

NATIONAL HISTORY DAY 2022

# Debate & Diplomacy in History

SUCCESSES, FAILURES,  
CONSEQUENCES



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# What Is National History Day<sup>®</sup>?



National History Day (NHD) is a nonprofit organization that creates opportunities for teachers and students to engage in historical research. NHD is not a predetermined, by-the-book program but rather an innovative curriculum framework. Students learn history by selecting topics of interest and launching into year-long research projects. The mission of NHD is to improve the teaching and learning of history in middle and high school. The most visible vehicle is the NHD Contest.

When studying history through historical research, students and teachers practice critical inquiry, asking questions of significance, time, and place. History students become immersed in a detective story. Beginning in the fall, students choose a topic related to the annual theme and conduct extensive primary and secondary research. After analyzing and interpreting their sources and drawing conclusions about their topics' significance in history, students present their work in original papers, exhibits, performances, websites, or documentaries. These projects are entered into competitions in the spring at local, affiliate, and national levels, where professional historians and educators evaluate them. The program culminates at the national competition held each June at the University of Maryland at College Park.

Each year, National History Day uses a theme to provide a lens through which students can examine history. The annual theme frames the research for students and teachers alike. It is intentionally broad enough to allow students to select topics from any place (local, national, or world) and any period in history. Once students choose their topics, they investigate historical context, historical significance, and the topic's relationship to the theme by researching in libraries, archives, and museums and by visiting historic sites.

NHD benefits both students and teachers. It enables students to control their learning. For example, students select topics that match their interests. NHD provides program expectations and guidelines for students, but the research journey is unique to each project. Throughout the year, students develop essential life skills by fostering intellectual curiosity. Through this process, they develop critical-thinking and problem-solving skills to manage and use information now and in the future.

The classroom teacher is a student's greatest ally in the research process. NHD supports teachers by providing instructional materials and hosting workshops at local, affiliate, and national levels. Many teachers find that incorporating the NHD model into their classroom curriculum encourages students to watch for examples of the theme and to identify connections in their study of history across time.

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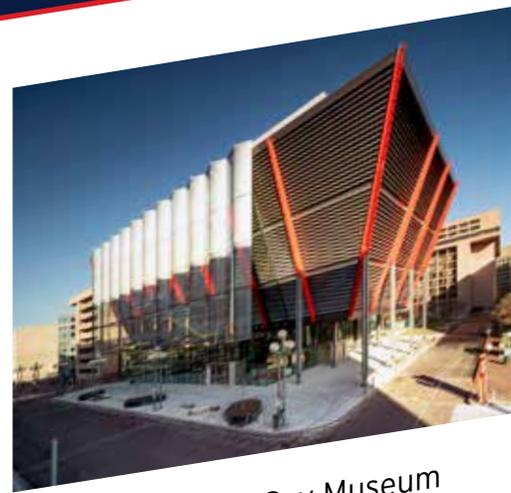
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# 2022 Theme Narrative: *Debate & Diplomacy in History: Successes, Failures, Consequences*

ASHLEY FOLEY DABBRACCIO, Program Assistant, National History Day®

Throughout the 2021–2022 academic year, National History Day (NHD) students will explore the theme of *Debate & Diplomacy in History: Successes, Failures, Consequences*. Some topics might be stories of debate and diplomacy, while others might cover debate with little diplomatic effort or diplomacy without debate. Students must investigate to determine whether one or both of those themes are present in their narrative.

Think of debate and diplomacy as a chess game. Several pieces are on the board, each with its unique talents and abilities. Some moves are aggressive and designed to advance the player one step closer to checkmate. Other actions involve the sacrifice of certain game pieces to advance.

**Debates** are formal or informal meetings where people argue opposing views. Some debates involve two sides, while others involve three (or more) perspectives.

**Diplomacy** usually involves negotiating, compromising, and communicating with people or nations to find a nonviolent solution. Debate and diplomacy can occur independently or be intertwined. Can diplomacy lead to new debates? Can debates lack diplomacy?

Students must also consider the successes, failures, and consequences of debates or diplomatic exchanges. Were they successful, and for how long? Did they fail to resolve the issues or have unintended consequences? It is important to consider the short-term and long-term impact of different events or exchanges on history. Students need to determine the legacies and consequences, good and bad, of the debates and diplomatic actions they choose. They must ask questions about successes, failures, and consequences to drive analysis. What do we consider a successful debate or diplomatic endeavor? Can a failure turn into a success or vice versa?

In the study of debate and diplomacy, key moments stand out, such as the Iran-Contra Affair (1985–1987), the Lincoln-Douglas debates (1858), or U.S. neutrality during the Great War (1914–1918). But what other instances of debate and diplomacy have defined international relationships, brokered or ended peace, and helped us better understand the past?

Consider the many different topics surrounding the Cold War (1947–1991). The Cold War exposed many social and cultural issues in the Soviet Union and the United States. Students might explore the Berlin Blockade (1948-1949), the Cold War's first crisis. Soviet Premier Josef Stalin blocked U.S., French, and British railway, road, and water access into West Berlin, hoping the western powers would surrender the city. What was the initial impact of this action? How might the events have launched the U.S. and its allies into another war? How did this crisis affect the diplomatic relationship between western powers and the Soviet Union? Students might explore other Cold War topics such as the Truman Doctrine (1947), the Korean War (1950-1953), the Kitchen Debates (1959), or the Cuban Missile Crisis (1962). Who was involved? Were these events instances of successful diplomacy, or were they diplomatic failures? How did their success or failure affect the relationship between the Western and Eastern blocs during the Cold War?



The 1948 political cartoon showed Josef Stalin seated on a table marked “Berlin Chess Game.” Stalin attempted to remove western influence in West Berlin, an area situated in communist East Germany. Truman’s and Stalin’s actions were depicted as a game of chess between two nations vying for dominance. ©Okefenokee Glee & Perloo, Inc. Used with permission.



Consider the history of the Middle East. One example was the creation of the State of Israel in 1948. How were diplomatic relationships carried out in the area? What role did the United States and Great Britain play? What were the long-term consequences for Israel? For diplomacy in the region? Or, students might be curious about the 1973 Arab-Israeli War and subsequent peace negotiations. What happened, and how did it impact the United States and other nations? What effect did these diplomatic relations have on the world economy?



United States' support of Israel during the Arab-Israeli War led to an oil embargo. As a result, Americans experienced a gasoline shortage that led to rationing and an economic crisis relating to high prices, 1973. Courtesy of the Library of Congress (2003677600).

Students might examine debate and diplomacy in colonial and revolutionary American history. Perhaps they might want to research the Carlisle Peace Commission, a group of British peace negotiators who traveled to the United States in 1778 in an attempt at reconciliation with the colonies. After their failures at the Battle of Saratoga, the British feared an American victory. The American alliance with France concerned them. Students might explore the events surrounding the Carlisle Peace Commission negotiations. What did the British offer the American colonists? What was the colonists' response? Was this a diplomatic success for the American colonists or the British? What was gained by Great Britain recognizing the negotiation power of the Second Continental Congress?

Or, students might be interested in studying some of the prominent social reformers of the 1830s and 1840s who engaged in numerous debates, hoping to change the United States for the better. Dorothea Dix advocated for prison and mental health reform. Legendary showman P. T. Barnum was a temperance advocate and prohibitionist. David Walker, the son of an enslaved father and a free mother, was a writer and anti-slavery activist. Educator Catherine Beecher promoted educational rights for women. The Lowell Mill Girls fought for labor reform for textile workers. What arguments did these people make in trying to persuade people to support their causes? How did these debates impact the United States' policies and laws?

Consider socio-political movements, such as women's rights. Students might explore the internal debates within these movements. Not all women have agreed, at any point in time, about what they wanted. How did an older generation of women who fought for the right to vote feel about the "New Woman" of the 1920s? What about women's movements of the 1960s and 1970s? How did the words of Gloria Steinem compare to those of Phyllis Schlafly? What was the role of African American or Asian American women in the women's movement? What challenges did women such as Ida B. Wells-Barnett, Anna Julia Cooper, and Mabel Ping-Hua Lee face inside the women's movement that led to debates over the definitions of race and womanhood?

The Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) is another example of how failed debates or diplomatic blunders may return later. The ERA, first proposed by Alice Paul and Crystal Eastman in 1923, revealed debates of women's legal rights. What legal rights did women hope to secure? What happened that resulted in fewer than the required number of states ratifying the ERA? The ERA was reintroduced in 1972, but once again, it failed to earn the necessary 38 state ratifications. Why do specific debates continue to reappear? How do they change over time or reflect new challenges?

Students interested in civil rights might investigate the role women played in the movement. Consider debates that occurred between African American women and their male counterparts. How did this affect and shape the movement? For instance, Ella Baker, a major proponent of the Civil Rights Movement, fought sexism in both the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC).<sup>1</sup> What were the results of these debates? Baker eventually left to help organize and advise the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). What influence did she have on the Civil Rights Movement?



Ella Baker served as an activist from the 1930s to 1980s, working in several major organizations. Her papers are archived at the New York Public Library's Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture. Courtesy of the Library of Congress (94504496).

1 Other Black women have come forth to discuss the challenges they faced as part of the Civil Rights Movement. For more stories, visit the Civil Rights History Project at the Library of Congress: <https://www.loc.gov/collections/civil-rights-history-project/>.

Students might be fascinated by the first televised political debate between Senator John Kennedy and Vice President Richard Nixon on September 26, 1960. What can we learn from this debate? Those who watched the televised debate had different reactions than those who heard it on the radio. Did this new format of debate change the outcome of the 1960 election? Since then, what role has television played in political debates?

How does the theme of *Debate & Diplomacy in History: Successes, Failures, Consequences* fit local history? In 1955, the U.S. Department of Commerce sparked local debates in Memphis, Tennessee, when it released its interstate highway plan. This plan would run six lanes of I-40 straight through Overton Park in the Midtown area of Memphis. Did local organizations protest or support the placement of the interstate? What impact did the highway have on residents, particularly the African American community? How did the debates around public transportation and green space lead to changes in Memphis? How does this story lend itself to discussions of race in the twentieth century?



The Citizens to Preserve Overton Park achieved its goal to block the interstate expansion in the area, to the detriment of the neighboring black community of Binghampton. Today, Overton Park contains the Memphis Brooks Museum of Art, the Memphis Zoo, the Memphis College of Art, Rainbow Lake, Veterans Plaza, and Levitt Shell across 342 acres of green space. Courtesy of the Digital Archives of Memphis Public Libraries.

2026 marks the 250th anniversary of the establishment of the United States as an independent nation. Together with the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), National History Day is working to promote and encourage students to explore the history of the nation and how we continuously strive to create “a more perfect union” for all Americans. Numerous subjects relating to the American Revolution and the Early Republic would make strong topics for this year’s theme. To learn more about the partnership, please visit [nhd.org/250](https://nhd.org/250).

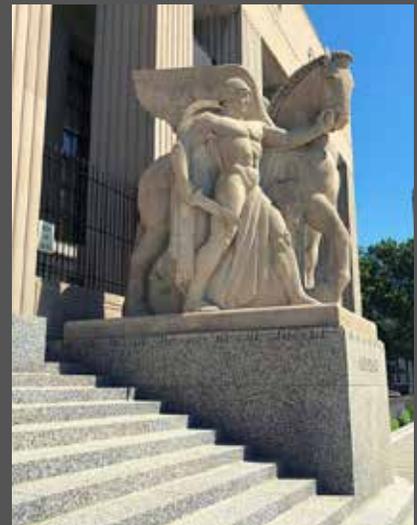
Think again about that chessboard. Each move is meant to take the player one step closer to checkmate. Sometimes players have to make sacrifices. Sometimes they miscalculate or make mistakes. These decisions have an impact on the outcome of the game. Debate and diplomacy face similar issues. Sometimes we succeed. Sometimes we fail. By exploring these themes, we learn to see how these exchanges have changed the course of history and how they affect us today.

**To access more theme resources, including our 2022 theme video and graphic organizer, go to [nhd.org/themebook](https://nhd.org/themebook).**

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# Tools of Diplomacy, Symbols of Understanding

JANE CARPENTER-ROCK, Ph.D., Deputy Director for Museum Content,  
National Museum of American Diplomacy

**“... I do believe the right symbol at the correct time can add warmth or needed edge to a relationship.”**

**Madeleine Albright, 64<sup>th</sup> United States Secretary of State<sup>1</sup>**

For centuries, the practice of diplomacy has built relationships between people and nations by establishing communication channels and mutual understanding. Although the relationships may shift over time based on domestic and global considerations, diplomats always maintain these relationships. As former Secretary of State George Shultz famously said of diplomacy, “If you have a garden and you want to see things flourish, you have to tend to it.”<sup>2</sup>

That is what diplomats do. They perform the critical task of cultivating relationships with foreign counterparts through skillfully selected words, tools, and actions. But when words fail due to language differences, time constraints, physical distance, or intractable disagreements, nations sometimes communicate through carefully selected symbols. The 2022 National History Day® (NHD) theme, *Debate & Diplomacy in History: Successes, Failures, Consequences*, gives students the opportunity to explore the collections of the National Museum of American Diplomacy (NMAD). By examining objects from NMAD’s collection, this article will shed light on the practice of diplomacy and how diplomats have resiliently deployed symbols as tools of international understanding, particularly when traditional diplomacy fails.

## WHAT IS A DIPLOMAT?

A diplomat is a person who represents his or her country to other countries. Diplomats study foreign languages and cultures so they can effectively communicate the desires of their government. Most American diplomats work for the U.S. Department of State (State Department), which was established as the nation’s first cabinet agency in 1789 to serve as the diplomatic arm of the U.S. government. The State Department continues to lead the United States in its relations with foreign governments, people, and international organizations. It promotes and

protects the American people’s security and prosperity and carries out international priorities, or foreign policy, of the United States.

From the earliest years of the republic, American diplomats shaped our nation’s history and the global landscape. They continue to do so today by deploying a wide range of skills and tools to achieve results.

## “AN UNPARALLELED SERPENT”: SECRETARY ALBRIGHT’S PINS

After the U.S.-led coalition successfully repelled Iraqi forces from neighboring Kuwait during the 1990–1991 Gulf War, Madeleine Albright, as United States Ambassador to the United Nations (UN), took the lead. She held Iraq and its leader, Saddam Hussein, accountable and told them to comply with UN weapons inspections. Ambassador Albright routinely, both publicly and privately, criticized Hussein’s lack of action and called for resolutions sanctioning Iraq. For her actions, the government-controlled Iraqi media began targeting her, eventually publishing a poem in Arabic insulting Albright, calling her an “unparalleled serpent.”



Madeleine Albright’s Serpent Pin, c. 1860; designer unknown (U.S.); gold, diamond. Courtesy of *Read My Pins: The Madeleine Albright Collection*.

1 Madeleine Albright, *Read My Pins: Stories from a Diplomat’s Jewel Box* (New York: Harper Collins, 2009), 20.

2 Neil A Lewis, “Reporter’s Notebook: Shultz in His ‘Garden,’” *The New York Times*, June 26, 1987; 2. For an interview with Secretary George Shultz, see James E. Goodby, “Groundbreaking Diplomacy: An Interview with George Shultz,” American Foreign Service Association, updated December 2016, accessed December 31, 2020. <https://www.afsa.org/groundbreaking-diplomacy-interview-george-shultz>.

In October 1994, before a meeting with Iraqi officials, Albright decided to wear an antique pin of a snake coiled around a branch, silently demonstrating her knowledge of and displeasure with the insult. The gesture went unnoticed during the meeting, but upon exiting, a reporter familiar with the poem asked her if there was a connection. Albright responded, “It was just my way of sending a message.”<sup>3</sup> The news media and foreign counterparts around the world began to “read” Madeleine Albright’s pins. Her use of pins became a well-known example of objects sending effective diplomatic messages.

After serving as the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, Albright became the 64<sup>th</sup> United States Secretary of State, serving from 1997 until 2001 under President Bill Clinton. In this role, she managed U.S. foreign policy and demonstrated a masterful command of diplomatic skills and tools to “persuade others to do what we want or, better yet, to want what we want.”<sup>4</sup> Diplomatic tools can include official statements, bilateral and multilateral meetings, technical cooperation, and citizen exchanges.<sup>5</sup> As Albright has said, “a president or secretary of state has a range of tools that includes military force at one end of the spectrum and words and reason at the other. In between are such instruments as diplomacy, economic sanctions, foreign aid, and trade.”<sup>6</sup> Some tools are visible to the public, and others are not. Some are traditional, and others are more innovative.

Diplomatic skills can be grouped into three broad categories: relational, informational, and operational.

- › **Relational skills** involve the capacity to build relationships by listening and responding, collaborating, and leading people.
- › **Informational skills** involve the processing of data by absorbing, analyzing, and effectively sharing information.
- › **Operational skills** involve the ability to achieve mission objectives through the efficient management of resources, dedicated advocacy, and the resilience to adapt to changing realities.

These skills are used in concert to ensure clear communication, optimal situational awareness, strategic innovation, and deft negotiation. Diplomats must consider all the skills and tools at their disposal and carefully select the best-suited combination for the circumstances. Words are often the most effective diplomatic tools, but symbols can speak volumes when words are not possible.

What is a diplomat? For more information about diplomats’ roles at home and abroad, please visit NMAD’s educational resource page at [diplomacy.state.gov/education-program-mission-vision/education-resources/](https://diplomacy.state.gov/education-program-mission-vision/education-resources/).

To learn more about Madeleine Albright as Secretary of State, please visit NMAD’s online exhibit, *A High Honor: Women Secretaries of State* [diplomacy.state.gov/explore-online-exhibits/herdiplomacy/a-high-honor-secretaries-of-state/](https://diplomacy.state.gov/explore-online-exhibits/herdiplomacy/a-high-honor-secretaries-of-state/).

## ESTABLISHING THE SYMBOL OF A NEW NATION: THE GREAT SEAL

After signing the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776, members of the Continental Congress quickly sent copies to European nations, who translated the document into many languages. The drafters understood the Declaration’s importance as a foreign policy document. For the new government to have legitimacy, other countries needed to recognize its independence. As John Adams later wrote, the Declaration was “. . . a formal and solemn announcement to the world, that the colonies had ceased to be dependent communities, and had become free and independent States.”<sup>7</sup> This formal proclamation demonstrated that the United States intended to join the world as a sovereign nation.

Check out the National Museum of American Diplomacy’s YouTube channel. You can learn more about the Declaration of Independence as a foreign policy document [www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_zjT5gFYcNY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_zjT5gFYcNY).

On that same day in July 1776, members of the Continental Congress also recognized the need for a formal symbol to represent the nation, a seal to be affixed to official documents, much like other sovereign nations. They passed a resolution tasking Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, and Thomas Jefferson to develop “a device for a seal for the United States of America.”<sup>8</sup> They, and later other members of the U.S. Congress, proposed many different designs,

3 Albright, *Read My Pins*, 17.

4 Albright, *Read My Pins*, 20.

5 Multilateral refers to a meeting or organization that involves more than two nations (which would be bilateral). International organizations, such as the United Nations, the World Trade Organization, and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, are multilateral. For definitions of these and other diplomatic terms, see our Diplomatic Dictionary at <https://diplomacy.state.gov/discover-diplomacy/diplomatic-dictionary/>.

6 Albright, *Read My Pins*, 20.

7 “The Great Seal,” U.S. Department of State, accessed December 22, 2020. <https://diplomacy.state.gov/explore-online-exhibits/the-great-seal/>.

8 “The Great Seal,” U.S. Department of State.

and six years passed before they selected one. In 1782, Secretary of the Continental Congress Charles Thomson proposed the seal design that we know today. It featured an eagle clasp ing an olive branch in its right talon and arrows in its left—olive branches representing the power of peace and arrows representing the power of war. Then, as today, the eagle always casts its gaze toward the olive branch, signifying that our nation desires to pursue peace first but stands ready to defend itself in war.<sup>9</sup>

In honor of the 13 original states, the number 13 figures prominently in the design. The eagle holds 13 arrows, and the shield on the eagle's breast has 13 stripes. A constellation above the head of the eagle has 13 stars, and the motto "*E Pluribus Unum*" (out of many, one) emblazoned on the scroll clenched in the eagle's beak expresses the union of the states.

### ESTABLISHING THE SYMBOL OF A NEW NATION: THE GREAT SEAL

For more information on the history of the Great Seal and how it relates to diplomacy, please view NMAD's *Diplomacy Classroom: The Great Seal* program on YouTube: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=g8GjkYtFSW8&t=36s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g8GjkYtFSW8&t=36s).



The original design of the Great Seal of the United States. Courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration.

Overall, the seal symbolizes our country's strength, unity, and independence. Now called the Great Seal of the United States, it has become a unique symbol of our national identity—the fingerprint of our nation. Only one authorized Great Seal is in official use by the U.S. government at any given time. Housed at the Department of State, officials use this die to emboss the symbol on over 3,000 official documents, including treaties, each year. The image of the Great Seal can also be found on other items, such as U.S. passports and the one-dollar bill.<sup>10</sup> Best typified by the eagle's image, the Great Seal communicates the founders' beliefs and values as ascribed to the new nation. It is an enduring symbol of understanding that is synonymous with the United States and recognized worldwide.

Students might look at other famous symbols and how they have been employed as tools of diplomacy—for instance, the U.S. flag or the Statue of Liberty. Students can ask how symbols have shaped relationships across history.

### NAVIGATING THE BARBARY PIRATE CRISIS: THE PASSPORT

American diplomacy grew as the nation grew and more Americans sought to conduct trade and travel around the world. Protecting the security and prosperity of citizens abroad was paramount then, as it is today. American diplomacy has always sought creative solutions to intractable problems, and its diplomats labor to find the most effective vehicles of understanding. For example, there was the challenge of securing travel on the high seas in the eighteenth century. Before American independence, colonists seeking to conduct international trade by sea either had to provide their own security or seek the British Navy's protection. Seaborne trade was dangerous, often subject to rampant piracy. However, after independence, British protection ceased. The Barbary pirates posed an early threat to American security and prosperity.

The Barbary pirates were a mix of independent and government-hired corsairs who operated from the North African Barbary States and used kidnapping and robbery as a revenue source between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries. Corsairs were privateers, or sailors who acted as state agents and captured foreign ships. They were allowed to keep a percentage of the spoils while the rest went to local governments or sponsors. The pirates were a constant threat to merchants doing business across the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea. Americans without

<sup>9</sup> "The Great Seal of the United States," U.S. Department of State, updated July 2003, accessed December 22, 2020. <https://2009-2017.state.gov/documents/organization/27807.pdf>.

<sup>10</sup> "The Great Seal," U.S. Department of State.

protection were often robbed, captured, and compelled to personally pay enormous sums of money or face years in captivity. Without a strong navy to protect U.S. commercial interests, or a line item in the national budget to pay tributes (fees) or offer sums to release the hostages, American diplomats and their negotiation skills were the United States' only recourse.

