



Rights & Responsibilities in History (9- 12)

The 2025 National History Day theme asks students to consider how the relationship between rights & responsibilities has developed over time, impacting people and their societies.

As you choose your topic for this year, think about the rights of people, the responsibilities or duties to protect those rights, and the role of government and institutions in defining rights and responsibilities.

MAKE IT ABOUT RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

You must consider **both rights and responsibilities**. Whether your topic is about a political change, a new law, a court decision, a protest, or a shift in thinking, remember that it happened because someone or a group of people took action that challenged existing rights and brought new responsibilities. When people exercise their rights, they also have a duty to act reasonably and protect the rights of others. Rights and responsibilities are connected and often involve a push and pull between people and those in power.

MAKE IT ABOUT CONTEXT

One way to explore rights and responsibilities is to look at historical events that led to struggles for rights. As you research, find out what events, changes, laws, philosophical shifts came before the rights and responsibilities you're studying.

MAKE IT ABOUT IMPACT

Conflicts between people seeking rights and those controlling them have led to important historical events. To understand the significance of your topic, research how it impacted society. Consider these questions as you work:

- 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 continuity and change related to your topic. What are the causes and consequences related to your topic? Does 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 solid evidence.

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