



Turning Points in History

The 2024 National History Day theme asks students to consider how an idea, event, or action resulted in a historical shift that changed society and culture in significant ways.

As you choose your topic for this year, think about significant changes related to an event, idea, or action that shifted the course of local or national history.

MAKE IT ABOUT CHOICE

Whether your topic is about a political change, a new law or court decision, a protest, an innovation, or a natural disaster, your turning point happened because someone or a group of people made a choice (did/said/created something) that changed culture and society from the way it was before. Turning points in history are created by people and impact people, and **once the turning point happens it can't be undone.**

MAKE IT ABOUT PERSPECTIVES

Turning points impact people differently. Your research and analysis should include these differences. Be sure to research the impact and change of your topic from **multiple perspectives.** Were all people impacted in the same way? Whose lives improved and who thought they were hurt by the turning point?

Historians have played a role in deciding which historical events are turning points. What have we learned over time that adds to our perspective about your topic? Do we have a clearer idea of the impact of the turning point when we bring in more perspectives and analyze the documents to see how all members of society were impacted?

How did the turning point change lives of people? Did all people benefit in the same ways? Did the turning point **create a shift in power?** Did some people gain power while others did not?

MAKE IT ABOUT CHANGE

By definition, a turning point in history indicates a **significant change** that alters the course of history for the people involved. A historical event becomes a turning point when historians research the **impact and change** of the event and conclude that **significant shifts resulted** because of the turning point, creating a changed circumstance that redefined or changed an element of society in a distinctively different way than before.

By choosing a topic that is at least **20 years old**, you will be able to more easily see both the short and long-term impacts.

MAKE IT CONNECT

This year's theme, Turning Points in History requires students to make the case of why their topic is a turning point by using evidence to support their claims.

Frame your research questions to address three areas of research:

1. Background research - How did previous events create the circumstance for the turning point?
2. Contextualization - How did the people involved shift their understanding, motivation, or goal to create the turning point?
3. Significance - Show the immediate and distant shifts by using evidence and analyzing the meaning.

The Way Things Were

Ideas, technology, culture, and understanding before the turning point.



Turning Point

New motivation, understanding, conflict, innovation



Shifted History

The significant ways in which life or society changed.