### HISTORICAL SIMULATIONS

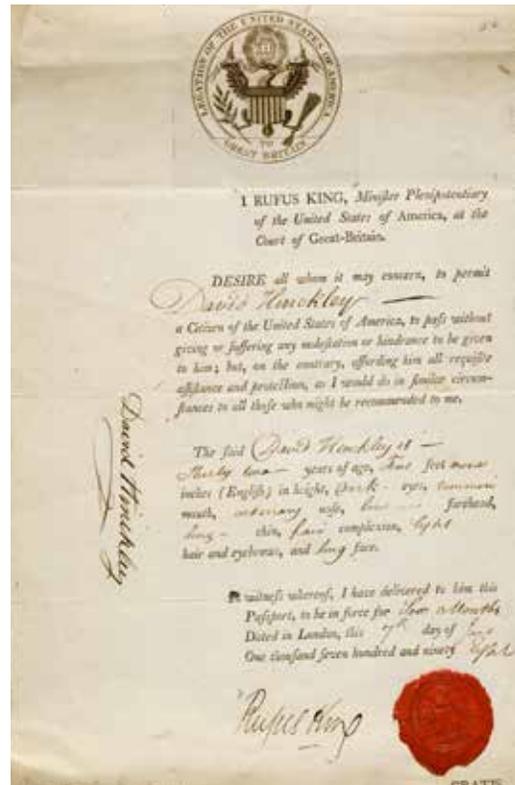
Please see NMAD's engaging classroom historical diplomacy simulation, *The Barbary Pirates Hostage Crisis: Negotiating Tribute and Trade*, which invites students to explore this event more fully. Teachers may use this simulation in their classrooms to introduce the notion of diplomacy, the skills diplomats use in their work, and what was at stake for the U.S. during this time. Other historical diplomacy simulations include *The Spanish-American War: Treaties and Self-Determination* and *The Suez Canal Crisis: National Sovereignty versus International Access to Waterways*. Learn more at [diplomacy.state.gov/discover-diplomacy/about/class-materials/](https://diplomacy.state.gov/discover-diplomacy/about/class-materials/).

For years, U.S. diplomats sought a solution through treaty negotiations with the Barbary States—Tripoli, Algiers, and Tunis, semi-autonomous states under the Ottoman Empire. Negotiation is an essential diplomatic skill that requires patience and flexibility. The negotiations tested U.S. diplomacy as there was no consensus on how best to solve the problem. As the nation's first Secretary of State, Thomas Jefferson strongly opposed paying exorbitant tribute for the right to trade freely in the Mediterranean Sea. He wanted to establish a U.S. Navy, end negotiations, and find a military solution to the problem. President George Washington and Vice President John Adams disagreed with him and instructed diplomats to negotiate an annual tribute and a sum to release the American hostages. Ultimately, Jefferson resigned, and Washington and Adams' position prevailed. The U.S. signed fragile treaties with the Barbary States in 1795 and 1797, but they came at a high cost.<sup>11</sup>

Once the treaties took effect, they often failed to protect traveling Americans. Since international communication was slow and unreliable, some corsairs were not aware of the treaties. Neither the United States nor the Barbary States ever fully abided by the treaties' stipulations. Even if some corsairs were aware of the treaties, it was difficult for the merchants to prove their U.S. citizenship. Short of carrying

copies of the treaties themselves, travelers needed another layer of protection. Thus, the practice of carrying a passport became necessary for some, though it was not yet mandatory for international travel. For one who needed it, the passport became a safeguard—a tangible object that verified the carrier's identity and nationality, representing the U.S. government and its treaties. It was a vehicle of mutual understanding that became an essential tool of diplomacy.

An early passport example from NMAD's collection is the 1798 document issued to David Hinckley by Rufus King, the American minister to Great Britain.<sup>12</sup> Hinckley was a wealthy Boston merchant who frequently traveled to London on business. Captured by Barbary corsairs in the early 1790s, he endured enslavement and hard labor for two years. After his release in 1798, Hinckley returned to his life as a merchant, frequently traveling from Boston to London. Understandably nervous, he ensured he had an official U.S. government passport on his person.



This 1798 passport issued to David Hinckley by Rufus King, the American minister to Great Britain, is the oldest passport in the museum's collection. Courtesy of the National Museum of American Diplomacy.

11 The Barbary Treaties (1786–1816) have been transcribed as part of Yale University's Avalon Project and can be accessed at [https://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th\\_century/bar1796t.asp](https://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/bar1796t.asp).

12 Rufus King was an American lawyer, politician, and diplomat. He was a delegate for Massachusetts to the Continental Congress and the Philadelphia Convention and was one of the signers of the 1787 United States Constitution. He was first appointed minister to Great Britain in 1796, then again in 1825. His papers have been digitized and are available for review at HathiTrust Digital Library: <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/yale.39002012604642>.

Hinckley's passport contained the seal of the "Legation of the United States of America to Great Britain," which incorporates the Great Seal of the United States.<sup>13</sup> Only an official government representative could apply the Great Seal. This seal gave the document a weighty authority. It was also a visual symbol of the U.S. government meant to be recognizable even for those who could not speak or read English. The symbol of the eagle became synonymous with the United States.

The diplomatic wording of the passport served as a personal entreaty from Minister King:

Desire all whom it may concern, to permit David Hinckley, a citizen of the United States of America, to pass without giving or suffering any molestation or hinderance [sic] to be given to him; but, on the contrary, affording him all requisite assistance and protection, as I would do in similar circumstance to all those who might be recommended to me.<sup>14</sup>

The passport was a proxy standing in for Minister King and his government's authority. The document described Hinckley as 32 years old, five foot nine, with "dark" eyes, a "common" mouth, an "ordinary" nose, "light" hair, and a "long" face. Hinckley's signature ran along the left-hand side. All of these details enhanced the credibility of the passport and verified the bearer's identity. The final flourish was a red wax impression of the Great Seal of the United States. King made a meticulous effort to convey the authenticity and authority of the U.S. government. Altogether, the passport became an effective tool of diplomacy that continues to today.

Hinckley's passport and the late eighteenth century treaties were only temporary solutions to the Barbary pirate dilemma. When Thomas Jefferson became president, he eventually began building the U.S. Navy and fought two Barbary Wars (1801–1815). These actions extended American security and prosperity.

The National Archives and Records Administration has digitized U.S. passport application records from 1795–1925. In these records, students can explore who requested passports, how applicants are described, and how and when U.S. citizens planned to travel. Visit [archives.gov/research/genealogy/passports](https://www.archives.gov/research/genealogy/passports) to learn more.

## A FLOWERING U.S.-JAPAN RELATIONSHIP: THE PLATE

As we saw with Madeleine Albright's pins, diplomatic tools are not limited to official U.S. government documents such as treaties and passports. Sometimes they take the form of more mundane or decorative objects.

In 1913, the United States was a trusted friend of the nation of Japan. Just eight years prior, U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt helped broker a peaceful solution to ease Japanese tensions with Russia through the Treaty of Portsmouth (1905), for which he won the Nobel Peace Prize. In May 1906, the United States' diplomatic presence in Tokyo was elevated to the status of an embassy. In March 1912, the people of Japan sent 3,020 cherry blossom trees to the United States as a gift of mutual friendship, and those trees continue to represent the close ties between the United States and Japan today.

When President Woodrow Wilson took office in March 1913, he sought an ambassador to Japan to keep the critical bilateral relationship on an even keel while international tensions were mounting and Japanese domestic uncertainty was swirling. Wilson's selection of George W. Guthrie, the former mayor of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, was a winning choice.

Guthrie was accredited as U.S. Ambassador to Japan on May 20, 1913, and quickly gained the Japanese government's respect. He represented President Wilson and the American people at the funeral of Empress Shōken, the Dowager Empress of Japan and widow of Emperor Meiji, on April 7, 1914. He and his wife, Florence Howe Guthrie, continued to successfully navigate the consequential bilateral relationship and the complex Japanese social milieu with skill. As a crowning achievement, the Guthries represented the United States at the historic coronation of Emperor Taisho in November 1915. Taisho's coronation was a spectacular affair attended by over 2,000 guests, including world leaders. Taisho's short reign included policies congenial to western powers, especially to the United States. For Guthrie, this was a favorable period.

As war spread into Asia and the Pacific in 1914 and as President Wilson attempted to maintain neutrality, Guthrie used his diplomatic skill of relationship-building to retain trust. The Japanese government was increasingly unhappy with Japanese immigrants' unfair treatment in California and the U.S. government's attempts to contain Japan's encroachment on territories in China.<sup>15</sup>

13 Legations were diplomatic foreign missions headed by diplomats with the rank of minister. As the United States expanded its global influence in the twentieth century, legations became embassies headed by ambassadors, a higher rank than minister. The first American diplomat to be awarded the rank of ambassador was Thomas Bayard, Ambassador to Great Britain, in 1893.

14 "David Hinckley," passport, June 7, 1798, National Museum of American Diplomacy. <https://diplomacy.state.gov/u-s-diplomacy-stories/passports-for-protection/>.

15 "Japanese-American Relations at the Turn of the Century, 1900–1922," U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian, accessed December 22, 2020. <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1899-1913/japanese-relations>.

Guthrie's secret weapon was his wife, Florence. As the daughter of a prominent Pennsylvania politician, Florence was a skilled and politically savvy hostess. She understood the power of gracious entertaining and setting the stage for intimate dinners to facilitate frank conversation.

One example of Florence's skillful blend of social grace with political understanding is a porcelain plate she commissioned while posted in Japan for use during official events at the ambassador's residence. The decorative plate, in the collection of the National Museum of American Diplomacy, speaks volumes. The design includes a stylized but unmistakable eagle from the Great Seal, representing the United States. It also features Japanese decorative elements, including temples and festoons of Japanese flowers, such as peonies and cherry blossoms. In light of the 1912 gift of cherry blossom trees from Japan to the United States, the intertwined blooms evoked that symbol of friendship between the two nations for everyone who saw them. In this one plate, we can see the delicate balance between the national symbols of both countries.



Porcelain Plate with Decorative Great Seal used by U.S. Ambassador to Japan George Guthrie, 1917. Gift by Lynn and Richard Tucker. Courtesy of the National Museum of American Diplomacy.

For more information about the history of U.S. and Japan diplomatic relations, please see NMAD's online exhibit, *Japan's First Embassy to the United States*, [diplomacy.state.gov/diplomacyisourmission/japans-first-embassy/](https://diplomacy.state.gov/diplomacyisourmission/japans-first-embassy/).

The use of this plate was both practical and political, sending a potent message. It asserted individual national identity while also honoring and affirming a vital friendship and bond during a time of uncertainty. Nervous words were not necessary, just the reassuring quiet elegance of a meaningful plate. The plate stands as a powerful gesture that did its part to advance diplomacy, even if words and policies were in doubt.



Photograph of U.S. Ambassador George Wilkins Guthrie at a banquet in Japan in honor of U.S. Navy Admiral Albert Gustav Winterhalter, commander in chief of the U.S. Asiatic Fleet. Courtesy of the Library of Congress (2014700656).

Ambassador George Guthrie died unexpectedly in March 1917 while playing golf in Japan. It was an event that shocked and saddened both nations. The esteem the Japanese government had for the Guthries and the United States was evident in Japan's final gesture to the fallen diplomat. Not only did the Imperial family's representatives attend his funeral, but the Japanese government also provided a warship to transport Guthrie's body back to the United States. The Japanese Foreign Minister publicly expressed that Guthrie's death was an "unmeasurable loss" to Japan and that he had "done an incalculable service in promoting and cementing the closer friendship between the United States and Japan."<sup>16</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The National Museum of American Diplomacy offers several ways students can research topics related to this year's theme, *Debate & Diplomacy in History: Successes, Failures, Consequences*. For instance, our Diplomacy Simulation Program highlights for our audiences what diplomacy is and what diplomats do ([diplomacy.state.gov/discover-diplomacy/about/](https://diplomacy.state.gov/discover-diplomacy/about/)). Diplomats often find themselves in high-stakes talks, the results of which could have a huge

16 "Japan Honors Guthrie," *The Washington Post*, March 11, 1917: 12.

potential global impact. At the heart of their work are skills that we all exercise and apply. Inviting students to explore and research diplomatic history through the stories of diplomats and diplomacy—often revealed through primary sources, objects, and personal narratives—brings shared humanity into an often daunting subject ([diplomacy.state.gov/stories-of-diplomacy/](https://diplomacy.state.gov/stories-of-diplomacy/)).

The museum website offers an education page ([diplomacy.state.gov/education-program-mission-vision/education-resources/](https://diplomacy.state.gov/education-program-mission-vision/education-resources/)) that provides several resources for educators, including learning about

- › the practice of diplomacy, the role of the Secretary of State, and the U.S. Department of State;
- › geographic locations of U.S. embassies and consulates and their function; and
- › how diplomats use communication skills to advance the interests of the United States.

The education page also offers downloadable materials ([diplomacy.state.gov/discover-diplomacy/about/class-materials/](https://diplomacy.state.gov/discover-diplomacy/about/class-materials/)) for educators to facilitate an in-class diplomacy simulation. Students role-play as diplomats to solve a global crisis based on real-life challenges that diplomats face, such as refugees, wildlife trafficking, combating infectious diseases, and more. The site provides an instructional video for simulation facilitators along with expert diplomats explaining how they work on these global issues with their overseas counterparts. Invite your students to practice their twenty-first-century communication skills, and perhaps some will be inspired to pursue a career in diplomacy one day.

**To access more theme resources,  
go to [nhd.org/themebook](https://nhd.org/themebook).**

If your students are interested in exploring the history of diplomacy for their National History Day projects, we encourage you to consider the following moments in diplomatic history:

- Treaty of Paris (1783)
- Treaty of Mortefontaine (Convention of 1800)
- Louisiana Purchase (1803)
- Treaty of Ghent (1815)
- Treaties of Portage des Sioux (1815)
- Treaty of Wanghia (1844)
- The annexation of the Republic of Texas (1845)
- The Mexican-American War and the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo (1848)
- Treaty of Friendship with Hawaii (1849)
- Kanagawa Treaty (1854)
- Alaska Purchase (1867)
- Venezuela Affair (1895)
- Spanish-American War (1898)
- Panama Canal (1903)
- Treaty of Portsmouth (1905)
- Kellogg-Briand Pact (1928)
- Suez Canal Crisis (1956)
- Tet Offensive (1968)
- Treaty on Nonproliferation of Nuclear Weapons (1968)
- Paris Peace Accords (1973)
- Camp David Accords (1978)
- Iran Hostage Crisis (1979)
- Summer Olympics Boycott (1980)
- Chernobyl Explosion (1986)
- German Reunification (1990)
- Free Trade Area in the Americas (1994)
- End of South African Apartheid (1994)
- Dayton Accords (1995)

# Step in to the shoes of diplomats!



## Historical Simulations

As part of an Una Chapman Cox Foundation program to educate the public about American diplomacy and the Foreign Service, the National Museum of American Diplomacy, in partnership with National History Day and the Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media, has created three brand-new historical simulations for the classroom.

- THE BARBARY PIRATES HOSTAGE CRISIS: NEGOTIATING TRIBUTE AND TRADES
- THE SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR: TREATIES AND SELF-DETERMINATION
- THE SUEZ CANAL CRISIS: NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTY VERSUS INTERNATIONAL ACCESS TO WATERWAYS

Please visit [diplomacy.state.gov/discover-diplomacy/about/class-materials/](https://diplomacy.state.gov/discover-diplomacy/about/class-materials/) to learn more and download all materials.

# Exploring Debates in Labor History through the National Park System

ELEANOR MAHONEY, Ph.D., National Park Service Mellon Humanities Postdoctoral Fellow in the History of Labor and Productivity

**Of my city the worst that men will ever say is this:  
You took little children away from the sun and the dew,  
And the glimmers that played in the grass under the  
great sky,  
And the reckless rain; you put them between walls  
To work, broken and smothered, for bread and wages,  
To eat dust in their throats and die empty-hearted  
For a little handful of pay on a few Saturday nights.**

*“They Will Say” by Carl Sandburg*

When Carl Sandburg published his poem “They Will Say,” in 1916, the U.S. government estimated that some two million children under 16 worked in the country’s mines, mills, and factories, and on farms. As a labor reporter writing for local papers in Chicago, Sandburg witnessed firsthand the dangerous conditions faced by young people who toiled in the city’s streets and businesses. He also encountered the many activists and reformers who fought to end child labor, often through new laws and regulations. These efforts frequently faced hostility from employers, politicians, and the legal system. Ratifying and implementing any sort of labor protection proved difficult in industrializing America; indeed, it took until the 1930s for the federal government to enforce child labor protections. Even then, school-age children continued to work for wages, especially in agricultural settings.

The enactment of child labor laws offers one example of a historical debate over work regulation in the United States. Legislation governing the workplace, whether about wages, hours, or rules for health and safety, was hotly contested in U.S. history. So too have been the rights of workers to organize unions and bargain collectively. Job sites have long been a space of civil rights struggles, with diverse groups of workers mobilizing to challenge discrimination and bias.

Labor history offers students an excellent opportunity to explore the National History Day® (NHD) theme of *Debate & Diplomacy in History: Successes, Failures, Consequences* in all its complexity by considering the people, places, events, and actions that shaped when, where, and how Americans made a living. In the U.S. Congress, on a factory

floor, or along a picket line, workers, employers, and government officials have engaged in spirited debates over wages, hours, and other working conditions. Diplomacy has been essential to addressing these disputes, as contending groups seek to find common ground on a piece of legislation, a union contract, or a health and safety regulation. Exploring why some attempts to find agreement succeeded while others failed, and the consequences of these outcomes, is essential to understanding the history of work in the United States.

The National Park Service (NPS) preserves and protects many of the nationally significant places and resources that tell all Americans’ stories. Students interested in learning more about debate and diplomacy in labor and working-class history can do so at a variety of NPS units, as well as at partner locations, including National Heritage Areas. Some sites discuss the effects of early industrial development on workers’ lives and the surrounding community, including the natural environment. Other parks emphasize the union movement’s growth, including the history of strikes and other workplace actions. Struggles for civil rights at work can be examined in these spaces as well. Agricultural labor, domestic labor, and transportation, such as railroad and canal construction, are prominent themes within the NPS system.

At these places, debates from the past still have resonance today. Who is responsible if a worker is injured on the job? How has immigration shaped work sites? What is the best manner to regulate pollution from factories or farms? How many hours should there be in a workday? What role should the government play in union elections or strikes? How should sites of labor conflict or violence be marked? These questions have elicited various views and perspectives throughout U.S. history and could be ideal for examining potential subjects for NHD research centered on diplomacy and conflict resolution.

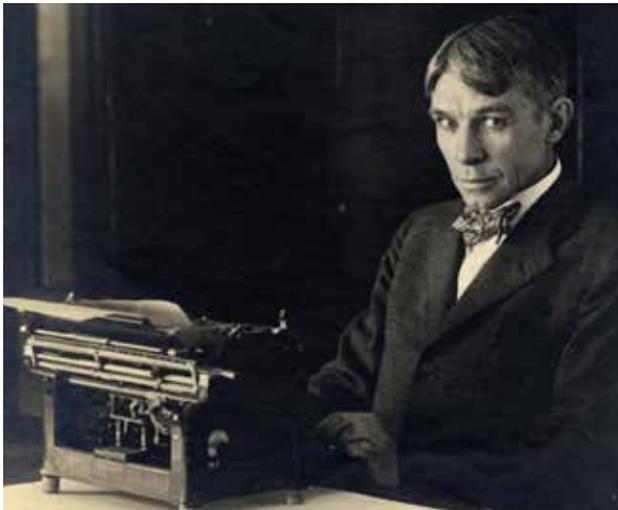
This article presents several examples of lesson plans and other materials created by NPS staff related to labor history. They were chosen to reflect a diversity of stories from NPS and partner sites. All can be connected to the NHD theme of *Debate & Diplomacy in History: Successes, Failures, Consequences*.

## CARL SANDBURG HOME NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE (NORTH CAROLINA)

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[nps.gov/carl/index.htm](https://nps.gov/carl/index.htm)

Known as the “Poet of the People,” Carl Sandburg chronicled working men and women’s lives in his publications and performances. Born in 1878 to Swedish immigrants, Sandburg left school at age 13 to help support his family. He later won numerous awards for his writing, which often documented the effects of industrialization and urbanization on the United States. Sandburg and his wife, Paula Steichen Sandburg, lived for over two decades at Connemara, a 245-acre farm in Flat Rock, North Carolina. The site is now part of the National Park System.



Carl Sandburg at his typewriter. Courtesy of the Carl Sandburg National Historic Site, National Park Service.

### PROBLEMS AND PERSPECTIVES

[nps.gov/teachers/classrooms/problems-and-perspectives-grades-9-12-carl-sandburg-home-nhs.htm](https://nps.gov/teachers/classrooms/problems-and-perspectives-grades-9-12-carl-sandburg-home-nhs.htm)

In this lesson, students examine debates over child labor drawn from early twentieth-century America. A collection of historic images generates discussion on the topic. Part of the lesson asks students to present the conflicting views (of children, elected officials, parents, employers, journalists, and social reformers) to one another in a debate format. Students interested in this topic could consider why it took so long for the U.S. federal government to address child labor and how reformers changed their strategies over time. Or, they might examine how reform advocates employed diplomacy to negotiate new protective legislation.

## KEWEENAW NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK (MICHIGAN)

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[nps.gov/kewe/index.htm](https://nps.gov/kewe/index.htm)

Michigan’s Keweenaw Peninsula is home to some of the most extensive copper deposits in the world. Indigenous peoples have been mining copper in the region for millennia, making beads, tools, and other items for use and trade. When Europeans arrived in the area, they learned of the copper resources from the Ojibwe people. In the mid-nineteenth century, new technology and increased demand led to a copper rush in northern Michigan. Boom and bust cycles followed, but the industry remained active for decades, enduring well into the twentieth century.

### STUDYING HISTORY: THE COPPER STRIKE OF 1913–1914

[nps.gov/kewe/learn/photosmultimedia/studying-history.htm](https://nps.gov/kewe/learn/photosmultimedia/studying-history.htm)

This video follows a middle-school student and a college professor as they learn about the history of an early twentieth-century strike by copper miners on the Keweenaw Peninsula, as well as the intense emotions the strike precipitated among residents. Some supported the decision to strike as the best means to improve their lives and livelihoods, while others worried about losing wages, health care, and company-owned housing. The film documents the student’s use of primary sources, including photographs, historic newspapers, and union and government records. It also examines the strike’s long-term consequences, which still resonate in the region today. Students interested in the history of copper mining can hear from the workers themselves by listening to interviews from the park’s extensive oral history collection. Watch and listen to excerpts provided through the “Working Wednesday” interview series at [nps.gov/kewe/learn/historyculture/working-wednesdays.htm](https://nps.gov/kewe/learn/historyculture/working-wednesdays.htm).



Strikers assembled during a 1913 strike in Michigan’s Keweenaw Peninsula. Courtesy of Keweenaw National Historical Park, National Park Service, Calumet & Hecla Inc. (007.01.03-001#086).

## NEW ORLEANS JAZZ NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK (LOUISIANA)

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[nps.gov/jazz/index.htm](https://nps.gov/jazz/index.htm)

Established to commemorate and share the story of jazz music, New Orleans Jazz National Historical Park hosts concerts, offers educational programming, and preserves sites and stories associated with the origins and growth of this distinctively American art form. Jazz had its roots in New Orleans and continues to shape the city and its residents today.

