or diplomacy you are researching continued to be an issue for a long time, what might that mean about the significance of your topic in history?

The historical significance of your topic may be positive or negative. You will want to learn about the people involved in the debate or the diplomatic conversations - both people who benefitted and those who were hurt by it.

*Consider the history of women's rights in the United States. A project on the debate at the Seneca Falls Convention, the Equal Rights Amendment, or the impact and legacy of Title IX are all options.*

### Choosing a Topic

After learning the different elements of the themes, you will begin to consider possible topics. You probably will start with big ideas. Some broad topic ideas might include people, events, and/or ideas that dramatically changed social conditions for the poor, political boundaries, or rights of previously oppressed groups of people.

*Other big topics may come from history's big headlines: the American Revolution, the French Revolution, Mahatma Gandhi and India's revolt against British rule, apartheid in South Africa, etc.*

You may even notice something happening today that makes you wonder about the past. Just

remember that you must make the case for your topic to be considered “history.” Conduct initial research in a big topic area to learn background information in order to find a more manageable topic.

## Narrowing the Topic

Students with successful NHD projects do not tackle large topics like World War II or Imperialism. Instead, you should search for specific incidents, people, or groups within the larger topic. The big idea about picking a topic is to narrow it down to a compelling individual, group, event, or idea that ultimately held great significance over time.

*For example, you might narrow World War II by looking at the Potsdam Conference. Or, you might analyze the debate over federal government projects by looking at the Hoover Dam.*

## Connecting the Elements of the Theme

When you research a topic related to this year’s theme, you most likely will discover that people related to your topic had ideas and were involved in events that directly led to or catalyzed dramatic change. Debate and Diplomacy in History provides you with a framework for organizing your research, thesis statement, and maybe even your project. You may want to draw an image of how the pieces - success, failures, and consequences - fit. You will decide the best way to organize the elements of the theme to fit your topic.

## Thinking Like a Historian

As a history sleuth exploring debate and diplomacy in history, you will want to think like a historian. Historical thinking requires that a topic be investigated and researched from different perspectives. Your analysis will need to reflect the following:

**Significance:** Is your topic significant in history? Why is it important to learn more?

**Chronology:** Identify key moments in history around your topic and establish the time period.

**Turning Points:** Think about the continuity and change related to your topic. What are the causes and consequences related to your topic? Is your topic centered on a period of progress or decline?

**Context:** Use primary sources to think about the context of your topic. Don’t forget to consider the point of view of the creator of your documents.

**Evidence:** Use a broad base of sources to present an argument based on analysis of the evidence.

**Multiple Perspectives:** How did the people of the past view their world? Did everyone have the same point of view or experience?

**Historiography:** Assess arguments among multiple secondary sources to determine if historians’ interpretations differ, or have changed over time.

**Historical Lenses:** Explore arguments and emphases in sub-fields of study, including political, economic, environmental, intellectual, social, and cultural history.

Debate and diplomacy have led to significant shifts in history. You will need to consider the significance of your topic by researching how strongly it impacted all aspects of society. Some questions you should consider while conducting your research include:

- How did the debate or diplomacy affect a person’s choice in where to live, opportunity for education, or what religion they can practice? **(Cultural/Social Lenses)**
- Do the people involved in the debate or diplomacy have responsibilities to society? **(Political Lens)**
- How does the debate or diplomacy affect a person’s ability to make a living or gain wealth? **(Economic Lens)**
- What happens when diplomacy or a debate does not impact people evenly? **(Cultural/Political/Economic Lenses)**
- Do debates and diplomacy apply to natural resources? **(Economic/Environmental/Political Lenses)**

Be sure to look at the time period when your topic occurred and try to view it from the perspective of people living in that time and place. You cannot judge history, but instead try to make sense of it. As you research your topic, find out what was happening at that time in history and what led up to the debate or diplomacy you are researching. What

factors allowed your topic to become important enough to be remembered now?

Sometimes, a debate or diplomatic action will lead up to unintended, dramatic changes. Whether your topic is a war, an environmental issue, a debate over medical ethics, or war ending diplomacy, find out how your topic initiated change - how were things dramatically and permanently different because of it.

