

2026 NHD-CA Topic List



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

United States

Colonial and Revolutionary Periods

- Captain John Smith (1602)
- Jamestown and Tobacco (1607)
- The Mayflower Compact (1620)
- The founding of Rhode Island (1630)
- King Philip's War (1675)
- First Great Awakening (1730s)
- John Peter Zenger Libel Case (1735)
- Imperial Reforms:
 - Currency Act (1764)
 - Sugar Act (1764)
 - Stamp Act (1765)
 - Townshend Acts (1767)
 - Tea Act (1773)
 - Intolerable Acts (1774)
- Boston Massacre (1770)
- Ethan Allen and Green Mountain Boys (1770)
- Thomas Paine, "Common Sense" (1776)
- Declaration of Independence (1776)
- Revolutionary War (1776-1783)
- Treaty of Paris (1783)
- Northwest Indian War (1785-1795)
- The Constitutional Convention (1787)
 - Federalism
 - The Great Compromise (1787)
 - Separation of Powers
- Bill of Rights (1789)
- The Federalist Papers (1788)
- Femmes-Soles in Colonial & Revolutionary Periods

Expansion and Reform

- The Proclamation of 1763
- Northwest Ordinance/ Land Ordinance of 1785
- Shay's Rebellion (1786)
- The Whiskey Rebellion (1791)
- The Cotton Gin (1793)
- Alien and Sedition Acts (1798)
- Manifest Destiny (1840)
- Louisiana Purchase (1803)
- Pike Treaty (1805)
- War of 1812
- Missouri Compromise (1820)
- Monroe Doctrine (1823)
- Jacksonian Democracy (1829-1837)
- Indian Removal Act (1830)
- War for Texas Independence (1835)
- 1848 Seneca Falls Convention
- California Gold Rush (1848-1855)
- Compromise of 1850
 - Fugitive Slave Act
- Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854
- Caning of Charles Sumner (1856)
- Harper's Ferry (1859)
- Homestead Act (1862)
- Civil War and Reconstruction
- Writ of Habeas Corpus
- Nat Turner's Slave Revolt (1831)
- Abolitionists
 - William Lloyd Garrison
 - Frederick Douglass
 - Elijah Lovejoy
 - James Birney
 - Grimke Sisters
- Lincoln-Douglas Debates (1858)
- South Carolina secedes from the Union (1860)
- New York Draft Riots of 1863
- The Gettysburg Address (1863)
- The Dakota War of 1862
- Homestead Act (1862)
- The Emancipation Proclamation (1863)
- The 'New South' (1877)
- Freedmen's Bureau (1865-1869)
- 13th, 14th, 15th Amendments (1865-1870)

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- Memphis Riots of 1866
- Civil Rights Act of (1875)
- Black Code – Jim Crow Laws (1876-1965)

Development of the Industrial U.S./ Social & Labor Issues

- Industrial Revolution (1800s)
- Transcontinental Railroad (1863 - 1869)
- Yellowstone Park: Beginning of National Parks and Land Preservation (1872)
- Great Railroad Strike (1873)
- U.S. vs. Susan B. Anthony (1873)
- Haymarket Strike and Riot (1886)
- Sherman Antitrust Act (1890)
- Pullman Railroad Strike (1893)
- Mother Jones and Labor Rights (1900s)
- Trust Busting & President Roosevelt (1901)
- Anthracite Coal Strike (1902)
- Pure Food and Drug Act (1906)
- NAACP (1909)
- Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire (1911)
- Keating-Owen Act Child Labor Act (1916)
- IWW Loggers Strike (1917)
- Brotherhood of the Sleeping Car Porters (1925)

U.S. Imperialism and Immigration

- Chinese Exclusion Act (1882)
- Annexation of Hawaii (1890)
- “Yellow Journalism” – Hearst & Pulitzer (1890s <)
- China and the Open Door Policy (1899)
- The Spanish-American War of 1898
- Philippine-American War (1899-1902)
- Boxer Rebellion (1899)
- Gentlemen’s Agreement – Restricting Japanese (1907)
- Literacy Tests – Restrictions on Immigration (1905)
- American Intervention in Nicaragua (1909)
- The Children’s Bureau (1912)
- Federal Reserve Act (1913)
- 16th Amendment - National Income Tax (1913)
- 17th Amendment - Direct vote for senators (1913)

- Panama Canal - (1914)
- The Sedition Act (1918)
- Occupation of Haiti (1915-1934)
- Wilson’s Fourteen Points (1918)
- Emergency Quota Act (1921) & National Origins Act (1924)

Roaring Twenties and Great Depression

- Late Women’s Suffrage Movement (1900s)
- Prohibition (1920-1933)
- The Jazz Age (1920s/30s)
- The Red Scare (1920s)
- Scopes Trial (1925)
- Bonus Army March on Washington (1932)
- New Deal:
 - Emergency Banking Act (1933)
 - Glass-Steagall Act (1933)
 - Agricultural Adjustment Act (1933)
 - Relief Agencies (1933-1935)
 - Social Security (1935)
 - National Labor Relations Act (1935)
- West Coast Waterfront Strike of 1934
- Wagner Act (1935)
- Flint Sit-Down Strike (1937)
- Recession of 1937