## FLAMBEAUX GLEAUX: THE NEW ORLEANS MARDI GRAS FLAMBEAUX STRIKE OF 1946

[nps.gov/teachers/classrooms/remembering-300-lesson-1.htm](https://nps.gov/teachers/classrooms/remembering-300-lesson-1.htm)

In this lesson, students learn about how collective action can support social change. They are asked to consider why workers mobilize together to support a cause and what approaches or tactics might be most effective in achieving a goal. Students also explore the ways debates over workplace issues, such as wages, might be connected to broader movements for justice and equality.

The focus is a 1946 strike by Flambeaux (torch carriers) in New Orleans. This workforce of African American men, many of them World War II veterans, carried flaming torches to light Mardi Gras parades. The Flambeaux, who were paid a flat rate of \$2.00 per march, asked for an increase to \$5.00, a demand rejected by march organizers. In response, the workers went on strike, leaving the parade routes dark during the 1946 Mardi Gras festivities. By 1947, march organizers hiked wages to \$4.00 per parade. Involvement in Mardi Gras events had long been shaped by race, gender, and social class, with the strike highlighting long-standing inequities.

## CÉSAR E. CHÁVEZ NATIONAL MONUMENT (CALIFORNIA)

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[nps.gov/cech/index.htm](https://nps.gov/cech/index.htm)

César E. Chávez led farm workers and supporters to establish the country's first permanent agricultural union, the United Farm Workers of America (UFW). His leadership brought sustained international attention to farmworkers and their families' conditions, including low wages, exposure to pesticides, and deteriorated housing. The National Monument preserves Chávez's home and final resting place. It is also the national headquarters of the UFW.



Portrait of César Chávez and his "Huelga" car taken during the Delano Grape Strike, J.D. Marlin Ranch, Tulare County, California, c. 1965. Courtesy of the Walter P. Reuther Library, Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Wayne State University.

## THE CÉSAR CHÁVEZ EDUCATOR TOOLKIT

[nps.gov/cech/learn/education/upload/CESAR\\_CHAVEZ\\_TOOLKIT\\_FINAL-DRAFT\\_4132016-508.pdf](https://nps.gov/cech/learn/education/upload/CESAR_CHAVEZ_TOOLKIT_FINAL-DRAFT_4132016-508.pdf)

This toolkit is a collection of lesson plans, classroom activity handouts, primary sources, technology-based activities, and resources for K-12 teachers. It provides educators with step-by-step guidance to design, implement, and deliver informative lessons about the life and work of César E. Chávez. Students will learn about the struggles faced by farmworkers and the organizing efforts of the UFW to improve working and living conditions. Many employers and politicians opposed the creation of a union for farm workers, and, in response, the UFW employed a variety of tactics to achieve the goal of collective bargaining. UFW members went on strike, promoted product boycotts, and held marches. Chávez and other union leaders also engaged in extensive talks with growers and lawmakers, negotiating complex contracts that necessitated finesse, grit, and determination.

## GATEWAY NATIONAL RECREATION AREA (NEW YORK AND NEW JERSEY)

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[nps.gov/gate/index.htm](https://nps.gov/gate/index.htm)

This park spans 27,000 acres from Sandy Hook, New Jersey, to Queens, New York. It protects a unique array of natural, historic, and recreational resources, including nesting areas for shorebirds, historic forts, public beaches, and land that served as New York City's first municipal airport. Designated by the U.S. Congress in 1972, Gateway National Recreation Area played an important part in expanding the presence of NPS in urban areas.

## WOMEN AT FLOYD BENNETT FIELD

[nps.gov/teachers/classrooms/women-at-floyd-bennett-field.htm](https://nps.gov/teachers/classrooms/women-at-floyd-bennett-field.htm)

During World War II, millions of American women took on new jobs, including those in defense industries and manufacturing. These experiences transformed their lives and society leading to debates over gender roles in the workplace and the home. What did the media, politicians, and diverse groups of women say about the changes? When the war ended, what options remained open to female workers? This teacher's guide includes materials that will introduce students to the World War II home front, emphasizing women and labor, highlighting both the opportunities and the conflicts generated by women's changing place in the workforce. It includes materials for reading, discussing, and reflecting on the biographies of four women who were employed at Floyd Bennett Field, now part of Gateway National Recreation Area.

### ROSIE THE RIVETER WWII HOME FRONT NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK (CALIFORNIA)

[nps.gov/rori/index.htm](https://nps.gov/rori/index.htm)

Interested in learning more about the experiences of diverse groups of women workers on the home front during World War II? The Rosie the Riveter World War II Home Front National Historical Park has produced an excellent film on the subject, *Home Front Heroes*, [nps.gov/rori/learn/photosmultimedia/park-films.htm](https://nps.gov/rori/learn/photosmultimedia/park-films.htm). The movie provides a comprehensive introduction to the World War II home front, explores the local story of the boomtown of Richmond, California, and features interviews with many "Rosies" and other home front workers.



Promotional photograph of "Rosie" Lawanda McLaird Stanley, who worked as a riveter at Lockheed's Burbank, California, plant and later at the Consolidated Vultee Aircraft Company. Courtesy of the National Park Service, Rosie the Riveter/WWII Home Front National Historic Park, RORI 1815\_b.

## LOWELL NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK (MASSACHUSETTS)

[nps.gov/lowe/index.htm](https://nps.gov/lowe/index.htm)

Lowell National Historical Park explores the long history of industrial development in the United States. It charts the rapid growth and then gradual waning of the textile industry in New England. The park preserves the physical landscape and technology of textile manufacturing as well as the human stories of factory work and community life. Visitors can learn about the experience of employment in a mill at different points in time and the actions workers took to improve their working conditions, such as the Lowell Mill Girl Strike of 1836.

### WHO POLLUTED THE MERRIMACK RIVER?

[nps.gov/teachers/classrooms/polluted\\_merrimack.htm](https://nps.gov/teachers/classrooms/polluted_merrimack.htm)

Labor and environmental history are closely intertwined. Industrial development and resource extraction can have tremendous and lasting impacts on the natural world. How are these effects measured, and who is responsible for clean-up and restoration? Since the first mills began operating in New England in the late eighteenth century, residents, mill owners, and workers have debated how pollution should be monitored and measured. These debates continue today, as individuals grapple with their impact on the environment. In this lesson plan, students learn about the Merrimack River in Massachusetts and consider how a community can identify and clean up harmful contaminants. Additional information on the river's history and on its links to the textile industry is available at [nps.gov/lowe/learn/historyculture/the-merrimack-river.htm](https://nps.gov/lowe/learn/historyculture/the-merrimack-river.htm).



Accumulated waste near a mill in early twentieth-century Lowell. Courtesy of Lowell National Historical Park, National Park Service.

### TEACHING ENGAGED CITIZENSHIP

[nps.gov/articles/series.htm?id=B7E731A8-B1AE-22FE-8EBAC94AEDB02C0B](https://nps.gov/articles/series.htm?id=B7E731A8-B1AE-22FE-8EBAC94AEDB02C0B)

This set of lesson plans introduces students to five key concepts in civics education, centered on the continual give-and-take of the legislative process. The topics are “Amending the Constitution,” “Federalism,” “The Judicial System,” “Voting Rights,” and “First Amendment Freedoms.” Students will consider how access to political power has changed over time and how Americans can affect decision-making at the local, state, and federal government levels.

among the most contentious pieces of legislation under consideration. Lawmakers must balance many competing interests when drafting bills, using diplomatic skills to find common ground. The history of organized labor, especially contract negotiations, is also worthy of investigation. If workers and employers cannot agree on terms, the consequences might be a strike or lockout. Researching cases where negotiations succeeded or failed offers students a chance to understand diplomacy’s implications in a workplace setting. Other aspects of labor history also relate to this year’s NHD theme. For example, debates over the short- and long-term environmental effects of industrial development are areas where students can compare clashing perspectives. All National Park units have a labor story, making them ideal settings to consider how debate and diplomacy have shaped labor history.

### CONCLUSION

The field of labor history is rich in stories for students to explore as part of their research into the National History Day theme of *Debate & Diplomacy in History: Successes, Failures, Consequences*. At the local, state, federal, and, indeed, international levels, labor regulations are frequently

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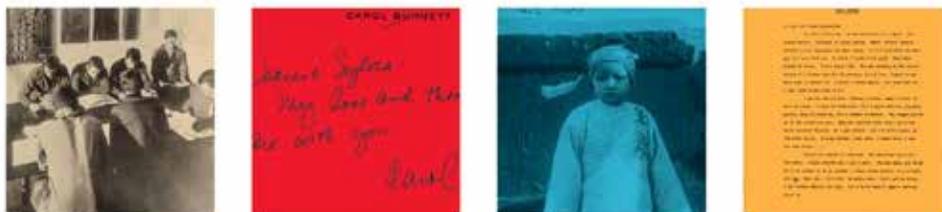
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# That’s Debatable: Exploring Public Debates in Different Venues through Primary Sources

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Where do debates take place? At a pair of lecterns on a public stage? In the official communications of world leaders? In the paragraphs of prestigious foreign-policy journals?

Debates are everywhere. From the slogans on protest signs to the barbed jokes of comedians, from letters to newspaper editors to civil (or occasionally less than civil) exchanges on social media platforms, people have always used a wide variety of tools and venues to advance their views on issues of public importance.

Many of these debates have left behind documents, artifacts, or other physical traces. The Library of Congress online collections contain numerous examples ([loc.gov/collections/](#)). These primary sources illuminate the different perspectives advanced by each debate’s participants. They can also raise productive questions about the persuasive techniques those individuals chose, their assumed audiences, and the venues that they thought most appropriate for their arguments.

Students who are willing to look for the records of historical debates in out-of-the-way places can discover topics, methods, and points of view that shed light on core issues of American life and reveal participants and perspectives that might have been marginalized or overlooked in the widely accepted narratives of past events. Research in the Library’s online collections can provide excellent opportunities to find compelling arguments and individuals to inspire and enrich a National History Day® (NHD) project.

## LOCAL DEBATES ON NATIONAL ISSUES: NEWS COVERAGE OF HIGH SCHOOL DEBATES

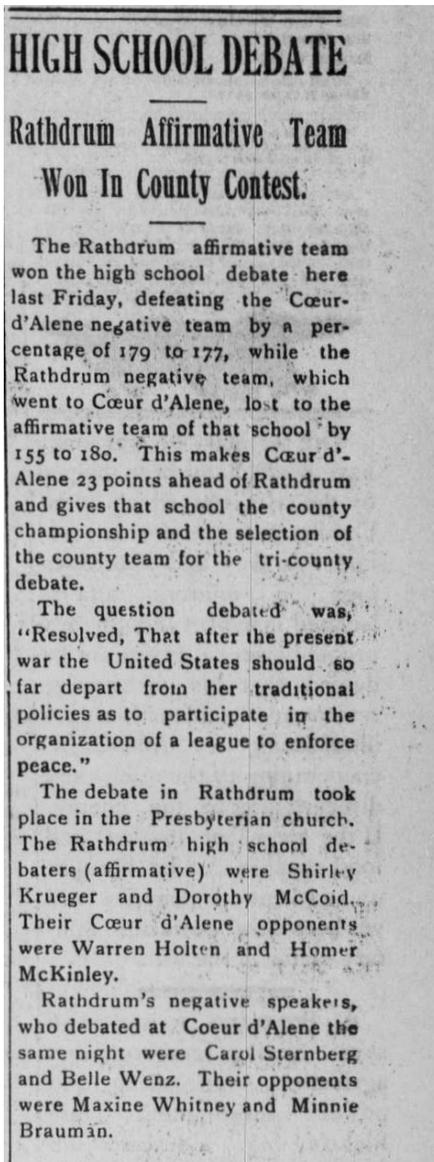
National issues are also local issues. The topics debated in legislative chambers and diplomatic salons are discussed in town halls, school auditoriums, and any physical or virtual venue that brings engaged citizens together.

Students can examine which national issues became topics of argument in local venues and explore how those issues were framed. Searching *Chronicling America* provides students with an opportunity to discover diverse perspectives on national issues and gather evidence of which issues resonated locally. *Chronicling America* is a database of historic newspapers from 1789–1963 that is jointly sponsored by the Library of Congress and the National Endowment for the Humanities.

The February 1, 1918, edition of *The Rathdrum Tribune*, published in Rathdrum, Idaho, featured a headline that read “High School Debate: Rathdrum Affirmative Team Won In County Contest.” The article that followed announced Rathdrum’s student debaters Shirley Krueger and Dorothy McCloud defeated their opponents, Warren Holten and Homer McKinley from Coeur d’Alene High School.<sup>1</sup>

The Library of Congress and National History Day are collaborating on a series of projects as a part of the Library’s Teaching with Primary Sources Consortium. Learn more and explore the resources available at [nhd.org/library-congress-tps](https://nhd.org/library-congress-tps).

1 “High School Debate,” *The Rathdrum Tribune* [Rathdrum, Idaho], February 1, 1918. <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn88056093/1918-02-01/ed-1/seq-1/>.



Newspaper article covering the debate, *The Rathdrum Tribune*, February 1, 1918. Courtesy of *Chronicling America*.

The question the teams debated at the Presbyterian Church in Rathdrum was:

Resolved, That after the present war, the United States should so far depart from her traditional policies as to participate in the organization of a league to enforce peace.<sup>2</sup>

Krueger and McCloud debated in favor of the resolution, while Holten and McKinley debated against it.

President Woodrow Wilson had just delivered his Fourteen Points address to the U.S. Congress four weeks before the student debate in Idaho.<sup>3</sup> The principles outlined in this speech included, as the fourteenth point, his proposal for an association of nations that should be “formed under specific covenants for the purpose of affording mutual guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity to great and small states alike.”<sup>4</sup>



Article from *The Evening World* in New York City detailing President Wilson's speech, January 8, 1918. Courtesy of *Chronicling America*.

This proposal would eventually be included in the Treaty of Versailles (1919), and the organization became known as the League of Nations. The outcome of the congressional debates about the proposal, however, was different than the student debate. The U.S. Senate never adopted the treaty, and the United States never joined the League of Nations.

A search in *Chronicling America* for “high school debate” in newspapers from 1918, the year the Rathdrum debaters

2 “High School Debate,” *The Rathdrum Tribune* [Rathdrum, Idaho], February 1, 1918. <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn88056093/1918-02-01/ed-1/seq-1/>.

3 Students can view Wilson's shorthand notes and segments of the typewritten draft of the Fourteen Points speech as part of the Library of Congress *Echoes of the Great War* Exhibition at <https://www.loc.gov/exhibitions/world-war-i-american-experiences/about-this-exhibition/world-overturned/peace-and-a-new-world-order/woodrow-wilsons-fourteen-points/>.

4 “Wilson's Fourteen Points,” Library of Congress, accessed December 31, 2020. <https://www.loc.gov/collections/world-war-i-rotogravures/articles-and-essays/events-and-statistics/wilsons-fourteen-points/>.

were considering the League of Nations, reveals that high schoolers took up issues including:

- › “Resolved that the United States should consider Germany’s peace proposals”;<sup>5</sup>
- › “Resolved that Congress should enact a law for the Compulsory Arbitration of Industrial Disputes”;<sup>6</sup> and
- › “Resolved, That the various states should adopt a schedule of minimum wages for unskilled laborers.”<sup>7</sup>

As students consider debate-related topics for their NHD projects, encourage them to consider the local platforms—like high school debate tournaments—where national and international debates occurred at the local level.

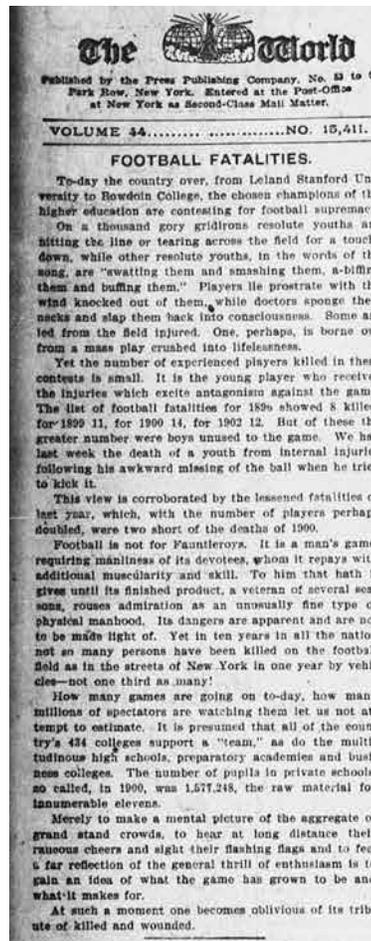
## DEBATING POLICY AND PIGSKIN: NEWSPAPERS’ SPORTS PAGES

Perhaps no other topic sparks as much daily debate among Americans as sports. Friends and strangers enter into heated exchanges just by asking about last night’s game, favorite teams, or top-ranked athletes. This cultural propensity to debate all sports-related items has played out for well over a century in American newspapers’ sports sections, editorial pages, and even front-page headlines. Beyond athletic statistics and trivia, newspapers have also documented the role sports played in everything from race relations to global pandemics to wartime efforts. Students can conduct research using Library of Congress primary sources to discover issues on the sports page that either went on to become the subjects of debate in larger society or illuminate current debates in new ways.<sup>8</sup>

One sports-related topic that might interest students is the debate about college football reform. Why did the debate begin in the first place? How did it expand? What impact did it have? An excellent place to start searching is the Library of Congress Research Guide titled “NCAA and the Movement to Reform College Football.”<sup>9</sup> From there, students can link to several selected articles found in Chronicling America.

By the end of the nineteenth century, the American gridiron began to codify and emerge on college and high school campuses nationwide. Football’s brutality appalled critics yet attracted fans. This 1903 *The Evening World* article titled

“Football Fatalities” argued on behalf of football, writing, “It is a man’s game, requiring manliness of its devotees, whom it repays with additional muscularity and skill.” Furthermore, the article claimed, “Yet in ten years in all the nation not so many persons have been killed on the football field as in the streets of New York in one year by vehicles—not one third as many!”<sup>10</sup>



The debate over football, *The Evening World*, New York City, October 31, 1903. Courtesy of Chronicling America.

Despite the sport’s widespread popularity, advocates could not ignore increased public calls to reform or even ban football, especially at the collegiate level, in response to

- 5 “Walnut Grove Lyceum League,” *The Monett Times* [Monett, Missouri], January 4, 1918. <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn90061308/1918-01-04/ed-1/seq-1/>.
- 6 “High School Debate.,” *Rockingham Post-Dispatch* [Rockingham, North Carolina], January 17, 1918. <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn91068736/1918-01-17/ed-1/seq-5/>.
- 7 “Red Lake Falls Debate Jan. 15,” *Grand Forks Herald* [Grand Forks, North Dakota], January 8, 1918. <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85042414/1918-01-08/ed-1/seq-5/>.
- 8 Students and teachers can explore the Primary Sources Sets from the Library of Congress to help inspire student research topics. Access the sets at <https://www.loc.gov/programs/teachers/classroom-materials/primary-source-sets/>.
- 9 “NCAA and the Movement to Reform College Football: Topics in Chronicling America,” Research Guide, Library of Congress. <https://guides.loc.gov/chronicling-america-ncaa-college-football-reform>.
- 10 “Football Fatalities,” *The Evening World* [New York, New York], October 31, 1903. <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030193/1903-10-31/ed-1/seq-8/>.

reported injuries and fatalities among players. Newspapers reported 19 deaths and 137 injuries in the 1905 football season and often detailed gruesome accounts. In 1906, the *Deseret Evening News* published an article headlined “Deaths in the Sporting World” that listed fatalities across various sports, including, “For the first time, so far as known, the death of a girl!” among football players.<sup>11</sup> Colleges and universities debated closing their football programs.

In October 1905, President Theodore Roosevelt, arguably the nation’s best-known gridiron fan, captured national attention and headlines by championing the cause of collegiate football reform. His son, Theodore, Jr., played for Harvard University’s 1905 freshman team and was injured during a game, as described in an article in *The Salt Lake Herald*.<sup>12</sup> That fall, President Roosevelt hosted two White House conferences with representatives from the college powerhouses of the time—Harvard, Yale, and Princeton Universities—to discuss improving the game’s fair play and safety. Among the attendees was Walter Camp, Yale’s athletic director at the time and already famous as the “Father of American Football.”

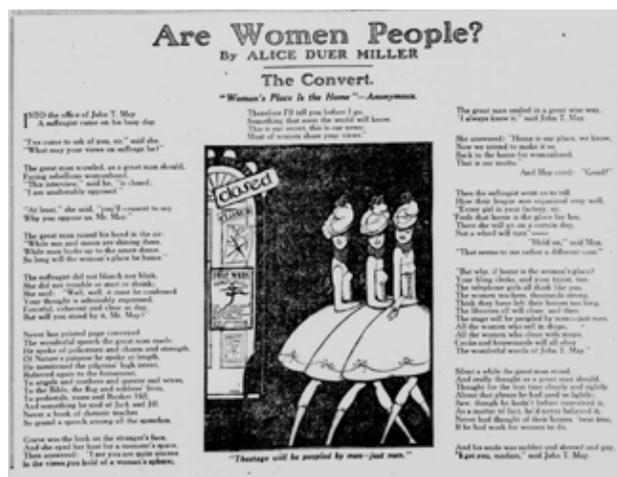
President Roosevelt’s football reform efforts ultimately led to new rules that revolutionized the game and established the forerunner to the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA). The national debate over the health and safety of football players at all levels did not end and continues to this day.

Students might be interested in exploring other sports-related topics from many different Library of Congress collections. For instance, they could research Jim Thorpe, a Native American, multi-sport athlete whose participation as a professional in the 1912 Stockholm Summer Olympics was the beginning of the debate over whether professional athletes should compete in the Olympics.<sup>13</sup> Or, they might consider the debate surrounding the breaking of the color line in professional baseball by researching Branch Rickey, team president and general manager of the Brooklyn Dodgers, who signed Negro League star Jackie Robinson to a minor league contract in 1945 and then, in 1947, to a major league contract with the Dodgers.<sup>14</sup>

## THE PERSUASIVE POWER OF PUBLIC POETRY: ALICE DUER MILLER’S POEMS

People with limited political power often used creative outlets and public platforms to debate issues. Women seeking the right to vote during the early twentieth century were doing so from a marginalized position. They devised innovative tactics—including music, art, and poetry—to convey their messages, catch people’s attention, and advance their cause. Students can discover previously unknown or uncelebrated voices in national debates by conducting research using primary sources from the Library of Congress.

Alice Duer Miller wrote a regular column in the *New York Tribune* titled “Are Women People?” that contained short satirical poems and commentary responding to current events about women’s rights. The title question responds to President Woodrow Wilson’s speech, “The New Freedom,” which concluded by declaring: “Bring the government back to the people.” The column initially appeared on “The Woman’s Forum” page when it launched in February 1914. The biting satire and social commentary proved so popular that it was soon published elsewhere in the paper to reach a broader audience.



Alice Duer Miller’s “Are Women People?” appeared in the *New York Tribune* on August 29, 1915.

11 “Deaths in the Sporting World,” *Deseret Evening News* [Great Salt Lake City, Utah], January 6, 1906. <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83045555/1906-01-06/ed-1/seq-25/>.

12 “Teddy Roosevelt, Jr., is Hurt on Football Field,” *The Salt Lake Herald* [Salt Lake City, Utah], October 15, 1905. <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85058130/1905-10-15/ed-1/seq-4/>.

