

Youth History Day

Teacher Guide

TEACHER GUIDE

AUDIENCE

Grades 4 & 5

STANDARDS

Social Studies

- Grade 4: C.S. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 17, 18
- Grade 5: C.S. 2, 3

English Language Arts

· Grades 4 & 5

- RI.1, RI.2, RI. 3, RI. 4, RI.5, RI. 6, RI. 7, RI.8, RI.9, RI.10, RF. 4, W.2, W.4, W.5, W.6, W.7, W.8, W.9, W.10

Social and Emotional

- B3.1, C1.2b, C1.3b, C3.2b, D1.2b

Introduction

How can fourth and fifth grade teachers successfully participate in Youth History Day? This guide will help you implement the 2026 Theme of Revolution, Reaction, Reform in History with your social studies curriculum, while also integrating reading and writing standards. This cross-curricular project has flexibility in how it is introduced and can be differentiated to meet the needs of any classroom.

A sticking point in implementing Youth History Day may be the research phase of the project. As 4th and 5th grade students are still beginners when it comes to learning to research, analyzing sources, taking research notes, writing thesis statements, citing sources, etc., support in helping students to comprehend their research topic is necessary. Using topics that are connected to history standards provided by the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce is one way to help. Students should have textbooks or some background knowledge to connect their new learning from research, too. The remainder of this document lists out topic ideas and sources that are connected to the Social Studies Standards. Ohio Youth History Day fully integrates social studies, reading and writing!

There are no minimum or maximums set for the number of primary and secondary sources students should be using. In general, a balance between primary and secondary sources is best. Some topics will naturally have more primary sources than others. For example, a 20th century topic will have more primary sources compared to an ancient topic. This is acceptable if students show that they are incorporating both kinds of sources in their research.

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Revolution, Reaction, Reform in History

This year's National History Day theme allows you to look at topics from all over the world and in many areas of study. As you dive deeper into your research, you'll find that this is a complex and thought-provoking theme. We've broken down this year's theme to help you choose a topic and begin your research.

What is a revolution?

We can think of a revolution as **the forcible overthrow of a government or social order, in favor of a new system, or a dramatic and wide-reaching change in the way something works, is organized, or in people's ideas about it.**

Sometimes, revolutions involve a change in government, like the American Revolution. Other revolutions are about changing the way society views certain people, practices or social norms. And some revolutions are about changing the way society, or a specific group of people, do something, like the mechanization of production during the Industrial Revolution or the Scientific Revolution that led to new knowledge about our natural world.

What is a reform?

The effort to change to a better state or form; to improve by alteration, substitution, or abolition (removal).

Reform is all about changing the way something works.

Reform can include change to the way we do things, like the invention of the oral Polio vaccine. It can also be about substituting or swapping something out, like when the Founding Fathers wrote the U.S. Constitution to replace the Articles of Confederation. Reform can also be about the outright removal or end of something, like the abolition of slavery.

What is a reaction?

An action performed or a feeling experienced in response to a situation or event; or the resistance or opposition to a force or movement. Reaction is all about how people respond to something that happens.

Reaction can take many forms. Sometimes reactions are limited to verbal or written responses, like a newspaper opinion piece against something. Other times, reactions take on a more active or organized role, like staging a protest or organizing a letter writing campaign.

There is always a reaction to a revolution or reform. People will always have a response to change. Reaction can also lead to revolution and reform.

What is the difference between revolution, reaction, and reform?

This year's NHD theme does not require you to use all three of the theme words "revolution, reaction, reform" in your project, but you should include them if your topic deals with them. For example, if your topic deals with both revolution *and* reaction, you should address both in your project. If your project deals with revolution, reaction, and reform, then it should address all three theme words.

The lines between revolution, reaction and reform are blurred, and a topic dealing with one will often touch on another. Sometimes a topic can be considered a revolution, reform, *and* reaction all in one. All three theme words are centered on change. Reforming the way something works can often also revolutionize that same thing. Similarly, a revolution will often lead to reform in the way something works.

Keep in mind that reaction is *always* a part of revolution and reform, because there will always be a reaction to a revolution or reform taking place. Reaction can often also lead to revolution or reform. Reaction is important in understanding the changes that take place through revolution and reform.

Tips and Tricks

You oversee selecting a format for Ohio Youth History Day that best meets the needs of the students in your classroom. There are a variety of ways to implement the major aspects of the project with differentiation, scaffolding, and extension in mind. Here are some ideas that may be helpful when beginning the research phase of Ohio Youth History Day:

Free Research Option (Extension)

- Most aligned with what Ohio History Day students in the Junior and Senior divisions are doing.
- Students can choose ANY topic in history that connects to the annual National History Day Theme.
- Students will need to find sources to research that match their theme.
- Student choice can be very engaging.