World War II and the Cold War

- Incarceration of Japanese Americans (1940s)
- Navajo Code Talkers (1942)
- G.I. Bill of Rights (1944)
- Truman Doctrine (1947)
- Fair Deal (1940s/50s)
- Marshall Plan (1948)
- Recognition of Israel (1948)
- NATO (1949)
- National Housing Act of 1949
- Warsaw Pact (1955)
- Federal Act Highway Act (1956)
- Digital Revolution (1950s <)
- 1953 US-backed Iranian Coup
- 1954 Guatemalan Coup
- 1960 South Vietnamese Coup Attempt
- U2 Spy Plane Incident (1960)

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- Bay of Pigs Incident (1961)
- Cuban Missile Crisis (1962)
- CounterCulture of the 1960s
- Vietnam War – The Camera at War (1960s/70s)
- Opposition to the Vietnam War (1962-1975)
- Limited Test Ban Treaty (1963)
- Tonkin Gulf Resolution (1964)
- 1968 My Lai Massacre
- SALT I Treaty (1970)
- Kent State Massacre (1970)
- Watergate Scandal (1972)
- Fall of Saigon (1975)
- National Energy Act (1978)
- SALT II Treaty (1979)
- Iran Hostage Crisis (1981)
- Iran Contra Affair (1986))
- NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) (1992)
- World Trade Organization (1995)
- War on Poverty (1960s)

Civil Rights

- African-American Topics
- Plessy vs. Ferguson – “Separate but Equal” (1892)
- Ida Wells and anti-lynching (1892)
- Booker T. Washington vs. W.E.B. Du Bois (1895)
- NAACP (National Association for the Advancement Of Colored People (1905)
- Marcus Garvey and Black Nationalism (1920s)
- Harlem Renaissance (1920-1930)
- Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment (1932-1972)
- Tuskegee Airmen (1940)
- Race Riots in America – Effects of Great Migration (1941-1943)
- Integration of U.S. military (1948)
- Korean War (1950s)
- Brown vs. Board of Education (1954)
- Montgomery Bus Boycott 1955)
- Little Rock School Crisis (1957)
- Sit-In Movement – non violent protest (1959)
- Greensboro Sit-in (1960)

- Freedom Riders (1961)
- Violence in Birmingham (1963)
- March on Washington (1963)
- 1964 Civil Rights Act
- Black Power (1960s)
- Malcolm X and the National of Islam (1960s)
- Desegregation of the Armed Forces (1960s)
- Mississippi Democratic Freedom Party (1964)
- Busing to Achieve School Integration (1970s)
- Affirmative Action (1970s)

Latino Topics

- 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo
- League of United Latin American Citizens (1929)
- Zoot Suit Riots (1943)
- American GI Forum – Latino Veterans (1945)
- Mexican-American Political Association (1960)
- The Chicano Nationalism Movement (1960s)
- Che Guevara and Marxist Revolution (1960s)
- United Farm Workers (1966)
- Brown Berets (1967)
- Mexican-American Youth Organization (1967)
- Bilingual Education – Immigration (1968)
- La Raza Unida (1969)

Native American Topics

- Native American boarding schools (1880s)
- Indian Removal Act (1830)
- Black Seminole Slave Rebellion (1835)
- Treaty of Mendota (1851)
- The Dawes Act (1887)
- Wounded Knee Massacre (1890)
- Indian Citizenship Act of 1924
- Indian Reorganization Act (1934)
- Navajo Code Talkers in WWII (1942)
- Termination Policy (1950s)
- American Indian Movement (1960s/70s)
- ‘Red Power’ – Pan Indian Identity (1960s)
- 1968 Indian Civil Rights Act
- Occupation of Alcatraz (1971)
- “Trail of Broken Treaties” and BIA Takeover (1972)
- Wounded Knee Incident (1973)

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- The Longest Walk (1978)
- NAGPRA (Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act) (1990)

LGBTQ Topics

- Karl Heinrich Ulrichs – pioneer of the modern Gay Rights Movement (1860s)
- The Order of Chaeronea (1890s)
- Trial of Oscar Wilde (1890s)
- The Ariston Hotel Bath Hotel Raids (1903)
- Harden-Eulenburg Affair (1907-1909)
- The Pink Triangle (1930s/40s)
- The Lavender Scare (1950s)
- Stonewall Riots (1969)
- Gay Liberation Front (1969)
- ‘Save our Children’ Campaign (1977-78)