13 “Jim Thorpe, Native American Athlete: Topics in Chronicling America,” Research Guide, Library of Congress. <https://guides.loc.gov/chronicling-america-jim-thorpe>.

14 The Library of Congress holds collections from both Branch Rickey and Jackie Robinson. See *Branch Rickey Papers*, Digital Collection, Library of Congress. <https://loc.gov/collections/branch-rickey-papers/about-this-collection/>; and *By Popular Demand: Jackie Robinson and Other Baseball Highlights, 1860s-1960s*, Digital Collection, Library of Congress. <https://www.loc.gov/collections/jackie-robinson-baseball/about-this-collection/>.

In 1915, a selection of Miller's poems was published in a book titled *Are Women People? A Book of Rhymes for Suffrage Times*.<sup>15</sup> Many of the poems are conversational, including the introductory poem, which imagines an exchange between a father and son. The son twice asks the title question, "Are women people?" Each time, the father answers differently.<sup>16</sup>

The book contains five sections: "Treacherous Texts," "Campaign Material," "Women's Sphere," "A Masque of Teachers," and "The Unconscious Suffragists." The poems included in "Treacherous Texts" respond directly to anti-suffrage speeches or legislative decisions, with each one beginning with a quotation from the original text of a speech or decision. Many of those original texts are hard to track down, but they are recorded and preserved in Miller's book that can be accessed through the Library of Congress General Collections.

One "Treacherous Texts" entry is a 24-line poem titled "Partners."<sup>17</sup> Miller wrote the poem in response to a New York Supreme Court decision regarding partnership and property in marriage. The decision included the text, "Our laws have not yet reached the point of holding that property which is the result of the husband's earnings and the wife's savings becomes their joint property . . . In this most important of all partnerships there is no partnership property." The poem imagines a man inviting a "Lady, lovely lady" to share his cares, compliments, and toil, "I outside the home, you within." The poem concludes, "Partners, lady, we shall be, / You and me, / Partners in the highest sense / Looking for no recompense, / For, the savings that we make, I shall take." The poem concisely and incisively underscores the irony in the court decision about the legal partnership of marriage's expectations and boundaries.

Alice Duer Miller's writings engaged in debate in the very public forum of the newspaper and later a book. By quoting laws and anti-suffrage speeches, Miller demonstrated her awareness of both current events and opponents' arguments in the struggle for voting rights. Her poems reflect a lively intellect and finely honed sense of humor and irony, pointing out flaws in legislation and logic by shining a light on how opponents' very own statements supported the cause of voting rights for women. Publishing the poems in a newspaper column amplified her voice when women had few options to be heard in public debate.

The *National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) Book Collection* contains close to 800 books and

pamphlets documenting the suffrage movement.<sup>18</sup> Students can access a collection of almost 500 photographs depicting tactics used by the suffrage movement's militant wing in the United States.<sup>19</sup> The *Women's Suffrage in Sheet Music Collection* contains over 200 pieces of sheet music that provide a study of the suffrage movement, its counter-movement, and its impact on society and popular culture.<sup>20</sup>

Students who want to examine further the lengthy battle for woman suffrage might be interested in the papers of individuals and organizations central to the fight. Library of Congress Digital Collections include the papers (correspondence, diaries, speeches, articles, and more) of:

- **Susan B. Anthony:** [loc.gov/collections/susan-b-anthony-papers/about-this-collection/](https://www.loc.gov/collections/susan-b-anthony-papers/about-this-collection/)
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## CASTING DEBATES IN STONE: TEMPERANCE STATUES AND FOUNTAINS

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the debate over temperance, defined by Merriam-Webster as moderation in or abstinence from the use of alcoholic beverages, was hotly contested. Advocates for temperance believed that alcohol was a root cause of many social ills, including poverty, crime, domestic violence, and general moral decay, and called for its manufacture and consumption to be either limited or banned. Many temperance opponents argued that drinking alcohol was an individual choice and, in some ways a social good, and that brewing and distilling were long-standing traditions and valuable industries in the United States.

15 Alice Duer Miller, *Are Women People? A Book of Rhymes for Suffrage Times* (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1915), Library of Congress (15013348). <https://www.loc.gov/item/15013348/>.

16 "Introduction," Miller, *Are Women People?*: 8. <https://www.loc.gov/resource/rbnawsa.n3348/?sp=6>.

17 "Partners," Miller, *Are Women People?*: 36. <https://www.loc.gov/resource/rbnawsa.n3348/?sp=35>.

18 *National American Woman Suffrage Association Collection*, Digital Collection, Library of Congress. <https://www.loc.gov/collections/national-american-woman-suffrage-association/about-this-collection/>.

19 *Women of Protest: Photographs from the Records of the National Woman's Party*, Digital Collection, Library of Congress. <https://www.loc.gov/collections/women-of-protest/about-this-collection/>.

20 *Women's Suffrage in Sheet Music*, Digital Collection, Library of Congress. <https://www.loc.gov/collections/womens-suffrage-sheet-music/about-this-collection/>.

This debate raged through a wide variety of media. Temperance activists and opponents made their case through parades and demonstrations, pamphlets and newspapers, books, lectures, and dozens of songs. By conducting research using primary sources from the Library of Congress, students can identify surprising tools and venues that temperance partisans used to persuade others to join the cause and explore less widely known aspects of the arguments made.

For all their belief in the persuasive power of the written—and spoken, and sung—word, the temperance crusaders decided to construct their message in a physical form and place it directly in the public’s path. Beginning in the 1870s, temperance organizations and individual supporters began sponsoring the construction of sculpted public fountains that provided clean drinking water for people and animals in cities and towns across the nation. These temperance fountains served two different purposes. First, a practical purpose, as drinking water was not always readily available in public spaces. Second, a rhetorical purpose, as they reminded users of the wholesomeness of water compared to brewed or distilled beverages.

To ensure passersby understood the temperance message, these fountains included statues and ornaments that communicated the healthy, or even divine, qualities of drinking water. A fountain in Philadelphia commissioned by the Catholic Total Abstinence Union of America included the biblical prophet Moses standing atop the Rock of Horeb, which provided water to Israel’s people in the book of Exodus.<sup>21</sup> In several towns, the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) topped their fountains with statues of the Greek goddess Hebe, known for serving ambrosia and nectar to the Olympians.<sup>22</sup> Among the most elaborate fountains were those built by dentist and temperance enthusiast Henry Cogswell, many of which featured sea creatures, water birds, mythological figures, and statues or portraits of Cogswell himself, along with the words “Faith,” “Hope,” “Charity,” and “Temperance.”<sup>23</sup>

The Library of Congress is the largest library in the world, with millions of books, recordings, photographs, newspapers, maps, and manuscripts. It is the research arm of the U.S. Congress.

Students can search the vast collections of Library of Congress primary sources to learn more about a multitude of people and historical events ([loc.gov](https://www.loc.gov)). Students who want to refine their search further might consider more specific searches within the Library:

- **Chronicling America:** Historic newspapers reflect the biases of the people who created them, so they provide excellent opportunities for students to notice whose perspectives these accounts might represent or exclude. Students can access these primary sources in two ways:
  - » Search by topic, subject category, or date range: [loc.gov/rr/news/topics/index.html](https://www.loc.gov/rr/news/topics/index.html).
  - » Search by entering one or more search words, refining the search by selecting a date range or a specific state, or using the U.S. Newspaper Directory to find information about American newspapers: [chroniclingamerica.loc.gov](https://www.loc.gov/rr/news/newspapers.html).
- **Research Guides:** The Library of Congress provides hundreds of guides to the Library’s general collections arranged by subject. Students can access an index of Research Guides to select a specific topic or enter search words to narrow their search: [guides.loc.gov](https://www.loc.gov/researchguides/).
- **Digital Collections:** Students can explore the multitude of digital collections available online at the Library of Congress. Once on the Digital Collections page, students can further refine their search by subject and search word: [loc.gov/collections/](https://www.loc.gov/digitalcollections/).
- **Exhibitions:** Students can access any of the 134 exhibitions that have been presented by the Library since 1992. An alphabetical list of the exhibitions is provided, or students can use search words to narrow their search: [loc.gov/exhibits](https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/).

21 *Temperance Fountain and Statues, Philadelphia, Pa. U. S. A.*, photograph, 1891, Library of Congress (2018653605). <https://www.loc.gov/item/2018653605/>.

22 Carol Highsmith, *A 12-foot-high statue of Hebe . . .*, photograph, May 6, 2018, Library of Congress (2018698174). <https://www.loc.gov/item/2018698174/>.

23 *Temperance Fountain, Pennsylvania Avenue . . .*, photograph, after 1933, Library of Congress (dc0268). <https://www.loc.gov/item/dc0268/>.



Temperance Fountain at Pennsylvania Avenue and Seventh Street, NW, in Washington, D.C. The photograph is part of the Historic American Buildings Survey, a project cataloged at the Library of Congress. Courtesy of the Library of Congress (dc0268).

Temperance advocates saw these fountains as persuasive tools in the campaign for their cause. They placed them in locations where they would be seen and used by as many people as possible: in parks, on courthouse lawns, on crowded commercial streets, and in busy saloon districts. With this exposure to potential converts came exposure to potential hazards, and some fountains fell victim to runaway horse carts and other dangers of the street. By making their argument for temperance in physical form in the public square, the fountains' builders invited refutation on the same terms. In the early hours of New Year's Day 1894, the Cogswell statue atop the temperance fountain in San Francisco was pulled down by "a silent gang of hoodlum miscreants" using "a coil of stout rope," according to the San Francisco *Morning Call*.<sup>24</sup>

The peak of the temperance organizations' influence came in 1920 when a constitutional ban on alcoholic beverages went into effect and ended in 1933 when the ban was lifted. Temperance fountains can still be found today, although many have lost their temperance-specific decorations and inscriptions, and few, if any, provide running water. However, statues and other public sculptures still have a great deal of symbolic power and continue to play a role in public debates. Students might find examples in their communities or debates carried on in today's public venues.

Students who are interested in researching other topics related to the debate over temperance and its impact on life in the U.S. might consider the "Inside Adams" blog about the Eighteenth Amendment, which outlawed the "Manufacture, sale, or transportation of intoxicating liquors," and Twenty-First Amendment, which repealed prohibition.<sup>25</sup> The Library of Congress Research Guide addresses the Eighteenth Amendment and guides students to digital resources to further their research.<sup>26</sup> Or perhaps students would want to research the use of popular songs to advance the arguments made by different participants in the debate over temperance<sup>27</sup>, the social and business ramifications of the temperance debate<sup>28</sup>, or the brewers' campaign against prohibition.<sup>29</sup>

## CONCLUSION

From high school debate stages to the pages of poetry books, from crusading sports pages to thirst-quenching street corner sculptures—these examples demonstrate just a few of the unusual and sometimes surprising venues in which public debates have taken place. Students who are willing to look beyond conventional accounts of public debate and willing to explore the Library of Congress can discover voices, places, and events that will enliven their National History Day projects. They may even spark a passion for the overlooked and unexpected histories that will enrich their lives as scholars and citizens.

To access more theme resources,  
go to [nhd.org/themebook](https://nhd.org/themebook).

24 "Image Breakers: Dr. Cogswell's Statue Overturned," *The Morning Call* [San Francisco, California], January 3, 1894. <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn94052989/1894-01-03/ed-1/seq-8/>.

25 Ellen Terrell, "Amendments 18 and 21," Inside Adams: Science, Technology & Business Blog, Library of Congress. February 12, 2014. [https://blogs.loc.gov/inside\\_adams/2014/02/amendments-18-and-21/](https://blogs.loc.gov/inside_adams/2014/02/amendments-18-and-21/).

26 "18th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution: Primary Documents in American History," Research Guide, Library of Congress. <https://guides.loc.gov/18th-amendment>.

27 *Music for the Nation: American Sheet Music, ca. 1870 to 1885*, Digital Collection, Library of Congress. <https://www.loc.gov/collections/american-sheet-music-1870-to-1885/articles-and-essays/music-published-in-america-1870-1885/themes-in-popular-songs/>.

28 "Temperance Movement & Prohibition," Research Guide, Library of Congress. <https://guides.loc.gov/alcoholic-beverage-industry/temperance-prohibition>.

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# Debating the Proper Role of Government during the Founding Era

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The National History Day® (NHD) 2022 theme, *Debate & Diplomacy in History: Successes, Failures, Consequences*, asks students to think about competing and multiple perspectives on various issues across history. Ever since the decision to form a federal government, Americans have debated what role the government should assume in providing for the military, immigration issues, and the rights of citizens who disagree with our government. This article explores debates surrounding the role of government during the early years of the newly created republic and the extent to which these debates remain important today.

This article is framed by the compelling question: “To what extent can the rights of citizens and the security of the nation be equally protected by a federal government?” In it, educators will find resources, research prompts, and lessons on the U.S. War Department’s role following the Revolutionary War, the Alien and Sedition Act of 1798, and connections beyond the Founding Era to link these issues to contemporary debates.

The materials and learning activities included in this article allow students to:

- › examine the role of government in the political, social, and cultural life of people in the United States;
- › analyze constitutional debates and the evolution of a two-party system within the federal government;
- › analyze debates about the responsibility of the War Department to the families of those who served in wartime;
- › evaluate the ability to provide for national security, civil liberties, First Amendment rights, and citizenship;
- › evaluate how Constitutional debates of the time continue to emerge across U.S. history through today; and
- › create original interpretations of historical and contemporary debates on the proper role of government.

## PAPERS OF THE U.S. WAR DEPARTMENT

Along with the U.S. State and the Treasury Departments, the War Department (now called the Department of Defense) became one of the new United States government’s first departments established under the Articles of Confederation. Its work was essential, and it continued under the U.S. Constitution. In the first decade of the new nation, the War Department oversaw veteran affairs, managed naval affairs (until 1798), and handled militia and army matters. The War Office engaged commercial firms and merchants across the nation; it was a major consumer of fabric, clothing, shoes, food, medicine, building materials, and weapons. It provided security, governance, and diplomacy and also shaped relations with Native Nations.<sup>1</sup>



The seal of the U.S. War Department (the precursor to the Department of Defense). Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

The War Department was involved in many aspects of life after the Revolutionary War and many debates about the new government’s functionality. Some of these were outside its control, for example, the debates about the ratification of the U.S. Constitution or the creation of the

<sup>1</sup> “About,” Papers of the War Department, 1784–1800. Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media and George Mason University, accessed December 19, 2020. <https://wardepartmentpapers.org/s/home/page/about>.

U.S. Navy. Still, many of these debates impacted the work of the War Department. Sometimes, officers and clerks untangled the finer points of a debate as it moved from controversy to policy.

One debate involved the question of the government's responsibility to people who served the nation during wartime, as well as to the surviving spouse and children of those killed in action.

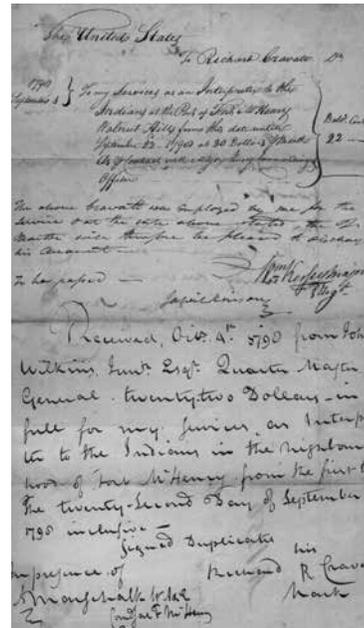
### "A MORE PERFECT UNION"

As part of its "A More Perfect Union" initiative, the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) offers free K-12 educational resources for teaching about the 250th Anniversary of the Declaration of Independence through EDSITEment.

- Teacher's Guide: "A More Perfect Union" [edsitement.neh.gov/teachers-guides/more-perfect-union-0](https://edsitement.neh.gov/teachers-guides/more-perfect-union-0)
- Lesson Plan: "A Day for the Constitution" [edsitement.neh.gov/lesson-plans/day-constitution](https://edsitement.neh.gov/lesson-plans/day-constitution)
- Lesson Plan: "The Federalist Debates: Balancing Power Between the State and Federal Governments" [edsitement.neh.gov/lesson-plans/federalist-debates-balancing-power-between-state-and-federal-governments](https://edsitement.neh.gov/lesson-plans/federalist-debates-balancing-power-between-state-and-federal-governments)
- Lesson Plan: "The Creation of the Bill of Rights: Retouching the Canvas" [edsitement.neh.gov/lesson-plans/creation-bill-rights-retouching-canvas](https://edsitement.neh.gov/lesson-plans/creation-bill-rights-retouching-canvas)
- Teacher's Guide: "Preparing for National History Day" [edsitement.neh.gov/teachers-guides/preparing-national-history-day](https://edsitement.neh.gov/teachers-guides/preparing-national-history-day)
- Teacher Resource Book: *Building a More Perfect Union* [nhd.org/250](https://nhd.org/250)

## THE WAR DEPARTMENT AND THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR

During the Revolutionary War, the Continental Congress authorized pension payments for the widows and orphans of officers killed in the line of duty and pensions for veterans of the Continental Army. After the war, debates raged about who was owed what, how much support should be offered, and to whom. When the U.S. Congress established pensions for veterans, widows, and orphans, it created the United States' first social welfare system. Many people involved in the debate over this system had serious concerns about its implementation.



Included in the Papers of the War Department is a receipt for payment to Dr. Richard Cravatt for \$22.00 as payment for interpreter services and boarding at Fort Mifflin, September 22, 1789. Courtesy of Papers of the War Department.

First, the War Department needed to ascertain whether an applicant was eligible for a pension in an era before photo identification or formal service records. Some officials were as concerned about the possibility of fraud as they were with helping disabled veterans. A few individuals were clearly eligible because they were famous officers. Others continued their military service after the Revolutionary War. However, not all cases were so clear cut. How would the Department verify the claim of someone who moved since the war? How should it handle claims of "invalid" (disabled) applicants who claimed their disabilities came from service?

After the U.S. Congress approved the pensions, the War Department approved and paid out the valid applications. This process was a massive task, and it was only one of the Department's many responsibilities. During this time, the main office was made up of only six or seven employees including the Secretary of War.

## PRESERVING AND ACCESSING THE PAPERS OF THE U.S. WAR DEPARTMENT

On November 8, 1800, a fire broke out in the U.S. War Department office. Two weeks later, Secretary of War Samuel Dexter wrote in a letter, “All the papers in my office [have] been destroyed.”<sup>2</sup> Thus, the official records of the U.S. War Department effectively began with Dexter’s letter. The rest of the documents created between 1784 and 1800 were believed to be lost.

Nearly 200 years later, in the 1990s, historian Ted Crackel realized many of the War Department’s records still existed in the personal papers of the many individuals who worked with and for the War Department. From 1993 to 2002, Crackel and a staff of researchers at East Stroudsburg University in Pennsylvania consulted more than 3,000 collections in more than 200 repositories in the United States, Canada, England, France, and Scotland to search for copies of the documents destroyed in the 1800 fire. The team copied, scanned, and processed tens of thousands of documents that resided in the War Office the night of the fire.

These digitized records are available as an open-access online collection, *Papers of the War Department* ([wardepartmentpapers.org](http://wardepartmentpapers.org)). The site includes information on how to navigate, search, and use the documents. Consult the search guide

([wardepartmentpapers.org/s/home/page/searching-pwd](http://wardepartmentpapers.org/s/home/page/searching-pwd)) for tips on advanced searches. One way students can search is by entering specific words or names related to their research interests. Try searching “shoes” for some surprising results.

Students can also engage with *Papers of the War Department* through four modules that encourage them to analyze a set of transcribed primary sources relating to four themes. Each module includes a selection of primary sources, historical context, and a historian’s worksheet.

- The debate over pensions: [wardepartmentpapers.org/s/home/page/pensions](http://wardepartmentpapers.org/s/home/page/pensions)
- Counterfeiting in the early American nation: [wardepartmentpapers.org/s/home/page/counterfeit](http://wardepartmentpapers.org/s/home/page/counterfeit)
- Diplomacy with Native Nations: [wardepartmentpapers.org/s/home/page/indigenoussdiplomacy](http://wardepartmentpapers.org/s/home/page/indigenoussdiplomacy)
- The Quasi-War between the United States and France: [wardepartmentpapers.org/s/home/page/quasiwar](http://wardepartmentpapers.org/s/home/page/quasiwar)

The War Department passed the burden of proof onto the individuals requesting a pension. Their applications needed to include witness statements confirming their or their spouse’s service, notes from physicians relating to any physical disabilities, and confirmations of their character. This last one may not seem relevant to us today, but for the War Department clerks, it was an additional assurance that the applicant was an honest man or woman and not someone trying to cheat the government.

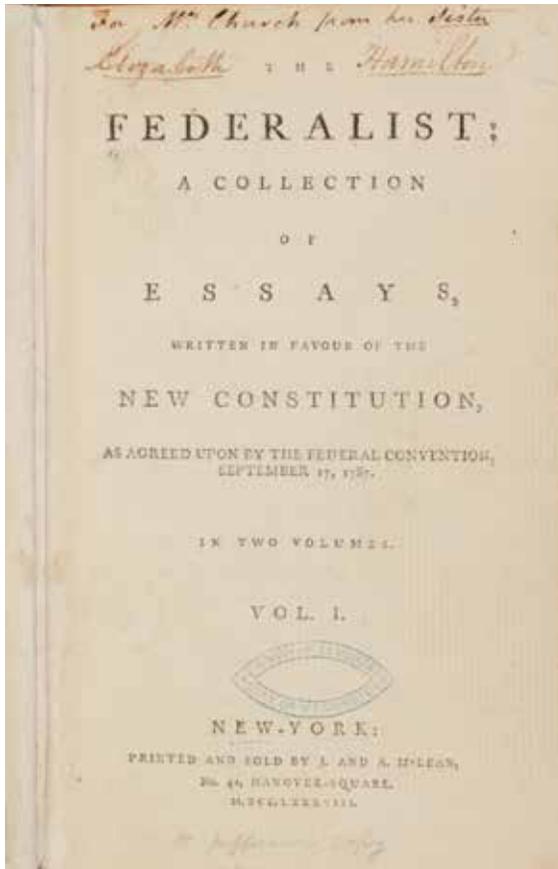
## THE ALIEN AND SEDITION ACT OF 1798

The drafting of the U.S. Constitution spurred a series of debates that ultimately determined the federal government’s structure and breadth. The framers disagreed over the nature of the union: the parameters

of the executive, legislative, and judicial branches; economic policies; and whether to include a Bill of Rights. Anti-federalists—those who were wary about granting excessive power to a new national government—argued that citizens’ fundamental rights required unequivocal protection from the federal government. The Federalists, a coalition that supported a strong central government, believed that adding a Bill of Rights was unnecessary and feared that any freedom included could be interpreted as comprehensive. They deemed a bill of rights superfluous because regulating civil liberties such as freedom of the press was not a power explicitly conferred upon the federal government by the U.S. Constitution.<sup>3</sup> This section examines conflicting viewpoints addressed by the adoption of the Alien and Sedition Acts in 1798 and the continued relevance of these constitutional issues to our debates over the government’s proper role today.

2 Letter from Secretary of War Samuel Dexter to Captain James Taylor, November 19, 1800, Records of the Office of the Secretary of War (RG 107), National Archives and Records Administration, Papers of the War Department, 1784–1800. <https://wardepartmentpapers.org/s/home/item/77259>.