Guided Choose your own Adventure (Scaffold)

- Teacher selects 2 or 3 topics that connect with the annual National History Day Theme.
- Students select one topic from those that they would like to research.
- Teacher can pre-prepare the primary and secondary sources that students will be using for research.
- Students can have more support with content by working on topics that they have learned about in social studies lessons or will be learning about in class.
- Students still have a choice in their project.
- Save time on finding sources and have more control over the types of sources students use.

Teacher Selected Topic (Differentiation)

- Best option for students and teachers who are brand new to research projects.
- Teacher selects the topic and provides the sources for research.
- Most supported option where students can work together with the teacher to research sources as a whole group.
- Students can still choose how to show what they learned, but the teacher has full control over the content they are researching.
- Save time on finding sources and have more control over the types of sources students use.

Lesson Plans

Below are some lesson plans we created to help students become familiar with researching historical topics and can serve as great starting points for beginning the Youth History Day project.

1. [Introduction to Youth History Day PPT](#)- What is National History Day? What is the 2026 theme?
[Teacher Guide](#)
2. [Selecting and Narrowing Down a Topic PPT](#)- What makes a good research topic? What is a broad versus narrow topic?
[Teacher Guide](#)
[Topic Selection Worksheets](#)
3. [Creating Thesis Statements PPT](#)- What is a thesis statement? How do we write a thesis statement for a historical topic?
[Teacher Guide](#)
[Thesis Statement Checklist](#)
4. [Big Picture PPT](#)- What is a primary source v. a secondary source? How can we use images (photos, paintings) from the past to analyze and learn more about a topic?
[Teacher Guide](#)
5. [Finding Trustworthy Sources PPT](#)- How do we determine if a source is trustworthy? How can we evaluate websites for trustworthiness?
[Teacher Guide](#)

Topic Ideas: Revolution, Reaction, Reform in History 2026*4th Grade:*

<i>Topic/Dates</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Research</i>	<i>Category</i>
St. Clair's Defeat	Tensions between settlers to Ohio and American Indians led to battles over terms of treaties. In 1791, General Arthur St. Clair and the US Army were defeated by Native Americans including Miami, Shawnee, Delaware, Potawatomi, Ottawa, Chippewa, and Wyandot warriors. The defeat led to reforms in the U.S. Military and the first congressional investigation into the executive branch. It also demonstrated the skills, strategy, and coordination of the Native tribes trying to protect their land. What was revolutionary about this battle? How did the Americans react? What reforms were made to the military after?	<p>St. Clair's Defeat Revisited: A New View of the Conflict https://arccg.is/1ymSLr2</p> <p>Arthur St. Clair Letter to President George Washington</p> <p>Arthur St. Clair Letter to James Ross</p>	American Indian History
Treaty of Greenville (1795)	After the defeat of American Indian tribes at the Battle of Fallen Timbers, General Anthony Wayne joined leaders of several Indian Nations from Ohio to sign this treaty. It determined that the land north and west of the established line belonged to the	<p>Ohio History Center Archives, Columbus, Ohio: Online Catalog https://www.ohiohistory.org/research/american-indian-relations/</p> <p>Myaamia Perspective of Treaty of Greenville Part 1 Part 2</p> <p>Greenville Treaty Line Map</p> <p>Treaty of Greenville in Letter to George Washington</p>	American Indian History

	<p>American Indian Nations and the land south and east of the line was established for white settlement. It also established rights for trading posts on American Indian land and allowed American Indians to still hunt in the area. What were the reactions to the signing of the treaty both by Americans and the Native Americans? How is this an example of reform?</p>		
<p>The American Anti-Slavery Society (1833-1870)</p>	<p>The American Anti-Slavery Society provided local and state antislavery societies, including the Ohio Anti-Slavery Society, with an organization that could take their cause to the national level. The American Anti-Slavery Society hoped to convince both white Southerners and Northerners of slavery's inhumanity. Unlike earlier organizations, American Anti-Slavery Society members called for an immediate end to slavery. In 1840, the American Anti-Slavery Society split. Some members of the American Anti-Slavery Society, including most members of the Ohio Anti-Slavery</p>	<p>Ohio History Connection African American Collection https://ohiomemory.org/digital/collection/p16007coll98 https://www.loc.gov/exhibitions/join-in-voluntary-associations-in-america/about-this-exhibition/a-nation-of-joiners/changing-america/american-anti-slavery-society/ https://constitutioncenter.org/the-constitution/historic-document-library/detail/american-anti-slavery-society-declaration-of-sentiments-1833</p>	<p>Early Ohio</p>