*For example when Richard Nixon decided to visit China in 1972, he opened diplomatic relations and changed U.S. foreign relations with China. As a result, this opened up a divide between China and the Soviet Union, leading to a shift in the Cold War balance.*

## Context Matters

A key element to researching and analyzing a History Day topic is to pay close attention to the context of the topic. You will need to ask questions about time, and place; cause and effect; change over time; and impact and significance. Students must consider not only when and where events happened, but also why they occurred and what factors contributed to their development. One way of discovering the context of a debate or diplomatic action is to identify events in history that came before it. As the historian, it will be your job to analyze the facts around your topic, determine how and why the debates or diplomacy occurred; then defend your conclusions with evidence from historical sources.

*Consider the decision in Brown vs. The Board of Education of Topeka in the context of the Civil Rights Movement or the 13th Amendment to the Constitution in the context of ending slavery in the United States.*

## Analyzing the Research

National History Day projects focus on primary sources as evidence, requiring deep research. NHD projects are much more than just research reports. You are becoming an historian: analyze the research; study your topic closely; pull apart information; and pay attention to how different sources explain it. You will notice where different sources are not in agreement with each other. Pay attention to details about your topic so you can put all the pieces together in a well-organized, logical way when you create your project. As you learn more and more, you should be able to answer some key questions such as:

1. What is my topic about?
2. Why is it important?
3. What is the larger issue that my topic connects to?
4. How did it happen?
5. Why did it happen?
6. How does it relate to the annual theme?
7. What is the historical significance?
8. Who are the compelling individuals or groups?
9. What is the compelling idea or event?

You are not limited to these questions; however, they might help get you started.

As a historian, you will be an active researcher using primary and secondary sources. You will seek out secondary sources to develop essential background knowledge, understand some of the differences in perspectives about the topic, and help narrow your topic. To the extent possible, you will seek out primary sources to get the “raw” story and first-hand accounts that bring the topic to life. As you conduct your research, you should continually craft new questions and look for contradictions and disagreements among sources. Be aware of bias and point of view.

## Pulling the Pieces Together – The Historical Significance of Your Topic

Determining the importance of your topic requires asking and finding answers to questions about time, place, cause and effect, change over time, impact and significance. Some initial questions include:

- How were people impacted by the debate or diplomacy?
- Who represented the different side of the debate or diplomacy?
- What factors contributed/led up to the diplomacy?
- Why was there a need for change at the time?
- Why did this event cause a change?
- How were things forever changed because of the debate being argued?
- Why does it matter that the debate or diplomacy led to change?

The reason for your analysis is to be able to explain why your topic is important in history. If you just told the story of your topic and described how it connected to the annual theme, you would have developed a fancy summary or book report. As a historian, you are expected to create your own conclusion(s) that explain the importance of your topic in history.

*For example, the treaties between the United States and Native Americans in the early 1800s involved diplomacy. What were the short and long term consequences? How do these diplomatic actions still matter today? Successful NHD students often explain or show how even topics from very long ago affect us today.*

### **From Analysis to Proving Your Argument – The Thesis Statement**

You will be developing a project using an argumentative style. Develop your project with a lot of evidence to support your argument or position about the importance of your topic. As you become an expert about your topic, you will develop analysis by forming a thesis (your argument or position on the topic and its connection to the theme). Although you will likely write a draft thesis statement early on in your research process, you will revise the thesis many times. It will be one of the last elements you finalize.

Begin your research with questions that will help you organize your research. Your thesis statement provides a response to your key questions. You will continue to research your topic to find more and more evidence to support your thesis/argument. You may discover that your thesis statement changes as you do more research. That is the sign of deep research and analysis.

A thesis statement is like a road map for your project. It will tell the audience how your topic connects to the theme. Many times, thesis statements make claims that others dispute. If there's nothing controversial in your thesis, it probably is just a summary, not an argument. Questions you may want to ask yourself as you analyze your research and develop your thesis statement include:

1. Did I answer my key questions?
2. Did I take a position or did I simply restate facts?

3. Does my thesis statement show that my topic matters?
4. Did I use the theme in my thesis statement?
5. Did I support my thesis statement with evidence from my research?

As you develop your project, you will refer back to your thesis frequently. You will most likely end up changing it. Make sure your project's components and evidence are in line with your thesis. As with each year's theme, the NHD theme for 2022 is intentionally broad. You will become an expert on a topic that your teacher and NHD judges might not know a lot about, so be sure that they can easily see the connections between your topic and the theme. Now it's time to dig in!