3 “The Debate Over a Bill of Rights,” Center for the Study of the American Constitution, University of Wisconsin–Madison, accessed December 19, 2020. <https://csac.history.wisc.edu/document-collections/constitutional-debates/bill-of-rights/>.



The cover page of a copy of *The Federalist Papers*, sent from Elizabeth (Eliza) Hamilton to her sister, Angelica Schuyler Church (note the inscription at the top). Courtesy of the Rare Books and Special Collections Division, Library of Congress (09021562).

Following the ratification of the Constitution in 1788, political rifts emerged. President George Washington fielded criticism while attempting to navigate the nascent nation through rising political tension in Europe and establishing a strong financial system.<sup>4</sup> In his 1796 Farewell Address, President Washington urged the country to recognize the inherent dangers of political partisanship.<sup>5</sup> However, by the time John Adams assumed the presidency in March 1797, the two-party system had become a permanent aspect of the American political system. The Federalist and Democratic-Republican parties dominated political debates and held opposing views on various matters, including the freedoms ensured in the Bill of Rights.

4 Wendell Bird, *Criminal Dissent: Prosecutions under the Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2020), 10-11.

5 "Washington's Farewell Address, 1796," Avalon Project, Yale University, updated 2008, accessed December 18, 2020. [https://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th\\_century/washing.asp](https://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/washing.asp).

6 Bird, *Criminal Dissent*, 34.

7 Bird, *Criminal Dissent*, 21.

8 Bird, *Criminal Dissent*, 12.

## CLASSROOM RESOURCE

EDSITEment offers a primary source-based lesson sequence on the Federalists and Democratic-Republican parties' competing philosophies entitled "The Federalist and Anti-federalist Debates on Diversity and the Extended Republic," available at [edsitement.neh.gov/curricula/federalist-and-anti-federalist-debates-diversity-and-extended-republic](https://edsitement.neh.gov/curricula/federalist-and-anti-federalist-debates-diversity-and-extended-republic).

Neither the Federalists nor the Democratic-Republicans recognized the legitimacy of their opposition. Political leaders in both parties accused the others of adopting policies capable of dismantling the federal government.<sup>6</sup> They disagreed over a response to the French Revolution and attacks on U.S. vessels by French privateers. Federalist Alexander Hamilton supported declaring war on France and strengthening an alliance with Great Britain.<sup>7</sup> Democratic-Republicans supported France and distrusted Great Britain.<sup>8</sup> When the U.S. Congress convened in 1798, war hysteria and Federalist Francophobia dominated the debates. This atmosphere of patriotism and fear culminated in the Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798, a series of four laws signed over 27 days.

Three of these laws addressed citizenship and immigration. The Naturalization Act, signed on June 18, 1798, granted the federal government jurisdiction over the naturalization process, stripping the states of their former ability to preside over matters of citizenship. It increased the years of residency required to become a citizen from five years to 14 years and required white non-citizens to register with the U.S. government within 48 hours of their arrival in the country.

The Aliens Friends Act, signed on June 25, 1798, granted the U.S. president the authority to deport any non-citizen suspected of conspiring against the government in war or peacetime. President Adams ordered three deportations under the Alien Friends Act. The first was French General Victor Collot, the second a man identified only as Mr. Schweitzer. The third was a person who posed such a dire threat to the U.S. government that he or she was only identified in a letter scribed by Rufus King, the ambassador to Great Britain.

The Aliens Enemies Act, passed on July 6, 1798, bestowed upon the U.S. president the right to arrest, restrain, and deport citizens of nations that declared war on or

threatened to invade the United States. The act granted both federal and state courts authority to preside over these cases and determine sentences. The Alien Enemies Act provided the option to deport thousands of French citizens residing in the United States. However, since neither country declared war, President John Adams never enforced the law.

The fourth law, the Sedition Act, signed on July 14, 1798, differed from the three other laws because of its ability to target U.S. citizens deemed enemies of the federal government. This act defined sedition as employing defaming rhetoric, resisting laws, or encouraging opposition to the government. It targeted citizens employed as newspaper journalists or editors and those who participated in public protest against the government by criminalizing the writing, printing, uttering, or publishing of seditious material that attacked the U.S. government, Congress, or the president. The federal government filed or prosecuted 51 cases under the Sedition Act.

### CLASSROOM RESOURCE

EDSITEment's lesson on the debates that occurred in the U.S. Congress over the Sedition Act offers primary sources students can consider as they evaluate these pressing questions: [edsitement.neh.gov/lesson-plans/lesson-2-debate-congress-sedition-act](https://edsitement.neh.gov/lesson-plans/lesson-2-debate-congress-sedition-act).

The mere threat of widespread enforcement of the Alien Acts led many French immigrants to leave the United States. Leaders of the Federalist majority used the Naturalization and Alien Acts to stunt the growth of the Democratic-Republican Party and target its supporters. The Sedition Act typified the Federalist Party's antagonism towards newspapers and its desire to curb their growing influence over the general public.

These acts spurred political debates about the limits of the federal government and national security that centered around the question, "Could the Federalists, the party in control, wield power necessary to protect America against those who opposed it without wielding that power against those who opposed them?" Federalists framed French and Irish immigrants as seditious enemies comparable to the Democratic-Republican Party and threats to the nation's political system. President Adams accused French immigrants of seditious activity, claiming they acted as agents for their home nation.

Since the Revolutionary War, United States citizens have held broad interpretations of civil liberties. The debates that resulted from the Alien and Sedition Acts marked the first national controversy over the breadth of the freedoms of speech and press ensured by the First Amendment. Widespread discontent with these acts culminated in

President Adams' defeat in the 1800 election to Thomas Jefferson. Adams was the last Federalist president, and the party eventually ceased to exist.

This era's political discourse laid the foundation for future controversies concerning the federal government's ability to regulate civil liberties protected by the Bill of Rights during times of conflict or war. These issues raise questions about the government's proper role and its ability to balance security and rights on a national scale. How can partisan politics affect the process of shaping security policies? To help answer this question, students may be interested in President Abraham Lincoln's administration's censorship of newspapers, mail, and telegraphs during the American Civil War or President Woodrow Wilson's signing of the Espionage Act of 1917 and Sedition Act of 1918 to quell dissent to America's involvement in World War I.

## CONCLUSION

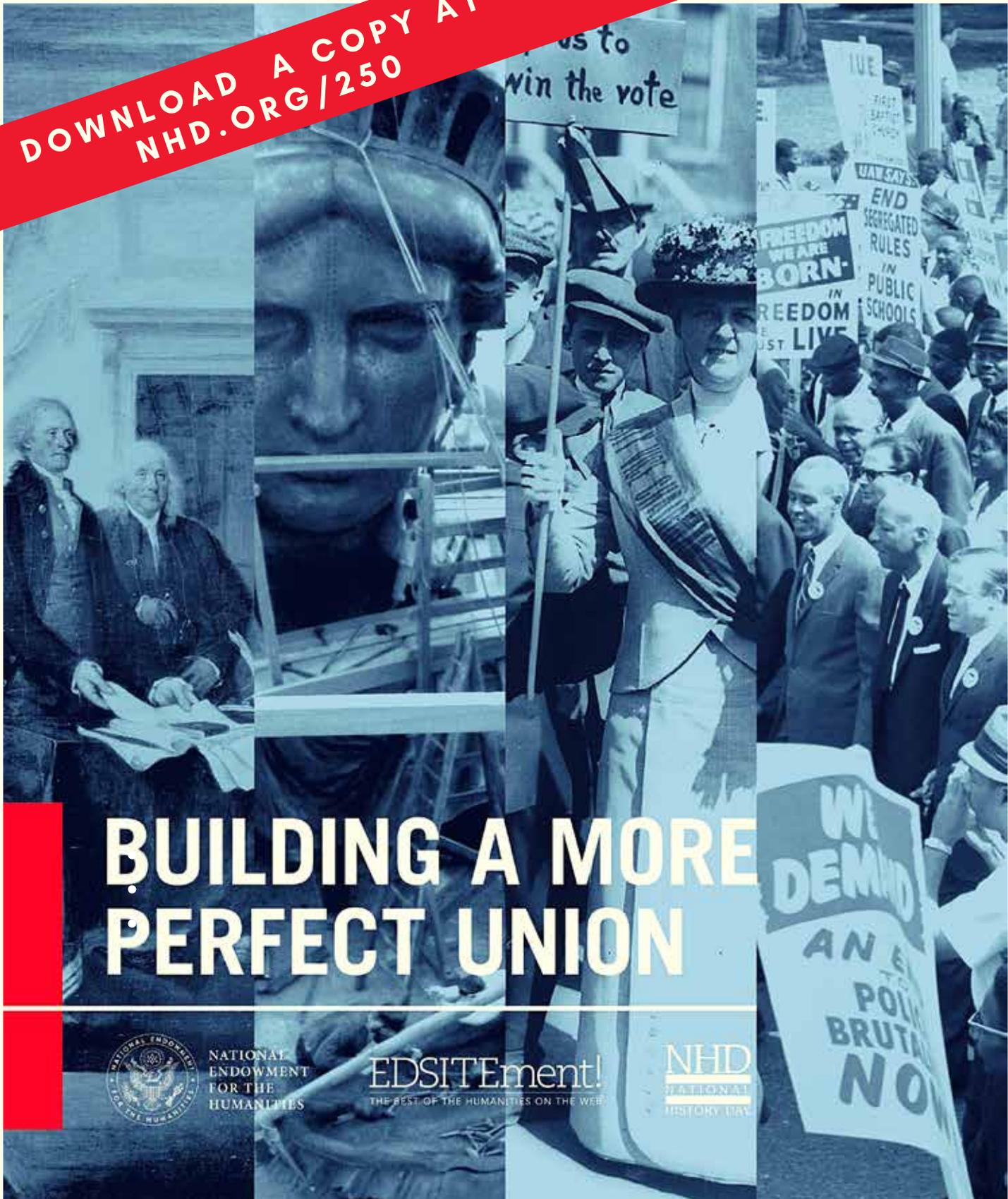
Debates over the Constitution remain a cornerstone of our democracy. Political parties have become an ingrained part of our political discourse, even though they are not mentioned in the U.S. Constitution. As the 1790s progressed and the new government tended to the growing complexity of issues facing the young nation, differing perspectives on the government's proper role continued to develop.

These developments fueled the debates over how to support families of soldiers who fought and died during the Revolutionary War, the First Amendment rights of citizens who disagree with their government, and the powers of the presidency with regard to citizenship and immigration. Research on the extent to which a federal government can equally protect citizens' rights and social welfare and the nation's security will inevitably lead to comparisons across time, including contemporary connections.

NHD projects on the successes, failures, and consequences of debates and diplomacy can offer insight into the complexities of national security, individual rights, and a host of other issues throughout history. The study of debates and the measured consideration of opposing and diverse perspectives that have persisted also inform one's civic knowledge and participation beyond research, writing, and presenting. Listening, reflection, and even cooperation can emerge from participating in and studying multiple sides of an issue. This process moves us all closer to a more perfect union.

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# BUILDING A MORE PERFECT UNION A LESSON PLAN BOOK

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# Diplomacy and State Dinners

LINA MANN, Historian, White House Historical Association

The White House is one of the most famous buildings in the world. While serving as the home and office for presidents of the United States, the White House is also known for its role in international diplomacy. One of the primary diplomatic events at the White House is the State Dinner. The State Dinner honors a visiting head of government or head of state and aims to establish or build upon existing diplomatic relationships. State Dinners provide an excellent opportunity for students to explore the National History Day® (NHD) theme, *Debate & Diplomacy in History: Successes, Failures, Consequences*, using the unique collections of the White House Historical Association.

The State Dinner is a long-standing White House tradition dating back to the nineteenth century. Initially, State Dinners honored members of the U.S. Congress, presidential cabinet members, other members of government, or visiting foreign officials. These early dinners were held during the winter social season and primarily focused on American politics and Washington, D.C. society. The country was still developing, and the United States was not yet a world power.<sup>1</sup> As the United States became more involved in international relations, the purpose and meaning of these events changed, and State Dinners gradually became the glamorous diplomatic ceremonies we know today, where presidents host foreign heads of state at the White House as guests of honor.

## THE FIRST STATE DINNER AND ITS GROWING ROLE IN DIPLOMACY

The first State Dinner to honor a foreign head of state was hosted by President Ulysses S. Grant and First Lady Julia Dent Grant on December 22, 1874. The Grants welcomed King Kalakaua of the Kingdom of Hawai'i for an extravagant celebration. Having traveled across the continental United States by train before arriving in Washington, King Kalakaua sought to speak with President Grant about trade terms between the United States and the Kingdom of Hawai'i.<sup>2</sup> The king hoped to negotiate a treaty allowing Hawaiian goods to enter the United States without incurring importation taxes. The Grants created an event described in the newspapers as "brilliant beyond all precedent."

Beautiful flowers decorated every surface. Staff arranged Limoges china and fine glassware at each setting alongside a place card featuring a steel engraving of the White House. Throughout the dinner, guests were entertained by the United States Marine Band in the State Dining Room. It was undoubtedly a dinner fit for a king. It also had the result King Kalakaua had hoped for when, on January 30, 1875, a treaty was signed allowing the tax-free import of goods.<sup>3</sup>



This is an engraving of King Kalakaua of Hawai'i visiting President Ulysses S. Grant on December 15, 1874. Both men greeted each other with a small bow in the White House Blue Room. Courtesy of the White House Historical Association.

This State Dinner for King Kalakaua provided a blueprint and set the stage for many dinners to come. As the twentieth century arrived, the United States became increasingly involved in world affairs. The U.S. Department of State (State Department) expanded and developed, and so did America's diplomatic relationships. The White House underwent a significant renovation in 1902 when President Theodore Roosevelt remodeled the interior, adding new offices (known today as the West Wing), and increasing the size of the State Dining Room. By the end of the renovation, the White House was better equipped to entertain. The new look gave President Roosevelt an appropriate backdrop that reflected America's growing influence and power on the world stage.<sup>4</sup>

1 Betty C. Monkman, "The White House State Dinner," The White House Historical Association, accessed October 5, 2020. <https://www.whitehousehistory.org/the-white-house-state-dinner>.

2 Steve Hendrix, "Brilliant beyond all precedent: The first White House state dinner for the king of Hawaii," *The Washington Post*, April 25, 2018. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/retropolis/wp/2018/04/24/brilliant-beyond-all-precedent-the-first-white-house-state-dinner-for-the-king-of-hawaii/>.

3 To learn more, see "Society, Etc.," *The Evening Star* [Washington, D.C.], December 23, 1874. <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83045462/1874-12-23/ed-1/seq-1/>; or "The First State Dinner: The Arrival at the White House," PBS, accessed December 7, 2020, <https://www.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/d03ca477-6ae8-4f6c-ad5a-4b3343ff18b0/the-first-state-dinner/>.

4 Monkman, "The White House State Dinner."

The interior of the White House has changed as different U.S. presidents decided to renovate. President Theodore Roosevelt's renovations expanded the State Dining Room, highlighting the importance of the State Dinner played in U.S. foreign policy ([whitehousehistory.org/theodore-roosevelts-white-house](http://whitehousehistory.org/theodore-roosevelts-white-house)). For their NHD projects, students might consider how spaces, such as the White House, became sites of diplomacy and debate and how these spaces changed over time. They might also look to Buckingham Palace, Independence Hall, embassies, and other sites for their project.

## DIPLOMACY THROUGH HOSPITALITY

Throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, State Dinners continued to be critical diplomatic events. The modern State Dinner is a very formal and dazzling affair that requires much preparation and thought. It is also a diplomatic tool serving two functions. First, the State Dinner is an opportunity to recognize heads of state and demonstrate hospitality; and second, it allows for a demonstration of American taste and style.<sup>5</sup>

Today, State Dinners are held to further diplomatic relationships. Some heads of state visit to maintain an already developed diplomatic relationship, while others participate in serious discussions about trade agreements, military engagements, or forming partnerships. The State Dinner concludes the discussions between leaders with a celebration to honor the visiting head of state. If all goes well during negotiations, it also celebrates whatever diplomatic agreement the two parties reached. This agreement can take the form of commitment to continue an allyship, the signing of a treaty or resolution, or a new commitment to begin a diplomatic partnership.<sup>6</sup>

State Dinners typically adhere to a strict schedule. The visiting head of state customarily arrives at the White House and participates in an Arrival Ceremony on the White House South Lawn. The head of state will then

usually spend the day in diplomatic discussions with the president. Depending on the nature of the visit and the relationship with the visiting country, these discussions can vary in structure, goal, and tone. Guests then retire to Blair House, the President's Guest House, across the street from the White House and return that evening for the State Dinner.<sup>7</sup> Once their guests arrive, the president and first lady escort them upstairs to the Private Residence of the White House for conversation and an exchange of gifts before descending the Grand Staircase to the State Floor as the Marine Band plays "Hail to the Chief" and the national anthem of the visiting country.<sup>8</sup> Dinner attendees are received by the president, first lady, and visiting head of state in the Blue Room before they continue to their seats in the State Dining Room.<sup>9</sup> Their places are assigned ahead of time and the seating arrangements are carefully planned. Circular tables are most often used to allow for more guests.<sup>10</sup>

Offering toasts is common in diplomacy and expected at State Dinners. These remarks, which often include historical or personal stories, are critical diplomatic statements and serve as an opportunity to highlight the relationship between the two nations. During the dinner, the president and visiting head of state each offer a toast. These toasts reflect how well the visit has gone and indicate whether any diplomatic agreement has been reached. This expression of goodwill has strict rules associated with it. A State Dinner toast must be delivered standing, with the president's toast to the visiting head of state occurring first.<sup>11</sup>

The number of dinners held during a presidency can vary widely. Some presidents hosted numerous State Dinners, while others chose to host only a few. World events can also impact the number of State Dinners. For example, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt hosted more State Dinners than his predecessor, President Herbert Hoover. Most of President Roosevelt's dinners took place during World War II, helping to cement American alliances.

Are you interested in learning more about diplomacy and State Dinners at the White House? Access the White House Historical Association's *Diplomacy and the White House Classroom Resource Packet* at [whitehousehistory.org/teacher-resources/diplomacy-and-the-white-house](http://whitehousehistory.org/teacher-resources/diplomacy-and-the-white-house).

5 C.K. Hickey, "All the Presidents' Meals," *Foreign Policy*, February 16, 2019. <https://foreignpolicy.com/all-the-presidents-meals-state-dinners-white-house-infographic/>.

6 Bill Allman, "The Official State Arrival and State Dinner: A Q&A with the White House Curator," The Obama White House, October 16, 2016. <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/blog/2016/10/18/official-state-arrival-and-state-dinner-qa-white-house-curator>.

7 "Blair House: The President's Guest House," Blair House, accessed February 5, 2021. <http://www.blairhouse.org/>.

8 "Music and the White House Classroom Resource Packet. White House Historical Association, accessed February 5, 2021. <https://www.whitehousehistory.org/teacher-resources/music-and-the-white-house>.

9 Ellen Cranley, "The Most Surprising Formal Protocol Presidents and First Ladies Have to Follow During Official State Visits," *Business Insider*, September 20, 2019. <https://www.businessinsider.com/state-visit-white-house-melania-trump-formal-protocol-2018-4>.

10 Monkman, "The White House State Dinner."

11 "So, You're Invited to a State Dinner. . .," White House Correspondents Insider, May 16, 2009. <http://whcinsider.com/2009/05/16/so-youre-invited-to-a-state-dinner/>.

A particularly important dinner was the 1939 State Dinner for King George VI of the United Kingdom. This dinner bolstered the relationship between the two countries on the eve of the Second World War. It was also the first time a reigning British monarch ever set foot on U.S. soil, demonstrating a commitment to cooperation between the nations. To ensure a successful visit, President Roosevelt himself was involved in all the planning. While appearing purely social on the surface, the visit, which took the king beyond Washington, D.C., to New York City and Hyde Park, New York, allowed the American people to gain the British monarch's trust as the two leaders negotiated behind the scenes. Ultimately, the visit and State Dinner were successful, as the leaders reached several military agreements and strengthened their relationship before the entrance of the United States into World War II.<sup>12</sup>

## WHAT'S FOR DINNER?: THE ROLE OF FOOD

It is important to demonstrate understanding about a visiting leader. For a State Dinner held in honor of Japanese Prime Minister Masayoshi Ōhira on May 2, 1979, President Jimmy Carter and First Lady Rosalynn Carter served a barbecue menu featuring roasted suckling pig, roast buffalo, and barbecued chicken after Social Secretary Gretchen Poston discovered that the Japanese prime minister had long desired to try American barbecue.



In this photograph, taken May 2, 1979, President Jimmy Carter, Social Secretary Gretchen Poston, and White House Executive Chef Henry Haller inspect the preparations on the West Terrace for the State Dinner for Prime Minister Masayoshi Ōhira of Japan. Courtesy of Henry & Carole Haller and Family, White House Historical Association.

The press jokingly referred to the dinner as “Barbeque Diplomacy.” While the menu may seem inconsequential, it was a way to show the prime minister the United States’ commitment to the relationship with Japan through hospitality. It helps to engender trust and build bonds between countries based on respect for those involved. The two sides reviewed the current state of their relationship during discussions, and the State Dinner reflected the informal nature of their talks.<sup>13</sup> The visit was ultimately successful, as the United States and Japan deepened their diplomatic relationship.

Food served at a State Dinner establishes the tone of the evening. The social secretary and the White House chefs coordinate the menu with input from the president, first lady, and the State Department. Since one of the State Dinner’s purposes is to demonstrate hospitality to the guest of honor, it is essential to serve a meal that they will appreciate. The chefs will frequently prepare a particular dessert or entrée that the visiting head of state is known to enjoy.<sup>14</sup>

Former White House Executive Chef Henry Haller served in the White House under five different administrations. He collected different materials during his tenure, including photographs, letters, recipes, and other White House ephemera. His entire collection was donated to the White House Historical Association in 2018. All materials have been digitized for the public. Explore the collection here: [library.whitehousehistory.org/fotoweb/archives/5062-The-Henry-Haller-Collection/](https://library.whitehousehistory.org/fotoweb/archives/5062-The-Henry-Haller-Collection/).

President John F. Kennedy and First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy preferred to serve elaborate meals to demonstrate America’s culinary talents and ensure guests of honor were receiving high-quality hospitality. During the State Dinner held in honor of President Rómulo Betancourt of Venezuela on February 19, 1963, guests were served an elegant French meal. The first course was Filet de sole Verdi. The second course included Pièce de boeuf Rochambeau, Petits pois au beurre, and Pommes Anna. The third course combined Salade Mimosa and Fromage Brie, while dessert consisted of Bombe Glacée Jeanneton.<sup>15</sup> The whole affair was meant to strengthen support in South America against the spread of communism. The United States worked with countries, such as Venezuela, to continue their policy of containment.

12 Monkman, “The White House State Dinner,” Office of Presidential Libraries, “State Dinners at the White House,” Pieces of History: A Blog of the U.S. National Archives, February 13, 2014. <https://prologue.blogs.archives.gov/2014/02/13/state-dinners-at-the-white-house/>.

