



Rights & Responsibilities in History (6-8)

The 2025 National History Day theme asks you to think about how the connection between rights and responsibilities has changed over time and how this has affected people and their communities.

When you choose your topic, think about the rights people have, the responsibilities to protect those rights, and how governments and institutions help define these rights and responsibilities.

MAKE IT ABOUT RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

You need to think about **both rights and responsibilities**. Whether your topic is about a political change, a new law, a court case, a protest, or a change in thinking, it happened because someone or a group of people took action that challenged rights and brought new responsibilities. Using rights comes with the duty, responsibility, to act reasonably and protect others' rights. Rights and responsibilities are connected, often involving a push and pull between people and those in power.

MAKE IT ABOUT CONTEXT

One way to find issues of rights and responsibilities is to look at events in history that led to struggles for rights. As you research, learn about what happened before the rights and responsibilities you are studying.

MAKE IT ABOUT IMPACT

The fight between people wanting rights and those controlling them has caused many important events in history. To understand why your topic matters, research how it affected society. Here are some questions to help guide your research:

- What happens when rights are not applied equally to everyone?
- Do people who have or demand rights also have responsibilities?
- How do rights & responsibilities affect a person's ability to work or build wealth?
- Do rights and responsibilities extend to the environment, space, or animals?
- How do rights affect a person's choice in where to live, opportunity for education, and their ability to practice a religion?

The Way Things Were

Rights & responsibilities, culture, and understanding before your topic.



The Main Event

Your topic - the event, controversy, protest involving rights & responsibilities



Shifted History

The significant ways in which life or society changed because of rights & responsibilities..



THINK LIKE A HISTORIAN

Historical thinking requires that a topic be investigated and researched from different perspectives. Reflect on:

Significance - Is your topic significant in history?

Chronology - Identify key moments in history around your topic and establish the period in which it belongs.

Turning Points - Think about the changes related to your topic. What caused these changes, and what were the results? Did your topic lead to progress or decline?

Context - Use primary sources to understand the context of your topic.

Evidence - Use a variety of sources to be sure your argument based on strong evidence.

Historical Lens - Understand different perspectives in history, such as political, economic, environmental, intellectual, social, and cultural history.