Women in History

- Christine de Pizan; The Book of the City of the Ladies (1405)
- Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz and the revolt against Patriarch Spain (1690s)
- Olympe de Gouges and the French Revolution (1780s/90s)
- Mary Wollstonecraft’s A Vindication of the Rights of Woman (1792)
- Sarah Hale and Ladies Magazine (1820s)
- Seneca Falls Convention (1848)
- National Women’s Rights Convention (1850)
- Elizabeth Blackwell and Female Education Reform (1850s)
- Mary Ellen “Mammy” Pleasant (1860s)
- Sojourner Truth, “Ain’t I a Woman” (1871)
- Nellie Bly and Stunt Journalism (1880s)
- Emma Goldman and the Anarchist political party in the U.S. (1900s)
- Margaret Sanger and Birth Control (1920s)
- 19th Amendment (1920)
- Simone de Beauvoir and Feminism (1930s/40s)
- Betty Friedan’s The Feminine Mystique (1963)
- National Organization of Women (NOW) (1966)
- Equal Rights Amendment (1972)
- Sandra D O’Connor and appointment to

Supreme Court (1981)

- Title IX (1972)

Sports History

- The Negro Leagues (1920 - 1960)
- Branch Rickey and the Integration of Baseball (1947)
- Stuart Udall and the Integration of the Redskins (1962)
- Muhammad Ali Conscientious Objector (1966)
- 1968 Olympics Salute to Black Power
- Curt Flood Act of 1998

Supreme Court Cases

- *Marbury v. Madison* (1803)
- *McCullough v. Maryland* (1819)
- *Dred Scott v. Sanford* (1857)
- *Plessy vs. Ferguson* (1896)
- *Hammer v. Dagenhart* (1918)
- *Schenck v. United States* (1919)
- *Mendez v. Westminster* (1945)
- *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954)
- *Baker v. Carr* (1962)
- *Miranda v. Arizona* (1966)
- *Loving v. Virginia* (1967)
- *University of California Regents v. Allan Bakke* (1968)
- *Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District* (1969)
- *Furman v. Georgia* (1972)
- *Roe v. Wade* (1973)
- *New Jersey vs. TLO: Student search and Seizure* (1985)
- *Hazelwood v. Kuhlmeier: Student press censorship* (1988)

World History

Europe

- John Locke and Social Contract (1680 - 1700s)
- English Bill of Rights (1689)
- Luddite Revolt in England (1812)
- Decembrist Revolt of 1825
- Reform Act of 1832

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- Revolutions of 1848 (France and Germany)
- Russian Revolution of 1905
- Easter Rising in Dublin (1916)
- October/ Bolshevik Revolution (1917)
- Bela Kun and the Communist Uprising in Hungary (1919)
- Irish War of Independence (1919)
- Reforms of the Weimar Republic (1919)
- Spanish Civil War – Francisco Franco (1936-1939)
- Kristallnacht (1938)
- 1943 Warsaw Ghetto Uprising
- Invasion of Normandy (1944)
- Hungarian Revolution of 1956
- Prague Spring of 1968
- Student Revolts of Paris ('May 68')
- Gorbachev's Reforms (1980s)
- Yugoslav Civil Wars (1991-1995)

Asia

- Philippine Revolution or Tagalog War (1896)
- The Chinese Revolution of 1911
- Non-Cooperation Movement and Gandhi (1920s)
- Indian Salt March (1930)
- Thai Revolution of 1932
- Ho Chi Min and Vietnam's Struggle for Independence (1940s)
- The Indo-Pakistani Conflict (1947-1971)
- The Tibetan Uprising (1959)
- Mao and the Cultural Revolution (1950s)
- Deng Xiaoping's economic reforms in Communist China (1960s)
- People Power Revolution in Philippines (1983-1986)
- Tiananmen Square Protests (1989)

Africa

- Scramble for Africa (19th century)
- Hutu vs. Tutsi – Rise of Rwandan Genocide (1959)
- The Congo Crisis (1960-1966)
- Angola War for Independence (1961-1975)

- South Africa Apartheid (1948 - 1990s)
- De-colonization:
 - Egypt (1953)
 - Somalia (1960)
 - South Africa (1961)
 - Algeria (1962)

Latin and South America

- Haitian Revolution (1791-1804)
- Hidalgo and the Mexican Revolt against Spain (1810)
- The Mexican Revolution of 1810
- Jose de San Martin and the Liberation of Chile (1810-1826)
- Great Reforms of Benito Juarez (1840s-1850s)
- War of Reform in Mexico (1857-1861)
- Ateneo de la Juventud (1910)
- Cristero War (1926-1929)
- Sandino in Nicaragua (1927-1933)
- Banana Massacre (1928)
- Brazilian Revolution of 1930 – Getulio Vargas
- Bolivian Civil War – David Toro (1930s)
- 1948 Costa Rican Civil War
- Puerto Rican Revolution (1950)
- Cuban Revolution (1895 and 1959)
- Augusto Pinochet and Chile (1973)
- Salvador Allende's Reforms in Socialist Chile (1970s)
- 1994 Zapatista Rebellion