13 “Program for State Dinner for Prime Minister of Japan,” White House Historical Association, accessed October 20, 2020. <https://library.whitehousehistory.org/fotoweb/archives/5017-Digital-Library/Main%20Index/Henry%20Haller%20Collection/1127726.tif.info#c=%2Ffotoweb%2Farchives%2F5017-Digital-Library%2F%3Fq%3DJimmy%2520Carter%2520Barbecue>; Donnie Radcliffe and Joseph McLellan, “Barbeque Diplomacy,” The Washington Post, May 3, 1979. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/lifestyle/1979/05/03/barbecue-diplomacy/78438e5e-b551-4bc2-8d56-c8488e359dbe/>; Jimmy Carter, “Visit of Prime Minister Ōhira of Japan Joint Communiqué,” The American Presidency Project, University of California Santa Barbara, accessed December 21, 2020. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/250330>.

14 Monkman, “The White House State Dinner,” and Office of Presidential Libraries, “State Dinners at the White House.”

15 “Menu for State Dinner Honoring President Betancourt,” White House Historical Association, accessed October 27, 2020. <https://library.whitehousehistory.org/>.



This menu was created for a State Dinner hosted by President John F. Kennedy and First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy to honor President Rómulo Betancourt of Venezuela on February 19, 1963. Courtesy of Henry & Carole Haller and Family, White House Historical Association.

Compare this elaborate French menu with a menu served during President Franklin Roosevelt's 1939 State Dinner for King George VI: minted melon balls, green turtle soup, broiled sweetbreads and mushrooms, asparagus, pineapple sponge shortcake, and coffee.<sup>16</sup> Unlike the Kennedys, hoping to demonstrate more sophistication, the Roosevelts, who occupied the White House during the Great Depression and World War II, preferred to serve a more austere menu with fewer courses. As White House Head Butler Alonzo Fields recounted in his memoir, "I was told there would be no waste, as in the Hoover Administration, and that Mrs. Roosevelt did not believe in elaborate dinners."<sup>17</sup>

Each administration designed its State Dinners as a reflection of the times. Marred by the economic troubles of the Great Depression (1929–1939) and the rationing of World War II, the Roosevelts exhibited caution over elegance. While still showing respect for the guest of honor, this approach also highlighted respect for the American people struggling during this period. The Kennedys, under the curtain of the Cold War, chose more elaborate dinners

that highlighted America's role as a world power and reflected their beliefs in capitalism as they battled with the Soviet Union.

**NHD Topic Tip:** Students interested in the history of food might look to different times and ways food has been debated or used to form bonds between people. For instance, they might examine how World War I and World War II saw the banning of German foods in the United States or how communities rationed food to support the war effort. Others might explore how Atlantic World and colonial-era foods, like coffee, tea, and sugar, traveled worldwide as different groups interacted with them.

## MAKING IT ALL HAPPENING: THE RUN OF SHOW

White House staff spends many months preparing for a State Dinner, and every detail furthers diplomatic relationships. Each State Dinner must adhere to the White House and the State Department's strict diplomatic protocol. First, the team creates a guest list. After accounting for the visiting party's guests and the president's attendees, the White House carefully determines who else will be invited. Attending a State Dinner is a great honor.

Behind the dinner's festive exterior, the business of government continues as guests use the opportunity to gather information, exchange opinions, make connections with influential people, and uphold their status. The number of guests typically remains low because most State Dinners take place in the State Dining Room, which only seats approximately 140 guests.<sup>18</sup> Once guests accept an invitation, the first lady and staff must carefully consider the seating arrangements, keeping protocol in mind as well as creating an interesting group at each table. Being selected to sit at the president or first lady's table is a special honor.<sup>19</sup>

In addition to establishing guest lists, first ladies work with White House staff, including the social secretary, the chief usher, and the State Department, to select the decorations and place settings for each dinner, including floral arrangements, china services, glassware, silverware, and tablecloths. Although these details may appear small, each decision is crucial because it recognizes the visiting head of state while highlighting American culture. These details are

16 "Royalty to Eat All-U.S. Dishes," *The Washington Post*, June 8, 1939, Proquest (151158334).

17 Alonzo Fields, *My 21 Years in the White House*, (New York: Coward-McCann, Inc., 1960): 57.

18 Fields, *My 21 Years in the White House*, 57.

19 Monkman, "The White House State Dinner."

often part of a theme selected to honor the visiting head of state. Staffers conduct extensive research on the visiting party in advance, and select flowers, settings, or colors that reflect the culture of the visiting head of state's country.<sup>20</sup>

For example, 1976 was a big year for State Dinners, as multiple visiting heads of state sought to honor America's bicentennial by deepening diplomatic relationships. In addition to hosting Queen Elizabeth II, President Gerald Ford and First Lady Betty Ford also hosted a State Dinner honoring French President Giscard d'Estaing and acknowledging one of the United States' oldest allies—the French. The first lady selected “light” as the dinner's theme, inspired by France's bicentennial gift to the United States, a light and sound show at Mount Vernon. Centerpieces were designed to pay homage to this gift, with items representing light, such as lanterns, candelabra, and candlesticks, loaned by Vermont's Shelburne Museum. The floral arrangements included anemones, the favorite flower of Mrs. d'Estaing. These thoughtful gestures served to demonstrate respect and knowledge of the visiting French president and his wife.<sup>21</sup>

State Dinners do not involve only foreign dignitaries and the President and First Lady of the United States. They also rely on contributions from many different people at the White House, including chefs, social secretaries, ushers, and others. Students might consider researching the ways ordinary people shape diplomacy for their NHD projects.

To conclude a State Dinner, guests usually participate in some form of after-dinner entertainment. Some State Dinners feature performances. President John F. Kennedy and First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy and President Lyndon B. Johnson and First Lady Claudia “Lady Bird” Johnson enjoyed hosting dance performances. Mrs. Kennedy even had a portable stage built for dance and theatrical performances in the East Room.<sup>22</sup> During one State Dinner held in honor of President Diosdado Macapagal of the Philippines on October 5, 1964, the Johnsons invited the Harkness Ballet and dancers Marjorie Tallchief and Nicholas Polajenko to perform in the White House East Room. This marked the new dance company's premier performance. Its founder, Rebekah Harkness, was an invited guest.<sup>23</sup>



This photograph shows ballet dancers as they perform for President Lyndon B. Johnson and his guests during the State Visit of Filipino president Diosdado Macapagal on October 5, 1964, in the East Room. Attending the performance were First Lady “Lady Bird” Johnson and Macapagal's wife and daughter, Eva and Gloria. Entertainment for the evening was provided by the Harkness Ballet, with Marjorie Tallchief and Nicholas Polajenko performing. Courtesy of the White House Historical Association.

Each piece of a State Dinner is designed to create open communication between guests and, from start to finish, serves to foster mutual respect, open debate, and promote continued diplomacy between nations.

## CONCLUSION

Exploring State Dinners through the collections of the White House Historical Association offers students the opportunity to uncover unique connections to the theme *Debate & Diplomacy in History: Successes, Failures, Consequences*. Ultimately, State Dinners exist to advance America's diplomatic relationships and demonstrate American hospitality and style. Since the president serves as the United States' chief diplomat and develops foreign policy, ensuring continued alliances with other countries is a significant goal. The use of the Executive Mansion as a tool of diplomacy and as a stage for international affairs is crucial to developing the United States' diplomatic relationships. The State Dinner allows presidents to open their home to the world and build lasting global connections.

To access more theme resources,  
go to [nhd.org/themebook](https://nhd.org/themebook).

20 Office of Presidential Libraries, “State Dinners at the White House.”

21 Office of Presidential Libraries, “State Dinners at the White House.”

22 “Jacqueline Kennedy in the White House,” The John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, accessed October 27, 2020. <https://www.jfklibrary.org/learn/about-jfk/jfk-in-history/jacqueline-kennedy-in-the-white-house>.

23 Dorothy McCordle, “The Setting was Silvery Blue,” *The Washington Post*, October 7, 1964, Proquest (142131717).

## CLASSROOM RESOURCES

The White House Historical Association (WHHA) boasts interactives and historical collections for students. It has a podcast, *1600 Sessions*, which discusses different topics relating to White House history, including woman suffrage, enslavement, and the president's neighborhood. It also has Classroom Resource Packets pertaining to various issues, including Westward Expansion and Space Exploration. Check out their virtual tours relating to enslavement in Washington, D.C., and an app that allows students to tour the White House from anywhere in the country. These resources are available at [whitehousehistory.org/online-resources-for-grades-6-12](http://whitehousehistory.org/online-resources-for-grades-6-12).

Looking for primary sources for the classroom? The WHHA has several collections relating to the White House and its long history, including:

- *A Cultural Connection: The Long History of our Ties with France*  
[whitehousehistory.org/collections/a-cultural-french-connection](http://whitehousehistory.org/collections/a-cultural-french-connection)

- *Italy in the White House: A History of Diplomatic Ties with our Allies*  
[whitehousehistory.org/collections/italy-in-the-white-house](http://whitehousehistory.org/collections/italy-in-the-white-house)
- *Presidents & Baseball: An American Tradition*  
[whitehousehistory.org/collections/white-house-baseball](http://whitehousehistory.org/collections/white-house-baseball)
- *Protest at the People's House*  
[whitehousehistory.org/collections/protest-at-the-peoples-house](http://whitehousehistory.org/collections/protest-at-the-peoples-house)
- *Women and the White House*  
[whitehousehistory.org/collections/women-and-the-white-house](http://whitehousehistory.org/collections/women-and-the-white-house)
- *The Working White House*  
[whitehousehistory.org/collections/the-working-white-house](http://whitehousehistory.org/collections/the-working-white-house)

You can also register for a free account on the WHHA's website to view, save, and download materials for classroom use. To register, visit [library.whitehousehistory.org/fotoweb/views/login](http://library.whitehousehistory.org/fotoweb/views/login).



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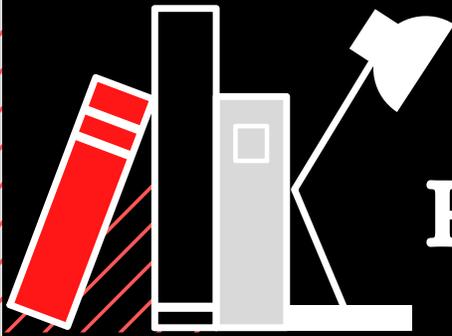
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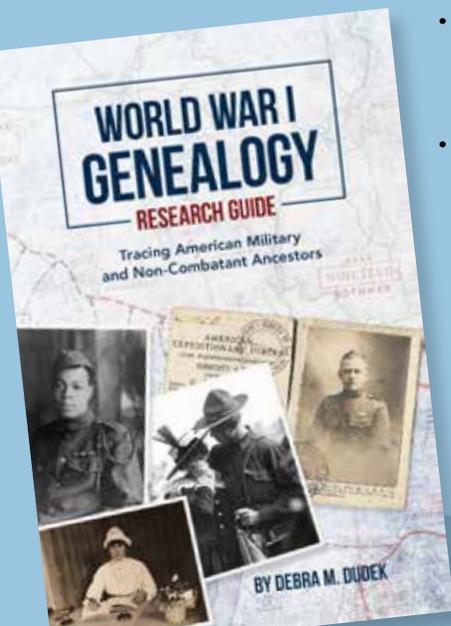
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# Igniting the Middle East: World War I Diplomacy and Treaties

LORA VOGT, Curator of Education, National WWI Museum and Memorial

The Middle East has been a hot spot of conflict throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, with millions of lives lost in civil wars, state-based conflicts, and one-sided violence. How and why has this loosely defined geographic region of southwestern Asia experienced such consistent upheaval?<sup>1</sup> To understand the conflicts of the modern Middle East, one must start with the Ottoman Empire.

The Ottoman Empire began in the thirteenth century.<sup>2</sup> During the next 500 years, it ruled over an ethnically, religiously, and geographically diverse region at the intersection of Europe, Asia, and North Africa. By the early twentieth century, the Ottoman Empire's military suffered several significant defeats. The Empire's sphere of influence contracted under a series of decreasingly effective monarchical leaders known as sultans.



Map of Anatolia and the Middle East from the *Comprehensive Atlas of Europe, 1919*. Courtesy of the National WWI Museum and Memorial (1989.2.12, page 24).

Why the assassination of an Austrian political leader, who did not yet command an empire, led to devastating global combat is still debated by historians. European countries with vast colonial investments in North Africa (France and Great Britain) and Central Asia (Great Britain) declared war rapidly in August of 1914 following Archduke Franz Ferdinand's assassination on June 28. Each belligerent nation sought to secure and enlarge its empire, knowing that industrialized economies relied heavily upon oil.<sup>3</sup> Before World War I, the British had even produced maps of oil regions, focusing on locations in the Middle East.<sup>4</sup>

The Ottoman Empire waited until the autumn of 1914 to join the war on the Central Powers' side.<sup>5</sup> Politically isolated and geographically vulnerable, the Ottoman Empire controlled most of southwestern Asia.<sup>6</sup> Four years and more than 37 million military and civilian casualties later, a formal armistice was signed that ended fighting on the Western Front. Four empires fell, including the Ottomans. It took another five years for the nations involved to establish and agree upon multiple treaties and provisions to officially end the war. As French Prime Minister George Clemenceau said in July 1919, "It is far easier to make war than make peace."<sup>7</sup>

- 1 The "Middle East" is a term used for a political and geographic region that can range from 15 to 27 countries. The region focuses on Southwestern Asia with additions of countries from North Africa, southeastern Europe, and/or Central Asia, depending on defining characteristics prescribed by the author.
- 2 A concise and image-rich article on the rise and fall of the Ottoman Empire is Erin Blakemore, "Why the Ottoman Empire Rose and Fell," *National Geographic*, December 6, 2019. <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/reference/modern-history/why-ottoman-empire-rose-fell/>.
- 3 The pamphlet, *The Commercial Future of Baghdad*, is the last object of the timeline on the east side of the Main Gallery of the National WWI Museum and Memorial in Kansas City, Missouri. The original text can be downloaded from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro <http://libcdm1.uncg.edu/cdm/ref/collection/WWIPamp/id/10387>.
- 4 The British Library has a collection of maps of the Middle East showing oil deposits from the early twentieth century. See "Oil maps of the Middle East," British Library, accessed December 30, 2020. <https://www.bl.uk/maps/articles/oil-maps-of-the-middle-east>.
- 5 The Central Powers in 1914 consisted of Austria-Hungary, Germany, and the Ottoman Empire. Bulgaria joined in 1915. Austria and Hungary formally split in October 1918. The Ottoman Empire officially ended on November 1, 1922.
- 6 The well-edited and diversely authored International Encyclopedia of the First World War 1914–18 is one of the most far-reaching projects of the World War I centennial. To learn more about why the Ottoman Empire became engaged in the war, see Feroze Yasamee, "War Aims and War Aims Discussions (Ottoman Empire)," International Encyclopedia of the First World War, updated January 22, 2018, accessed December 30, 2020. [https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/war\\_aims\\_and\\_war\\_aims\\_discussions\\_ottoman\\_empire](https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/war_aims_and_war_aims_discussions_ottoman_empire).
- 7 Margaret MacMillan and Richard C. Holbrooke, *Paris 1919: Six Months That Changed the World* (New York: Random House, 2003).

Students may want to explore Ottoman diplomacy leading up to and through World War I.<sup>8</sup> Online archives, like those listed on the portal at Koç University in Istanbul, Turkey, are good places to start ([ibguides.ku.edu.tr/c.php?g=135295&p=4863860](http://ibguides.ku.edu.tr/c.php?g=135295&p=4863860)). Students can also watch a series of historians' perspectives from the National WWI Museum and Memorial's YouTube channel: [youtu.be/uUawFE3AR3M](https://youtu.be/uUawFE3AR3M).

The Paris Peace Conference opened on January 18, 1919, and closed on January 19, 1920. It established the terms of peace between the Allied and the Central Powers.<sup>9</sup> The five treaties that resulted from this meeting included:<sup>10</sup>

- › Treaty of Versailles, signed by the Allied Powers and Germany on June 28, 1919;
- › Treaty of Saint-Germain, signed by the Allied Powers and Austria on September 10, 1919;
- › Treaty of Neuilly, signed by the Allied Powers and Bulgaria on November 27, 1919;
- › Treaty of Trianon, signed by the Allied Powers and Hungary on June 4, 1920; and
- › Treaty of Sèvres, signed by the Allied Powers and the former Ottoman Empire on August 10, 1920.

These treaties are a perfect fit with the National History Day® (NHD) theme *Debate & Diplomacy in History: Successes, Failures, Consequences*. Each treaty resulted from a series of debates and diplomatic actions. Each had short- and long-term implications, with successes and failures defined in part by the lens through which it was evaluated. Perspectives shape history. Each perspective provides a different piece of a larger narrative. One group might see a success, where another sees a failure. When exploring the treaties of World War I, students must pay close attention to the various historical actors and perspectives involved.<sup>11</sup>

## DIPLOMATIC DEALS BEFORE FORMAL TREATIES

Understanding historical context is essential when assessing any action. To understand the vast repercussions of post-war treaties within the Middle East, students need to be aware of four diplomatic efforts that launched *before* the treaties were negotiated and signed: the Husayn-McMahon Correspondence, the Sykes-Picot Agreement, the Balfour Declaration, and the King-Crane Commission. Each event helped shape the foundation of what would become the modern Middle East.

### HUSAYN-MCMAHON CORRESPONDENCE, 1916

In 1915 and 1916, as World War I raged, Husayn Ali (also spelled Hussein), the Sharif of Mecca and Hejaz leader, and Sir Henry McMahon, the British High commissioner in Egypt, exchanged a series of letters. McMahon, keenly aware of British losses at Gallipoli and Kut-al-Amara, wanted to weaken the Ottoman Empire. Husayn Ali desired British economic support and political opportunities after the war.

In these letters, McMahon promised protection of sacred Holy Places and support for Arab independence if the Arabs revolted against the Ottoman Empire. In exchange, Great Britain would gain special administrative provisions within oil-rich Baghdad and Basra.<sup>12</sup>

### LOST IN TRANSLATION

Many diplomatic efforts occur when the primary negotiators do not speak the same language. When exploring topics, consider the role and the responsibility of the translator. Pay attention to the choice of words and how they were delivered. For the Husayn-McMahon correspondence, the translator was Husayn Ruhi.<sup>13</sup>

8 To learn more about the Ottoman Empire before the war, see Mustafa Aksakal, "The Limits of Diplomacy: The Ottoman Empire and the First World War," *Foreign Policy Analysis* 7, no. 2 (April 2011): 197-203; David Fromkin, *A Peace to End All Peace* (New York: Holt, 2009); and Yiğit Akin, *When the War Came Home: The Ottomans' Great War and the Devastation of an Empire* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2018).

9 The Allied Powers who attended the Paris Peace Conference and were listed by name in the Treaty of Versailles included: the United States, Great Britain, France, Japan, Italy, Australia, Belgium, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, China, Cuba, Ecuador, Greece, Guatemala, Haiti, The Hedjaz (Saudi Arabia), Honduras, India, Liberia, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Roumania (Romania), The Serb-Croat-Slovene State (Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Slovenia), Siam (Thailand), South Africa, Czecho-Slovakia (Czech Republic and Slovakia), and Uruguay.

10 The U.S. State Department provides digitized and searchable versions of agreements associated with the Paris Peace Conference at <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1919Parisv01>.

11 Students may explore how one defines success or failure. For example, from a French and British perspective, the relative peace of the 1920s is a success of the Treaty of Versailles. The German perspective would be very different.

12 Students can access the transcribed letters through the Qatar National Library ([https://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc\\_100023608756.0x00000c](https://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100023608756.0x00000c)) or the National Archives of the United Kingdom (<http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/D7644719>).

13 Learn more about Husayn Ruhi here: Hilary Falb Kalisman, "The Little Persian Agent in Palestine: Husayn Ruhi, British Intelligence, and World War I," *Jerusalem Quarterly* 66 (Summer 2016). <https://www.palestine-studies.org/en/node/202341>.

## SYKES-PICOT AGREEMENT, 1916

Without rescinding earlier promises to Arab leaders, British diplomat Sir Mark Sykes and French diplomat François Georges-Picot secretly drafted the Sykes-Picot Agreement in 1916, with Russia's approval. The agreement split the Ottoman Arab provinces into two spheres of influence, one British and one French, granting Russia control over present-day Turkey. The Sykes-Picot Agreement was not intended to create a cohesive future for the region's independence but instead, limit rivalry between and preserve power for the British and French.

In 1917, the Bolsheviks overthrew Tsar Nicholas II in Russia and rose to power. Recognizing an opportunity to embarrass the Allied Powers by disclosing both the plan to split the provinces and conflicting promises to Husayn Ali and the Arabs, the Bolsheviks published the agreement's text in October 1917, making the secret agreement public.

The National Archives of the United Kingdom highlights materials in their collection relating to the Sykes-Picot Agreement. Learn more at [blog.nationalarchives.gov.uk/dividing-bears-skin-bear-still-alive-1916-sykes-picot-agreement/](https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/dividing-bears-skin-bear-still-alive-1916-sykes-picot-agreement/).

## BALFOUR DECLARATION, 1917

During World War I, the British government sought to secure its position in the Middle East with the Jewish population (roughly 90,000 of whom lived in Palestine during World War I) and enlist the support of Jews in the United States and Russia.<sup>14</sup> In 1917, after a series of communiqués and debates on wording, British Foreign Secretary James Balfour wrote a letter to British Zionist leader Baron Lionel Walter Rothschild promising the “establishment in Palestine of a National Home for the Jewish people.”<sup>15</sup> This letter became known as the Balfour Declaration of 1917.

The agreement included the statement that it should be “understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country.”<sup>16</sup> For political practicalities, the British intended to create a Jewish colony dependent on Great Britain. This agreement directly contradicted McMahon's promises for Arab independence.

In exploring National History Day topics, look for archives that hold deliberation records. For example, the National Museum of American Jewish History has handwritten notes on the Balfour Declaration's draft language.<sup>17</sup> Consider why individuals settled on the final language and who influenced the debate.<sup>18</sup> The National WWI Museum and Memorial has records of comments made by President Woodrow Wilson<sup>19</sup> and other delegates<sup>20</sup> from planning sessions during the Paris Peace Conference.

## KING-CRANE COMMISSION REPORT, 1919

Despite official involvement for less than half the war, the United States had significant influence over the Paris Peace Conference negotiations. Appointed by President Woodrow Wilson, Henry Churchill King and Charles Crane led a commission to meet delegations and invited petitions from the wide-ranging factions across the Middle East. Though intended to be a multi-national effort, it remained a primarily American endeavor, in part because of the other conflictual agreements described earlier.



On December 2, 1922, *Editor & Publisher* magazine published the King-Crane Commission Report. The magazine described the report as a “Suppressed Official Document of the United States Government.” Courtesy of HathiTrust.

14 To learn more about the Jewish-American experience in World War I, visit <https://www.theworldwar.org/explore/exhibitions/past-exhibitions/liberty-american-jewish-experience-wwi>.

15 “Balfour Declaration,” The Avalon Project, Yale Law School, accessed December 30, 2020. [https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th\\_century/balfour.asp](https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/balfour.asp).

16 “Balfour Declaration.” To learn more about the Balfour Declaration, see Maryanne A. Rhett, “Balfour Declaration,” *International Encyclopedia of the First World War*, updated July 18, 2019, accessed December 30, 2020. [https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/balfour\\_declaration](https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/balfour_declaration).

