

The 2022 National History Day theme asks you to think about how disagreements and attempts to reach compromise have impacted people, places, ideas, and events in the past. **Although you are not required to discuss both theme words, you should look for both debate and diplomacy in your topic, and discuss both ideas if they are present.**

- **Debate** is a discussion between people or groups in which they express different opinions about something.
- **Diplomacy** is the work of maintaining good relationships between the governments of different countries or people through discussion and compromise.

Topics connected to politics, warfare, and relationships between countries will naturally fit this year's theme. Any topic, however, that involves different points of view could also connect: civil rights, labor activism, scientific achievements, artistic movements, and much more! Examine the outcomes of your topic to figure out its successes, failures, or consequences.

Debate and diplomacy can connect to a wide range of topics. It is important to find a topic that **you are interested in** and want to learn about more. We recommend your topic be at least twenty years in the past so you can see both the short and long-term impact in history.

What Was the Debate?

Debate involves **an argument, disagreement, or discussion between two or more sides**. Debate can happen in a formal meeting, like a presidential debate or a trial in court. Debate may also happen without any organized meeting or conversation. Think about how different points of view have been argued through newspaper editorials, works of literature or art, protests, and more. For your topic, first think about the main issue. What were the different sides? How did they communicate their opinions?

- *In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, [Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. DuBois debated](#) through their writings how best to challenge racial discrimination and achieve economic success for African Americans. Washington argued for economic independence through industrial and farming trades. DuBois called for Black-led political activism to bring about social change.*

Did Diplomacy Happen?

Diplomacy is **how governments or groups of people work together to maintain relationships and solve problems**. They use communication and negotiation to find solutions or avoid violence. In your topic, did different sides work together to find common ground? Were all groups invited to the table, or was power shared equally by all sides? Did they reach a solution, or did they fail? **Remember:** Refusing to work together, or a lack of diplomacy, can also have consequences.

- *In 1977, eight Minnesota women known as [the Willmar 8](#) went on strike and filed a lawsuit in protest of gender discrimination at Citizens National Bank. Although bank management failed to fulfill the negotiated agreement to rehire the women in exchange for ending the strike, the strikers became an inspiration for later women's rights activists demanding better treatment in their workplaces.*

What Changed? Successes, Failures, Compromises

So what? For every History Day project, you need a historical argument, or **thesis, that shows your topic's impact in history**. The impact of your topic can be positive, negative, or a mixture of both. It can have local, national, or international effects. Use the second half of the theme - successes, failures, consequences - to think about how the topic changed history. What happened in the short *and* long-term? Was the impact felt equally by all? Was the conflict resolved through diplomacy, or does the debate continue today?

- *The [Treaty of Paris](#) was the agreement signed in 1783 to officially end the Revolutionary War between Great Britain and the United States. The treaty was a negotiation between several countries and skewed in favor of the United States. Many of the agreements were later reversed or changed with new treaties, except for the one that declared the independence of the United States.*

Have You Considered Different Points of View?

By definition, debate and diplomacy involve *at least* two sides of an issue. Even on the same side of an issue, however, there will be different opinions and ideas. We know it is impossible to research and present *every* individual person's point of view within a History Day project. We do expect, however, that you will **think about a variety of perspectives of those involved in or impacted by your topic**. Be sure to think about not only those individuals or groups who held power. Were there groups or individuals who were not part of the decision-making process?

- *In 1871, the United States government debated and passed the [Indian Appropriations Act](#), without input or discussion from a single American Indian nation. The Act ended treaty diplomacy with American Indian nations, disregarding their status as sovereign nations. This was a first step toward U.S. assimilation policies, such as the Dawes Act of 1887 and the Nelson Act of 1889.*