



Revolution, Reaction, Reform in History (6-8)

The theme for the 2026 National History Day asks students to think about how reform (fixing problems) and revolution (big changes) can cause strong reactions. These reactions often

push people to change the way a group, system, or practice works, usually to make it better. When you pick your topic, make sure you think carefully about how it connects to this theme. Keep in mind that the lines between reform, revolution, and reaction are not always clear.

MAKE IT CONNECT TO THE THEME WORDS

Your topic should connect to the parts of the theme that fit best.

- All topics should connect to **reaction**.
- A **reform** means fixing problems by making changes, but not tearing down the whole system.
- If **reforms** don't happen, or don't go far enough, people may call for a **revolution**.
- A **revolution** usually means a total change, often with new leaders or a new system.

MAKE IT ABOUT HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Which happened first in your topic: a revolution, a reaction, or a reform? What caused it to happen? Did all groups of people experience the changes the same way? Did reform fail and lead to a revolution?

MAKE IT ABOUT IMPACT

Show how your topic changed society through revolution, reaction, or reform.

- What happens when a revolution fails?
- How can reforms create social changes that are just as important as revolutions?
- How do people react to court decisions, and can these reactions lead to reform or revolution?
- How can new discoveries or ideas cause reactions or reforms that change society?

THINK LIKE A HISTORIAN

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

Significance - Why is this topic important in history?

Chronology - What events came before and after?

Multiple perspectives - Did all people experience the change the same way? Who gained, and who was left out?

Context - What conditions or problems made people demand change?

Evidence - What do letters, speeches, photos, and documents show?

Historical Lens - Study your topic through political, social, cultural, and economic history.