17 Carrie Hagan, “How a Single Paragraph Paved the Way for a Jewish State,” *Smithsonian Magazine*, May 22, 2017. <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/single-paragraph-paved-way-jewish-state-180963390/>. To learn more about the exhibition, *1917: How One Year Changed the World*, visit the National Museum of American Jewish History at <https://info.nmajh.org/1917/>.

18 Lily Rothman, “These Two Drafts Show How the Balfour Declaration Evolved,” *Time*, March 17, 2017. <https://time.com/4702147/balfour-drafts-1917/>.

19 Faith H. Dodge, “Transcript from the 3rd Plenary Session . . .,” transcript, February 14, 1919, National WWI Museum and Memorial (2014.34.36a). <https://theworldwar.pastperfectonline.com/archive/7A1ECC86-01E4-4435-972F-605856316724>.

20 Faith H. Dodge, “Transcript from the 4th Plenary Session . . .,” transcript, April 11, 1919, National WWI Museum and Memorial (2014.34.37). <https://theworldwar.pastperfectonline.com/archive/2A6E5CD9-F2F6-4B14-B701-323918109060>.

Between June and August 1919, the American Commission traveled across the Middle East to discuss self-determination. King and Crane met with 432 leaders in modern-day Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Israel, and Turkey to understand how their inhabitants wanted to define their borders and governments.<sup>21</sup> In many ways, it was a diplomatic success. The Commission recognized the volatile situation in Turkey. It insisted that boundaries based on ethnic lines were nearly impossible and that forcing people to live together through complicated legal arrangements was ill-advised. Ultimately, it failed because national leaders completely disregarded the Commission's findings. The Commission Report was not made public until December 2, 1922.

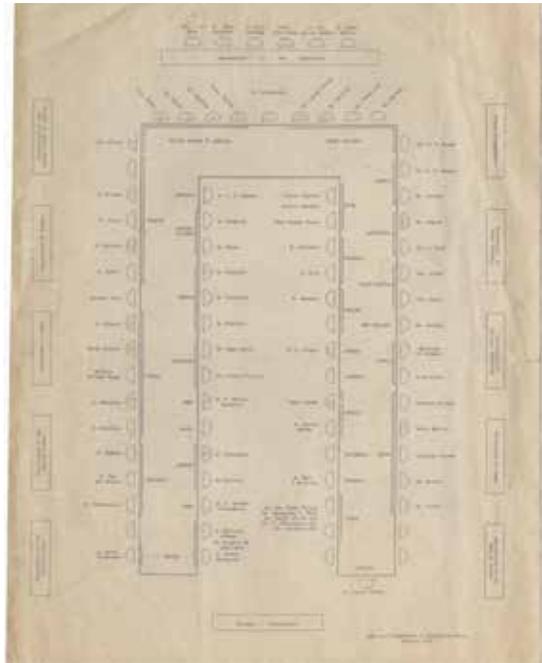
## CASCADE OF TREATIES

The Paris Peace Conference included representatives from nearly 30 nations and lasted over a year. It was an uphill battle, as the end of empires led to a figurative and literal remapping of the globe. Four years of contradictory diplomatic agreements, conflicting objectives amid ambiguous commitments, and significant debate resulted in five treaties that fueled upheaval worldwide, particularly within the Middle East. Almost all of the delegates (notably the Big Four Representatives from the United States, Great Britain, France, and Italy) favored the diplomatic agreements led by Balfour, Sykes, and Picot, establishing British and French mandates in the Middle East and promoting the concept of a Jewish homeland.

## TREATY OF VERSAILLES, 1919

"As no one is satisfied it makes me hope we have made just peace," U.S. President Woodrow Wilson wrote to his wife, Edith, about the Treaty of Versailles.<sup>22</sup> Lauded as the most influential post-World War I treaty, the Treaty of Versailles revealed supposed compromises. Diplomats cautioned that the treaty would not and observed how the treaty already could not ensure peace, even while it was being written. It doled out war reparations, reevaluated land boundaries, and shifted power toward the Allied Powers. The treaty also included President Wilson's request for a League of Nations. As the Allied Powers walked away victorious, Germany felt the weight of heavy sanctions while other nations, such as the Ottoman Empire, were ignored at the negotiation table. The treaty is a prime example of both diplomatic success and failure, depending on the perspectives of those involved. Husayn Ali, represented by his son, Faisal, did not ratify the Treaty of Versailles in

protest, as it diverged from earlier diplomatic agreements.<sup>23</sup> Great Britain, France, and the United States all saw success, as they earned more power and money from the treaty. Many other nations struggled economically and politically for years to come.



The seating chart for the negotiations reflects complicated acts of diplomacy. Courtesy of the National WWI Museum and Memorial (2014.34).



Faysal ibn Husayn standing in front of, from left to right, Mohammed Rustum Bey Haidar of Baalbek, Brigadier General Nuri Pasha Said, Captain Pisani, T. E. Lawrence, and Captain Hassan Bey Kadri (with an unknown person in the background) at the Paris Peace Conference, January 22, 1919. Courtesy of the Imperial War Museum (Q 55581).<sup>24</sup>

21 Henry King was president of Oberlin College from 1902 to 1927. Oberlin College holds a digitized archive of commission-related documents, accessible at <https://www2.oberlin.edu/library/digital/king-crane/intro.html>.

22 Edith Galt Wilson, *Memoirs of Mrs. Woodrow Wilson* (London: Putnam, 1939): 324.

23 One of Wilson's Fourteen Points, self-determination for Kurds, was adopted by the Treaty of Versailles. Though the Kurds were promised a nation-state by the Allied Powers, over the course of three treaties they found themselves divided among Turkey, Syria, Iraq, and Iran. Primary sources can be found at the Woodrow Wilson Center <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/>.

24 To learn more about the British Mandate for Mesopotamia, see Burcu Kurt, "Mesopotamia, British Mandate for," *International Encyclopedia of the First World War*, updated April 16, 2018, accessed February 10, 2021. [https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/mesopotamia\\_british\\_mandate\\_for](https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/mesopotamia_british_mandate_for).

Many applauded President Wilson for advocating self-determination, a concept that appeared in his Fourteen Points presented at the Paris Peace Conference. As early as January 22, 1917, in a speech to the U.S. Congress, he argued that “no nation should seek to extend its polity over any other nation or people, but that every people should be left free to determine its own polity, its own way of development, unhindered, unthreatened, unafraid, the little along with the great and powerful.”<sup>25</sup>

Self-determination and its aspirational and inspirational diplomatic tones looked very different in action. Fueled by wartime sacrifice and a new sense of nationalism, Egyptian statesman Saad Zaghlul sought to present the case for Egyptian self-determination at the Paris Peace Conference. The British government refused to allow the conference delegation to travel and arrested Zaghlul and others in March 1919, deporting them to Malta. This action led to Egypt’s 1919 Revolution, where over 800 Egyptians died.<sup>26</sup> Despite direct outreach to Woodrow Wilson and the U.S. Congress, many felt betrayed in the application of self-determination, particularly as it pertained to peoples of color.

Across the Middle East and Asia, people under colonial rule were deeply disappointed with the Treaty of Versailles’ results. Future Chinese leader Mao Zedong described the Allied Powers in 1919 as “a bunch of robbers bent on securing territories . . . [even though they] cynically championed self-determination.”<sup>27</sup> Students might investigate connections between discourse and diplomatic failures that link World War I and the Vietnam War.<sup>28</sup>

The Paris Peace Conference offers students multiple opportunities to think about debate and diplomacy. Examining the Treaty of Versailles allows students to explore many international digitized archives (including the British Library, Europeana, French Diplomatic Archives, and the National Archives of the United Kingdom and the United States) while investigating the themes of diplomacy and debate.<sup>28</sup> Students might consider how:

- inattentiveness to domestic debates caused the U.S. to lead a treaty negotiation that they did not ratify;
- U.S. cross-party political debate impacted the League of Nations;
- the treatment of specific factions during peace negotiations, for example, Kurds or Egyptians, influenced later diplomacy and debates; or
- the League of Nations created an opportunity for the accountability of power in ways echoed later by the United Nations and the European Union.

## TREATY OF SÈVRES, 1920

The short-lived Treaty of Sèvres ultimately dissolved the Ottoman Empire. Created near the end of the Paris Peace Conference in 1919 and signed in 1920, it split the Ottoman Arab provinces between France and Great Britain, though not on the original Sykes-Picot line. France, Great Britain, and Italy gained control of Anatolia (modern-day Turkey). It also provided mandates to the French and British in oil-rich territories—Syria and Lebanon (provided to France) and Palestine, Iraq, and Transjordan (provided to Great Britain)—to the dismay of other diplomats such as T.E. Lawrence.<sup>30</sup>

25 Woodrow Wilson, “A World League for Peace,” Speech to the U.S. Congress, January 22, 1917. Miller Center, University of Virginia. <https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches/january-22-1917-world-league-peace-speech>. To access the complete text of President Wilson’s Fourteen Points, go to “The Fourteen Points: Woodrow Wilson and the U.S. Rejection of the Treaty of Versailles” available from The National WWI Museum and Memorial: <https://www.theworldwar.org/learn/peace/fourteen-points>.

26 Erez Manela, “Woodrow Wilson and the ‘the Ugliest of Treacheries,’” *The New York Times*, March 9, 2019. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/09/opinion/egypt-revolution-wilson.html>.

27 Quoted in Manela, “The Peace of Versailles: A Global View.”

28 Explore these connections in the National WWI Museum and Memorial’s online exhibition, *The Vietnam War: 1945–1975* at <https://www.theworldwar.org/explore/exhibitions/past-exhibitions/vietnam-war-1945-1975>.

29 See “World War One,” British Library, accessed December 30, 2020. <https://www.bl.uk/world-war-one>; “The Treaty of Versailles: The end of World War I?,” Europeana Blog, June 28, 2019. <https://www.europeana.eu/en/blog/the-treaty-of-versailles-the-end-of-world-war-i>; and “Diplomatic Archives: The Peace Conference (Paris, 18 January 1919),” Diplomatic Archives of France, accessed December 30, 2020. <https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/the-ministry-and-its-network/the-diplomatic-archives/documents-from-the-diplomatic-archives/article/diplomatic-archives-the-peace-conference-paris-18-01-1919>.

30 Lawrence was a British military intelligence officer who served as a liaison from the British Army to several Arab leaders, supporting independence movements against the Ottoman Turks.

British Prime Minister David Lloyd George faced the challenge of reconciling wartime diplomatic agreements with postwar treaties. This debate amplified the Ottoman people's disillusionment with their government and drove the Turkish nationalist movement.



A photograph of Sultan Mehmed VI with Turkish military officials, taken by Dr. P. A. Smithe, an American Red Cross surgeon in Vienna from 1914 to 1915. Courtesy of the National WWI Museum and Memorial (1983.41.120).

After Sultan Mehmed VI, the last sultan of the Ottoman Empire, signed the Treaty of Sèvres, Kurds joined the Turkish nationalist movement. Kurdish and Turkic forces ultimately expelled British and French forces in the Chanak Crisis of 1922. This led to the end of Prime Minister George's political career, showcased the League of Nations' weakness, and paved the way for the Conference of Lausanne in 1922 and 1923.

Aware of the diplomatic duplicity, the British attempted to placate Husayn Ali and other rulers in the Sharifate of Mecca by placing Husayn Ali's sons, Faisal and Abdullah, in leadership roles. Faisal became the King of Iraq and Abdullah became the Emir of Transjordan (later known as Jordan).

Though the Treaty of Sèvres created the borders of new countries and addressed economic issues, it failed. Great Britain and France's financial weaknesses and unwillingness to handle the demands of minority populations, coupled with the fall of Russia, led to its collapse.

## TREATY OF LAUSANNE, 1923

The Allied Powers gained greater authority in the Middle East (Anatolia, Arabia, Syria, and Mesopotamia) when they signed the Armistice of Mudros on October 30, 1918. However, controlling the vast expanse of lands required a sizable military force, a concept that did not align with a global desire to de-escalate and "bring our boys home." British diplomat Lord George Curzon described negotiating with the Turkish Republic, "Hitherto we have dictated our peace treaties . . . now we are negotiating one with the enemy who has an army in being while we have none, an unheard of position."<sup>31</sup> Many historians agree the Treaty of Lausanne, signed by the Allied Powers and the new Republic on Turkey on July 24, 1923, was effective because participants negotiated and produced conceding multilateral agreements. It proved to be the longest-lasting treaty associated with the Paris Peace Conference.

Some consider the Treaty of Lausanne to be one of Turkey's most significant diplomatic victories. The negotiations created Turkey's present borders and allowed it to be truly independent and sovereign.<sup>32</sup> Others perceived the treaty as a diplomatic failure. The Treaty of Lausanne did not deliver "autonomous development for the non-Turkish nationalities."<sup>33</sup> Neither the Armenians nor the Kurds gained their nation. This disillusionment fueled Kurdish nationalism and a century of hostilities. Additionally, a compulsory transfer of populations—Muslim Greeks for Christian Turks—set the stage for conflict between the Greeks and Turks throughout the twentieth century.

### POSSIBLE RESEARCH AREAS FOR STUDENTS

The limitations and miscarriages of diplomacy during and after World War I influenced the Middle East. Students can consider topics for NHD research, including:

- a Kurdish "statelessness" created by separating Kurds among three different nation-states—Turkey, Persia (now Iran), and Iraq—none of which had concern for Kurdish autonomy;
- a legacy of resentment toward colonial rule and a persisting distrust of Western motives;
- repercussions from the League of Nations awarding the city of Mosul to British-Iraq in 1925; and
- the Cold War that led to armed conflict in Afghanistan and throughout the Middle East.

## CONCLUSION

World War I is rich with lessons on debate and diplomacy. That victory does not equate to peace is just one of World War I's lessons. Historians of the past century have struggled to define triumphs and miscarriages of diplomacy during and after World War I. What is certain is that those who participated in the Paris Peace Conference tried to build a better future. It is our responsibility to learn from those failures and successes to understand the world better and address the consequences of World War I and a century of conflicts since then.

To access more theme resources,  
go to [nhd.org/themebook](http://nhd.org/themebook).

## Transforming Education

The National Museum of the American Indian's education initiative Native Knowledge 360° (NK360°) offers educators free, bilingual, easy-to-use resources that engage students and challenge them to rethink their assumptions about Native peoples. NK360° provides views of not only Native cultures in the past but also the vibrant lives of Native peoples today.

### Students and educators learn more about:

- Native contemporary and traditional cultures
- Native peoples' roles in history
- Native peoples' contributions to the arts, sciences and literature

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# Nation to Nation: Diplomacy, Debate, and the American Indian Removal Act of 1830

MANDY VAN HEUVELEN, Cultural Interpreter Coordinator, National Museum of the American Indian

When Europeans first arrived in America, they encountered many diverse Native Nations, each with its own sovereign government, leaders, language, and diplomatic traditions. Native North Americans found that European newcomers had very different ways of thinking and being. However, both groups shared the custom of making treaties between independent nations. Throughout their shared history, the Native Nations and the United States signed nearly 400 treaties, revealing strong diplomatic ties between the communities who lived side-by-side.<sup>1</sup> To understand the history of the United States, we must engage with diplomatic stories amongst nations. Those treaties bound both sides, but what happened when those treaties were not honored?

To introduce this topic with students, educators can use this video produced for the National Museum of the American Indian's exhibition *Nation to Nation: Treaties Between the United States and American Indian Nations*. It provides an introduction to the principles of diplomacy established through treaties: [youtube.com/watch?v=gNII8ZWQPkl](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gNII8ZWQPkl).

Many early treaties intended to solidify peace and friendship between the nations and, importantly, define borders and boundaries negotiated by each party. However, as the U.S. population grew, so too did its need for more land and resources. Pressure grew to remove Native Nations from their traditional lands.

This demand to expand U.S. borders resulted in the Indian Removal Act of 1830, which imagined the United States without American Indians. It proposed that the tribal Nations and their citizens living inside the country's boundaries should leave their land in exchange for payment and new land west of the Mississippi River. The Indian Removal Act was hotly debated in the U.S. Congress and throughout the country as Americans took sides.<sup>2</sup> Its consequences resulted in the forced relocation of tens of thousands of American Indians from their homelands and changed America's landscape.

This article uses the National History Day® (NHD) theme of *Debate & Diplomacy in History: Successes, Failures, Consequences* to explore the nation-to-nation diplomacy between the United States and Native Nations, the tension between national growth and democratic and humanitarian values, and the Indian Removal Act's consequences.

The Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian has an online education initiative, *Native Knowledge 360°*. Visit [americanindian.si.edu/nk360](https://americanindian.si.edu/nk360) to find classroom materials, student programs, and teacher professional development opportunities.

## TREATIES AS TOOLS OF DIPLOMACY

**In order to fully understand the American Experience, you have to understand the relationship between the United States and the Indian Nations [and] how that relationship evolved right up until what it is today.<sup>3</sup>**

**Kevin Gover (Pawnee)**  
**Under Secretary for Museums and Culture,**  
**Smithsonian Institution**

Native Nations have always had sovereignty (the right to make their laws and govern themselves). Treaties are agreements between sovereign nations. Native Nations made treaties with one another long before Europeans came to the Western Hemisphere. The United States began making treaties with Native Peoples because they were independent nations.

The boundaries of the United States were first established in 1783 when it signed the Treaty of Paris with Great Britain to end the Revolutionary War.<sup>4</sup> The Americans and Europeans drew the boundaries around those of Native Nations, whose leaders did not sign nor witness the treaty.

1 Suzan Shown Harjo (Cheyenne and Hodulgee Muscogee) guest curator, *Nation to Nation: Treaties Between the United States and American Indian Nations*, exhibition (2014-2025), National Museum of the American Indian.

2 To learn more about opposition to the Indian Removal Act in American abolitionist circles, see Mary Hershberger, "Mobilizing Women, Anticipating Abolition: The Struggle against Indian Removal in the 1830s," *Journal of American History* 86, no 1 (June 1999): 15–40. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2567405>.

3 Quoted in *Nation to Nation*, video file, March 12, 2015, Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gNII8ZWQPkl>.

4 "Treaty of Paris," Library of Congress, accessed December 18, 2020. <https://www.loc.gov/rrr/program/bib/ourdocs/paris.html>.



This map, created in 1919, revealed only the boundaries of the United States and Spain, ignoring the land owned by Native Nations. Courtesy of the Library of Congress (2009581137).

Following the Revolutionary War, George Washington understood the importance of diplomacy with Native Nations. At the time, the United States was weak and still surrounded by adversaries to the north (British) and south (Spanish). Why were alliances with Native Nations so important to Washington? What was there to gain from forging these alliances? What were the risks? Why did Native Nations choose to trust Washington and the young United States?

Students can look to two treaties President George Washington signed to understand the everlasting peace and friendship that was guaranteed. Article I of the 1790 Muscogee Creek Treaty states, "There shall be perpetual peace and friendship between all the citizens of the United States of America, and all the individuals, towns and tribes of the Upper, Middle and Lower Creeks and Semanolies [sic] composing the Creek nation of Indians."<sup>5</sup> The 1794 Treaty of Canandaigua (Treaty with the Six Nations), opens with the statement, "Peace and friendship are hereby firmly established, and shall be perpetual, between the United States and the Six Nations."<sup>6</sup> The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) in Washington, D.C., preserves the original treaties between the United States and American Indian nations ([archives.gov/research/native-americans/treaties](https://www.archives.gov/research/native-americans/treaties)). Students can also examine an address to the Seneca Nation on December 29, 1790, in which President Washington affirmed this diplomatic relationship's importance.<sup>7</sup>

With each administration that followed, Native Nations maintained a unique relationship with the Office of the President of the United States. Some of the most impactful decisions and federal Indian policy came from Andrew Jackson, Abraham Lincoln, Lyndon B. Johnson, and Richard Nixon. The legacy of these decisions still impacts Native Nations today.

The Library of Congress and the National Archives and Records Administration house records that can be helpful to students studying various topics in American Indian history, including:

#### Library of Congress:

- Andrew Jackson Papers  
[loc.gov/collections/andrew-jackson-papers/about-this-collection/](https://www.loc.gov/collections/andrew-jackson-papers/about-this-collection/)
- Abraham Lincoln Papers  
[loc.gov/collections/abraham-lincoln-papers/about-this-collection/](https://www.loc.gov/collections/abraham-lincoln-papers/about-this-collection/)
- Classroom Materials, Immigration and Relocation in U.S. History (Native American)  
[loc.gov/classroom-materials/immigration/native-american/](https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/immigration/native-american/)

#### National Archives and Records Administration:

- American Indian Records in the National Archives  
[archives.gov/research/native-americans](https://www.archives.gov/research/native-americans)
- Records Pertaining to Cherokee Removal, 1836–1839  
[archives.gov/research/native-americans/chokeee-removal.html](https://www.archives.gov/research/native-americans/chokeee-removal.html)

5 "Treaty with the Creeks, 1790," in Charles J. Kappler, *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1904). National Museum of the American Indian, accessed December 18, 2020. <https://americanindian.si.edu/static/nationtonation/pdf/Muscogee-Treaty-1790.pdf>.

6 "Treaty with the Six Nations, 1794," in Charles J. Kappler, *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1904). National Museum of the American Indian, accessed December 18, 2020. <https://americanindian.si.edu/static/nationtonation/pdf/Treaty-of-Canandaigua-1794.pdf>.

7 "From George Washington to the Seneca Chiefs, 29 December 1790," Founders Online, National Archives and Records Administration, accessed December 18, 2020. <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/05-07-02-0080>.

## THE INDIAN PROBLEM

While treaties were negotiated in good faith, the United States' attitude began to change over time. Most Native Peoples entered the nineteenth century believing the United States recognized their inalienable rights to their lands, sovereignty, languages, and cultures. However, as the United States grew, state and federal leaders became less tolerant of the Native Nations within the country's borders.

The United States moved away from using treaties as a means of diplomatic engagement with Native Nations. Soon, treaties "morphed from this friendship and reciprocity" and became one-sided efforts to seize Native lands as the United States felt pressure to expand to accommodate its growing European population.<sup>8</sup>

Thomas Jefferson (1743–1826) was one of the most influential leaders of the early republic. In his eyes, acquiring territory was crucial to creating national power. Jefferson envisioned America as a country of farmers with an economy based on commerce. Both required Indian land. As the country's third president, Jefferson dramatically increased its territory, encouraging white settlers to push west and south. The first to suggest that Native Nations be sent west, he helped set off the national debate about removal. In a letter to William Henry Harrison in 1803, he wrote, "Should any tribe be fool-hardy enough to take up the hatchet at any time, the seizing the whole country of that tribe & driving them across the Missisipi [*sic*], as the only condition of peace, would be an example to others, and a furtherance of our final consolidations."<sup>9</sup>

Though Jefferson did not live to see it, his thinking influenced the 1830 Indian Removal Act and his ideas sparked the later actions taken under Indian Removal.<sup>10</sup>

As the United States' power, influence, and population grew in the nineteenth century, the nation gradually rejected the main principle of treaty-making—that tribes were self-governing nations—and initiated policies that undermined tribal sovereignty. For Indian nations, these policies resulted in broken treaties, vast land loss, removal and relocation, population decline, and cultural decimation. To learn more, watch *The "Indian Problem,"* a video produced for the museum's *Nation to Nation: Treaties Between the United States and American Indian Nations* exhibition: [youtube.com/watch?v=if-BOZgWZPE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=if-BOZgWZPE).



