

Debate & Diplomacy in History: Successes, Failures Consequences

The 2022 National History Day theme will connect to topics from every part of the world and area of study in history. Below we've broken down the theme to help you consider all the ways to approach it – and find Ohio-based topics for your project this year!

What is a Debate? What is Diplomacy?

Debates are formal or informal meetings where people argue opposing views. Debates can involve two or more points of view. Diplomacy involves negotiating, compromising, and communicating solutions to those debates. **Debate and diplomacy can happen separately or at the same time.** When researching, think about whether you see both diplomacy and debate at play or just one?

- *During much of the 1800's and early 1900's, a debate raged across the United States on whether alcohol should be made illegal. During this time the Temperance Movement gained more and more support until, in 1920, the 18th amendment was passed banning the production, sale, and transportation of alcohol. However, the 18th amendment, also called Prohibition, was later repealed in 1933. How did both sides of the alcohol debate communicate their messages? How did this shape the debate? Whom were these different groups trying to reach?*

Communicating Opinions

How people communicated and expressed their opinions is important. Considering this will also help you find primary sources to explore your topic. Ask: What are people using to persuade others to their side? Does this communication happen out in the open or behind closed doors? Thinking about where and how people choose to express their opinions is key to every story.

- *Art and literature often comment on debates within history and society. For example, historically African Americans had little representation at World's Fairs, especially those that took place in the United States. In 1939, African Americans were invited to create an exhibit for one week only. What were the debates surrounding their participation? How does this fit within the larger context of American race relations on the eve of the Second World War? To explore this topic more, check out our [lesson plan](#).*

Debate & Diplomacy is a Many-Sided Effort

Debate and diplomacy cannot happen without multiple opinions and perspectives. Be sure to consider how different groups of people argued for their point of view. Did different groups share the same or have conflicting goals? How does that influence the topic? Look for multiple viewpoints throughout the time period as well: before, during, and after when your topic takes place. Also, consider which sources you are using for your research, and what viewpoints they express. Have you looked for sources to help understand multiple points of view?

- *In 1830, President Andrew Jackson signed the Indian Removal Act, which granted the president authority to negotiate Indian removal treaties. This affected many tribes in Ohio, including the Seneca, Delaware, Shawnee, Ottawa and Wyandot. Looking at this topic from the perspective of only the American politicians would represent just part of the story. By researching accounts by American Indians, we bring their voices into the fold to understand how they faced the crisis of removal, as well as get a more rounded account of the event.*

Explore the Successes, Failures, and Consequences

Every good NHD theme has a subtitle to help you analyze your topic closer and develop an argument. This year, you'll want to explore the successes, failures and consequences of your topic. What were the outcomes or results of a diplomatic exchange or debate? What were the goals of the different groups entering into diplomacy? Was it considered a success or failure at the time, and by whom? What happens when diplomacy and debate fail to fix an issue? Did the outcome affect relationships between people?

- *Since the founding of the nation, the debate over slavery had created a divide between the Northern and Southern States. This debate led to many diplomatic efforts between the states, including the Three-Fifths Compromise, Missouri Compromise, the Compromise of 1850, and the passage of the Fugitive Slave Acts. What was the ultimate consequence of these efforts? Can these diplomatic exchanges be seen as successes or failures? How did each change the nature of the debate surrounding slavery? Did any of these diplomatic solutions create unintended consequences?*

Consider the Long- & Short-Term Impacts

You should be able to show **why your topic was important in history**. Your topic doesn't need to be in a history textbook to be important, but it needs to have had an impact, even locally. Think about how your topic connected or contributed to larger movements in history. **Consider what changed right away and in the long-term**. Is your topic still affecting relationships between people and countries? If it was a failure or a success at the time, did that perspective change over time?

- *Baldemar Velásquez worked with many civil rights and labor organizations. In the mid-1960s, he co-founded the Farm Labor Organizing Committee to provide migrant farmworkers with a voice. How did this organization advocate for change in the agricultural industry? How did it affect how migrant farmworkers organize for change then and now?*

Don't forget to check out the **2022 Ohio History Day Student Guide** and **Local History Topic List** for more tips on how to tackle this year's theme of [*Debate and Diplomacy in History: Successes, Failures and Consequences*](#). We can't wait to see the projects you create this year!