Sac and Fox (Sauk and Fox) delegates and their interpreter, Washington, D.C., 1867. William T. Sherman Collection of Alexander Gardner photographs, National Museum of the American Indian. Used with permission.

## THE DEBATE

In the early 1800s, a vigorous debate consumed the country: Should Indians be removed from the United States? Among non-Indians, removal was controversial. The United States knew that removing American Indians from their sovereign territories could damage its reputation as a new democracy. Supporters argued that it was humanitarian, and opponents said it betrayed democratic values. Students researching the Indian Removal Act of 1830 might explore the different historical figures, their arguments, and how these debates played out in the federal government's three branches, in different states, or even in local communities.

Supporters of Indian Removal, such as President Andrew Jackson and Chief Justice John Marshall, used stereotypical imagery and language to defend their arguments. Others justified removal through economic arguments. Wilson Lumpkin (1783–1870), the governor of Georgia from 1831 to 1835, was one of the fiercest advocates for the Indian Removal Act.<sup>11</sup> He wanted a railroad built across "Georgia land," hastening the state's economic progress. To make this happen, he needed land owned by the Cherokee. Lumpkin wrote of the long history of Georgia's relationship with the Cherokee Nation in his book, *The Removal of the Cherokee Indians from Georgia*.

8 Quoted in *The "Indian Problem,"* video file, March 3, 2015, Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=if-BOZgWZPE&t=4s>.

9 "From Thomas Jefferson to William Henry Harrison, 27 February 1803," Founders Online, National Archives and Records Administration, accessed December 18, 2020. <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/01-39-02-0500>.

10 "Thomas Jefferson Papers, 1606 to 1867," Digital Collection, Library of Congress. <https://www.loc.gov/collections/thomas-jefferson-papers/about-this-collection/>.

11 Governor Wilson Lumpkin's correspondence to President Andrew Jackson is available in the Library of Congress as part of the Andrew Jackson Papers Collection.

“No man is fit to be a Congressman who does not know that the Government might . . . have removed every Indian from Georgia.”<sup>12</sup> Students can examine Governor Lumpkin’s writings to learn more about his reasoning for removing Cherokee people from their land. Why did he believe the Cherokee were hindering economic progress for the state of Georgia? Why did he think Cherokee sovereignty restricted the sovereignty of the state?

Opponents of removal argued for the inherent sovereign rights of Native Nations. They claimed that expelling the entire Indian population of the United States went against existing policy and betrayed democratic values. Prominent voices against Indian removal disputed claims that Indian lands were destined for whites and that Indians lacked a “civilized” society. They recognized that American Indians had strong governments based on systems of morality and ethics that served their people’s interests and shaped relationships with diverse outsiders, Native and non-Native alike.

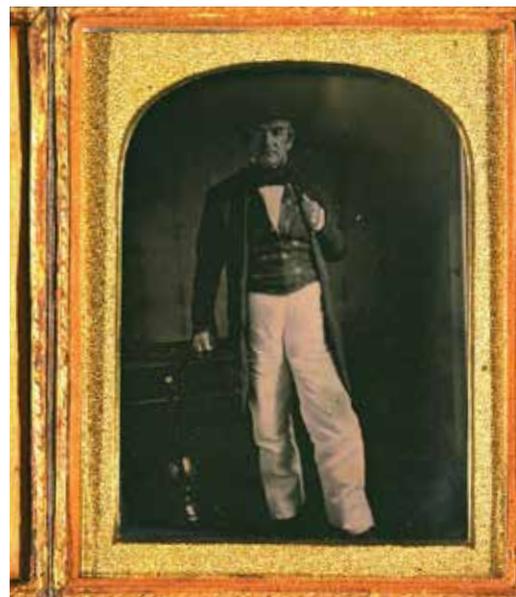
Serving for only one term, New Jersey Senator Theodore Frelinghuysen (1787–1862) gained national recognition opposing Indian removal. He wrote, “Our ancestors found these people . . . exercising all the rights, and enjoying the privileges, of free and independent sovereigns of this new world. They are not a wild and lawless horde of banditti, but live under the restraints of government, patriarchal in its character, and energetic in its influences.”<sup>13</sup> Frelinghuysen’s arguments against removal resonated with many who supported his views. What were the fundamental arguments he made? Why were the terms “civilized” and “uncivilized” so crucial in arguments for and against removal?

Many ordinary Americans also strongly opposed removal. In 1830, 63 women in Steubenville, Ohio, signed a petition imploring Congress to uphold the “undoubted national right” of Indians to their land.<sup>14</sup> The essayist Ralph Waldo Emerson also took a stand. He wrote to President Martin Van Buren in 1836, “The soul of man, the justice, the mercy that is the heart in all men from Maine to Georgia, does abhor this business.”<sup>15</sup>

While the Indian Removal Act never mentions a tribe or region, it was aimed at the Cherokee, Muscogee (Creek), Choctaw, Chickasaw, and Seminole nations because their sizable territories were among the most fertile in the South. They were called the Five Civilized Tribes because they had opened up to missionaries and the larger economy.

The tribal leaders were often Christian and prosperous, with many owning plantations worked by enslaved people.

John Ross (1790–1866) became the principal chief of the Cherokee Nation in 1827.<sup>16</sup> Presiding over his nation during its fight against removal, he, along with other Native leaders, actively participated in the national debate. Ross staunchly opposed any proposal that the Cherokee cede their land because their nation was “incompatible” with the state of Georgia. Under Ross, the Cherokee established a constitutional form of government, allowed missionary schools into their territory, and established a bilingual tribal newspaper. He argued that any American unease about Cherokees was unjustified.



Photograph of John Ross, the Chief of the Cherokee Nation. Courtesy of the Library of Congress (2004664594).

Students can read a letter Ross wrote to Secretary of War John C. Calhoun in 1824, in which he makes clear his position on removal:

Sir, to these remarks we beg leave to observe, and to remind you, that the Cherokee are not foreigners, but original inhabitants of America, and that they now inhabit and stand on the soil of their own Territory, and

12 Wilson Lumpkin, *The Removal of the Cherokee Indians from Georgia* (New York: Dodd, Meade & Company, 1907). Digital Library of Georgia. <http://dlg.galileo.usg.edu/georgiabooks/do-pdf:gb0187a>.

13 Theodore Frelinghuysen, *Speech of Mr. Frelinghuysen, of New Jersey, Delivered In the Senate of the United States, April 6, 1830, On the Bill for an Exchange of Lands With the Indians Residing In Any of the States Or Territories, And for Their Removal West of the Mississippi* (Washington: Office of the National Journal, 1830). HathiTrust. <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/uva.x000472632>.

14 Memorial from the Ladies of Steubenville, Ohio, Protesting Indian Removal, petition, February 15, 1830. Records of the U.S. House of Representatives (RG 233), National Archives and Records Administration (306633). <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/306633>.

15 Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Emerson’s letter to Martin Van Buren.” In Ninam Baym, Ed., *The Norton Anthology of American Literature* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2007): 1268–1271.

16 John Ross’ papers are digitized by the Gilcrease Museum and available at <https://collections.gilcrease.org/collection/john-ross-papers>. Additional papers have been digitized by the University of Wisconsin-Madison and available through HathiTrust <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89058276452>.

that the limits of their Territory are defined by Treaties, which they have made with the Government of the United States, and that the States by which they are now surrounded have been created out of the lands which was once theirs, and that they cannot recognize the Sovereignty of any State, within the limits of their Territory.<sup>17</sup>

Tribal leaders across the southeast responded to the increased pressure for removal in various ways. Oplotle Yoholo (c. 1798–1863) was a Tuckabatchee Muscogee (Creek) leader. Throughout the late 1820s and early 1830s, he and other Muscogee leaders traveled to Washington to urge the federal government to stop white encroachment on Muscogee lands. In March 1830, the Muscogee published a petition in the *Cherokee Phoenix* to plead their case against removal. “We beg permission to be left, where your treaties have left us, in the enjoyment of rights as a separate people, and to be treated as unoffending, peaceable inhabitants of our own, and not a borrowed, country.”<sup>18</sup> Students can explore more articles from the *Cherokee Phoenix* through the Digital Library of Georgia: [gahistoricnewspapers.galileo.usg.edu/search/pages/results/?proxtext=Cherokee+Phoenix](http://gahistoricnewspapers.galileo.usg.edu/search/pages/results/?proxtext=Cherokee+Phoenix).

## THE ACT

The goal of the Indian Removal Act was to unlock the agricultural potential of the Deep South. Some members of Congress, such as New Jersey Senator Frelinghuysen, had misgivings. Notably, the legendary frontiersman and Tennessee Congressman Davy Crockett opposed the Indian Removal Act because he felt it violated both the law and the honor of the United States. He declared that his decision would “not make me ashamed in the Day of Judgment.”<sup>19</sup> But most members of Congress were persuaded that removal was in the best interests of American Indians. How and why did proponents craft the language of the act to present the nation as benevolent? Students can learn more about the language of the Act in the museum’s online exhibition, *Americans*, at [americanindian.si.edu/americans/#stories/the-removal-act](http://americanindian.si.edu/americans/#stories/the-removal-act).

Ultimately, the Indian Removal Act passed by a margin of only five votes, and President Jackson signed it into law on May 28, 1830. This act and the removal of American Indians from the Deep South became Jackson’s first major initiative

as president.<sup>20</sup> In December 1830, Jackson outlined his Indian removal policy in his Second Annual Message to Congress. He noted:

It gives me pleasure to announce to Congress that the benevolent policy of the Government . . . in relation to the removal of the Indians beyond the white settlements is approaching to a happy consummation. Two important tribes have accepted the provision made for their removal at the last session of Congress, and it is believed that their example will induce the remaining tribes also to seek the same obvious advantages.<sup>21</sup>

The work of removing Native Nations spanned nine presidents and took approximately 25 years to complete. The policy resulted in the seizure of tens of millions of acres of Native land.



Photograph depicting a woman (Eastern Band of Cherokee) with an infant on her back and another child to her right, Eastern Cherokee Reservation, North Carolina, c. 1937–1938. W.M. Cline Company, National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI.AC.362). Used with permission.

## THE CONSEQUENCES

The United States never before attempted removal and rarely spent so much on one project. The legislation gave few specifics and appropriated only \$500,000. By the 1850s, costs had soared to \$100 million, about \$2.7 billion in today’s money. Massive federal spending—on steamboats, rations, clerks, blankets—helped grow the economy.<sup>22</sup>

17 Letter from Secretary of War John C. Calhoun to John Ross and other Cherokee Leaders, January 30, 1824, Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, The University of Georgia Libraries, Digital Library of Georgia, [https://dlg.usg.edu/record/dlg\\_zlna\\_tcc691](https://dlg.usg.edu/record/dlg_zlna_tcc691).

18 “Memorial of the Creek Nation of Indians,” *Cherokee Phoenix*, March 17, 1830, 4, Special and Digital Collections, Hunter Library, Western Carolina University. <https://www.wcu.edu/library/DigitalCollections/CherokeePhoenix/Vol2/no48/memorial-page-4-column-1a-4b.html>.

19 David Crockett, *Narrative of the Life of David Crockett* (Philadelphia: E.L. Carey and A. Hart, 1834): 206.

20 The Cherokee Nation in Georgia attempted to use legal means to preserve their claim to their ancestral lands. NHD students might explore legal cases such as *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia* (<https://www.oyez.org/cases/1789-1850/31us515>) and *Worcester v. Georgia* (<https://www.oyez.org/cases/1789-1850/31us515>) as part of their NHD projects.

21 Andrew Jackson, “Second Annual Message to Congress,” December 6, 1830, Miller Center, University of Virginia. <https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches/december-6-1830-second-annual-message-congress>.

22 Paul Chaat Smith (Comanche) and Cécile R. Ganteaume (co-curators), *Americans*, online exhibition (2018–2028), National Museum of the American Indian, <https://americanindian.si.edu/americans/>.

Cotton production increased rapidly after 1830, creating an economic boom. Cotton connected Southern plantations, Massachusetts mills, New York financial houses, and traders in London and Liverpool. While Indians were sent up the Mississippi on the voyage to Indian Territory (present-day Oklahoma), cotton cultivated in their former homelands was being shipped down the Mississippi River to New Orleans. From there, the cotton was sent to the Northeast and England. By 1840, a higher percentage per capita of the country's millionaires lived in the southern Mississippi Valley than in any other region of the United States.<sup>23</sup>

Removal was supposed to be a smooth and benevolent process. Indians would be clothed, fed, and paid. Instead, it was a mess. For example, in removing the Choctaw, the United States pushed through a fraudulent treaty, supplied insufficient provisions, and forced the deportees to travel during severe winters. Each phase was poorly managed and executed.

This list, compiled from multiple sources, estimates the population of each Native Nation that was removed and the number of people who died along the way. Natives died from disease, exposure, exhaustion, avoidable accidents, and warfare. The human cost of removal was enormous and catastrophic for Indian Nations.

#### INDIVIDUALS REMOVED

- Cherokee: 16,000
- Chickasaw, including enslaved laborers: 5,600
- Choctaw: 20,000
- Muscogee (Creek), including enslaved laborers: 23,000
- Seminole: 3,000

#### DEATHS

- Cherokee: 2,000
- Chickasaw: 800
- Choctaw: 4,000
- Muscogee (Creek): 3,500
- Seminole (Second Seminole War): 700

Native memories of removal were passed on from generation to generation through stories, songs, and personal names. In the early 1900s, visitors to Oklahoma could still meet Seminoles named A'-ba-yik'-ha-tco, or "people going," It-tcai-hi, or "the one who shoots," Ingalee, or "scared," and Ahichakitag, or "looking back."<sup>24</sup> In the early 1900s, Cherokee and Choctaw powers popularized

the phrase *Trail of Tears*, and it first appeared in print in 1908, when used to describe Indian removal to Oklahoma.<sup>25</sup>

Exploring American Indian history for your NHD project? Review the National Museum of the American Indian's handout, "Am I Using the Right Word?" to learn more about correct terminology. Access the materials at [americanindian.si.edu/nk360/pdf/Impact-of-Words-Tips-for-Using-Appropriate-Terminology.pdf](http://americanindian.si.edu/nk360/pdf/Impact-of-Words-Tips-for-Using-Appropriate-Terminology.pdf).

Different American Indian nations reacted to issues of removal in different ways. While the process of removal created upheaval, suffering, and death among Indian people, it was not the end for American Indians. They have survived and thrive as their own cultural and political entities today. In fact, the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma is the largest federally recognized tribe in the United States, with a population of more than 355,000 citizens.

During the past century, the phrase *Trail of Tears* has had multiple meanings. First, it described only the Cherokee removal of 1838. Later, it included the removals of all southeastern Indian nations. It then became shorthand for policies toward all American Indians. In the 2000s, it has become a rallying cry against government injustice. The core meaning of the phrase, though, still refers to a moment of national shame.<sup>26</sup> Students can learn more about activism against injustice by exploring more about the American Indian Movement, the Trail of Broken Treaties, and, more recently, the protests against the Dakota Access Pipeline at Standing Rock. At the heart of these injustices are broken treaties.

## RESEARCHING THE INDIAN REMOVAL ACT

A wide variety of digitized sources are available for students researching the Indian Removal Act and its consequences. Educators and students can use the National Museum of the American Indian's online lesson, "American Indian Removal: What Does it Mean to Remove a People?" to learn more about the history, impact, and response of tribal Nations faced with removal, including the Cherokee, Seminole, Muscogee (Creek), and more. The lesson provides perspectives from Native American community members, documents, maps, images, and activities to help students and educators understand an important and difficult chapter in United States history. Explore the vast scope of removal and its effects on Native Nations at [americanindian.si.edu/nk360/removal/](http://americanindian.si.edu/nk360/removal/). In

23 Smith and Ganteaume, *Americans*.

24 Theda Perdue, "The Legacy of Indian Removal," *The Journal of Southern History* (February 2012): 13.

25 Perdue, "The Legacy of Indian Removal," 23.

26 Smith and Ganteaume, *Americans*.

addition, educators can book a live virtual field trip with a museum educator about American Indian removal for their classrooms at [americanindian.si.edu/nk360/student-programs/virtual-field-trips/field-trip-american-indian-removal](http://americanindian.si.edu/nk360/student-programs/virtual-field-trips/field-trip-american-indian-removal).

As a result of removal, there are three federally recognized Cherokee Nations: the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma ([cherokee.org](http://cherokee.org)), the United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians in Oklahoma ([keetoowahcherokee.org](http://keetoowahcherokee.org)), and the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians in North Carolina ([ebci.com](http://ebci.com)). By exploring their websites, students can learn more about the history, culture, and government of each nation today.

The digital archive of the Eastern Band of Cherokee's Museum of the Cherokee Indian reveals records from members of the Nation. You can find more by researching "The King Research Collection: Trail of Tears" at [cherokeemuseum.pastperfectonline.com/](http://cherokeemuseum.pastperfectonline.com/).

Georgia Humanities (co-sponsor of the NHD program in Georgia) has online resources and articles relating to the Indian Removal Act of 1830. They include the Georgia Topic Explorer, a partnership between National History Day Georgia, Georgia Humanities, Digital Library of Georgia, and the New Georgia Encyclopedia ([georgiahumanities.org/programs/nhdga-topic-explorer/](http://georgiahumanities.org/programs/nhdga-topic-explorer/)). Articles are also available in the New Georgia Encyclopedia, a resource of Georgia Humanities, on such topics as the Creek Nation, John Ross, Indian Missions, *Worcester v. Georgia*, and many more ([georgiaencyclopedia.org/](http://georgiaencyclopedia.org/)). To learn more, see this comprehensive list ([tinyurl.com/2022NHDGAResources](http://tinyurl.com/2022NHDGAResources)).

The Oklahoma History Center (sponsor of Oklahoma History Day) has online exhibits and resource guides relating to the Indian Removal Act of 1830 and the Trail of Tears, including American Indians in Oklahoma ([okhistory.org/learn/ai](http://okhistory.org/learn/ai)), resources for elementary students ([okhistory.org/historycenter/grade3.3.6](http://okhistory.org/historycenter/grade3.3.6)) and resources for secondary students ([okhistory.org/historycenter/okh2.3.php](http://okhistory.org/historycenter/okh2.3.php)).

## CONCLUSION

Indian removal contradicts democratic values. The act was ferociously debated, very expensive, and time-consuming. The consequences of removal forever shaped America's landscape and defined the future generations of those tribal members who faced it and survived.

However, removal is not just a tragic story about American Indians victimized by a cruel president. Today we remember it as a betrayal of American values. May we not forget that it was thoughtfully debated by the most democratic country on earth, supported by both parties, and broadly accepted by its citizens.<sup>27</sup>

Students interested in the Indian Removal Act (1830) might also be interested in researching:

- Americanization and Forced Assimilation of Native Nations
- Indian Boarding Schools
- Indian Citizenship Act (1924)
- Indian Civil Rights Act of 1968
- Red Power Movement of the 1960s and 1970s
- Trail of Broken Treaties (1972)

To access more theme resources,  
go to [nhd.org/themebook](http://nhd.org/themebook).

27 Smith and Ganteaume, *Americans*.



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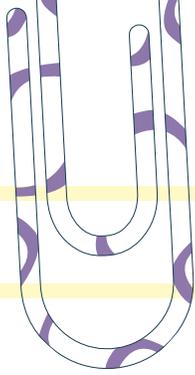


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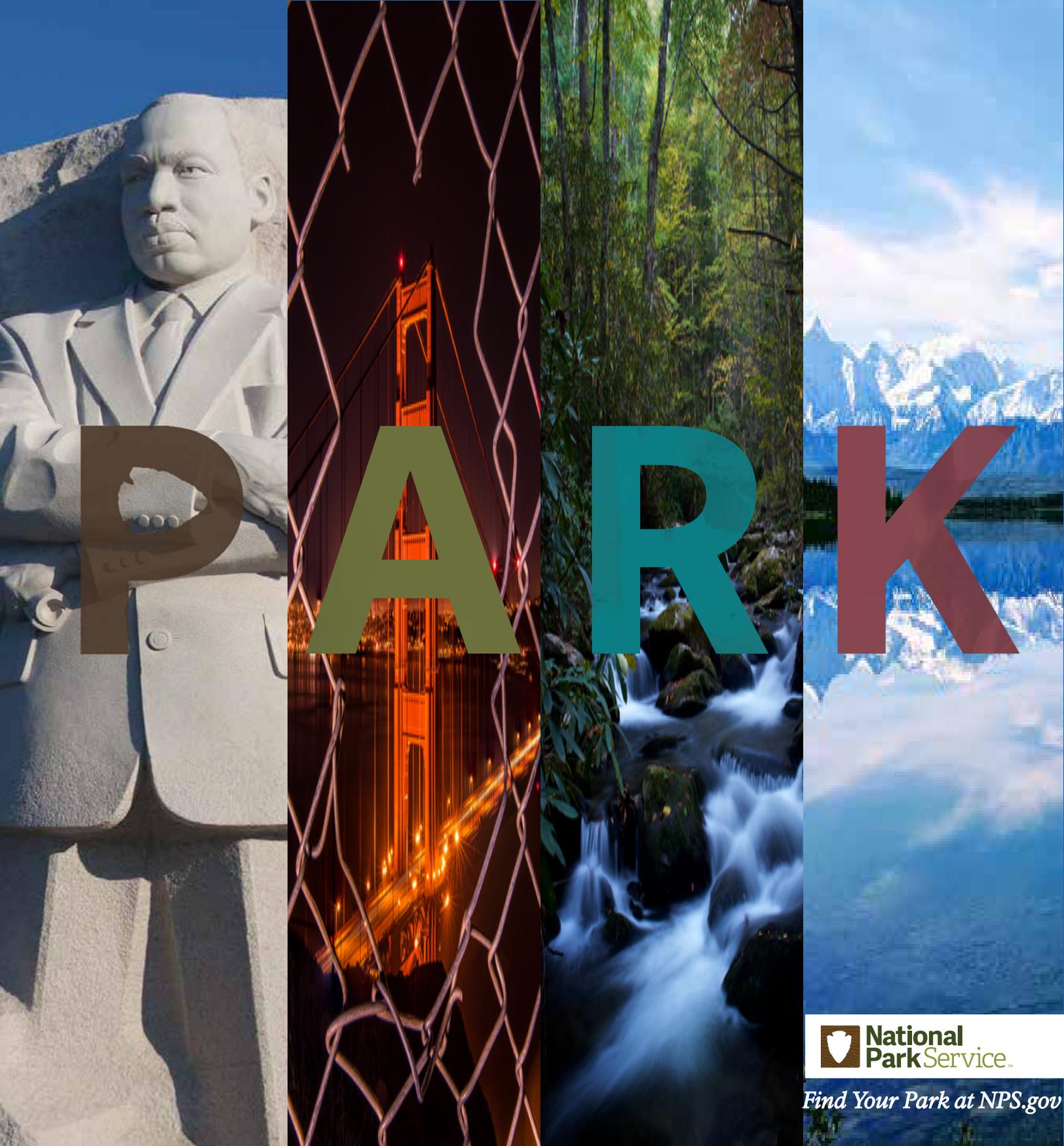
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