	<p>Society felt that abolitionists should try to elect people of their beliefs to political offices to make laws ending slavery. To achieve this end, these abolitionists formed the Liberty Party. What is revolutionary about this society? What were the reactions to its creation?</p>		
Underground Railroad in Ohio (Mid-19 th Century)	<p>Ohio boasted several prominent abolitionists who played a vital role in the Underground Railroad. Many freedom seekers continued to Canada. At least eight cities, including Ashtabula, Painesville, Cleveland, Sandusky, Toledo, Huron, Lorain, and Conneaut, along Lake Erie served as ferrying points to transport the former enslaved people to true freedom in Canada. How did these reactions to slavery impact those who were enslaved? What was revolutionary about their work?</p>	<p>Rankin House and John Parker House in Ripley, Ohio http://www.ohiohistory.org/museumsand-historic-sites/museum--historicsites-by-name/rankin-house http://johnparkerhouse.org/</p> <p>National Underground Railroad Freedom Center Cincinnati, Ohio http://freedomcenter.org/</p> <p>Ohio History Center Archives, Columbus, Ohio: Online Catalog https://ohiomemory.org/digital/collection/siebert</p> <p>Places of the Underground Railroad</p> <p><i>Harriet Tubman and the Underground Railroad</i> by: Michael Martin <i>Who was Harriet Tubman?</i> By: Yona Zeldis</p>	African American History
Benjamin Lundy (1789-1839)	<p>Benjamin Lundy was an abolitionist opponent of slavery in the years before the American Civil War. In 1815, he established the first society dedicated to the abolition of</p>	<p>Ohio History Connection https://www.ohiohistory.org/benjamin-lundy-ohio-abolitionist-and-free-labor-advocate/ Benjamin Lundy Portrait</p>	Early Ohio

	slavery west of the Appalachian Mountains. It was known as the Union Humane Society. Lundy published an abolitionist newspaper, <i>The Genius of Universal Emancipation</i> . What was the reaction to Lundy's work. What reforms were he calling for?		
Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811-1893)	During the 1830s, Stowe became friends with several Ohio abolitionists. The stories that she heard from freedom seekers and Underground Railroad conductors while she lived in Cincinnati formed the basis of her book, <i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i> . How did the public react to the book?	Harriet Beecher Stowe House https://stowehousecincy.org/index.html Places of the Underground Railroad Uncle Tom's Cabin Poster	Early Ohio
Ohio and Erie Canal (1800s)	The Ohio and Erie Canal connected farmers to Lake Erie and later the Ohio River. This allowed farmers to sell their crops beyond the local market. By the 1850s canals were losing business to railroads. What was revolutionary about the canals? How did they reform transportation?	Ohio and Erie Canalway https://www.ohioanderiecanalway.com/	Early Ohio
Ohio/American Indian Wars (late 1700s-early 1800s)	Tensions between settlers to Ohio and the American Indians led to battles over terms of treaties. Some of these wars included:	Letter about Draft for War of 1812 Print of the Attack on Fort Meigs Letter about Siege of Fort Meigs	American Indian History

	Harmar's Defeat, St. Clair's Defeat, Battle of Tippecanoe, & the Battle of Fallen Timbers. Why did each side believe they had the right to the land? Did the settlers honor the American Indian rights established in treaties?	Extracts from Mr. Rollin's Journal-Eastern Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma Digital Collection Federal Territory of 1785 Map Ordinance for the Government of the Territory of the United States Northwest Territory Executive Journal Historic American Indian Tribes of Ohio	
The Revolutionary War	<p>The Revolutionary War was fought to establish American independence from the British. While there are many important moments and battles consider a connection to Ohio.</p> <p>In the Ohio River Valley, George Rogers Clark fought the British and their Native American allies during the war. Who was he and why did he consider that important? What did he hope to accomplish?</p>	https://www.nps.gov/people/george-rogers-clark.htm https://kids.britannica.com/kids/article/George-Rogers-Clark/ https://www.battlefields.org/learn/biographies/george-rogers-clark The Battle of Yorktown Declaration of Independence <i>Liberty! How the Revolutionary War Began</i> by: Lucille Recht Penner <i>The Revolutionary War- Cornerstones of Freedom</i> by: Josh Gregory <i>The Crossing: How George Washington Saved the American Revolution</i> by: Jim Murphy <i>History Smashers: The American Revolution</i> By: Kate Messner <i>Who was George Washington?</i> By: Roberta Edwards <i>George Washington: Leading a New Nation</i> by: Matt Doeden <i>What is the Declaration of Independence?</i> By: Michael Harris	
Ohio Statehood	Ohio celebrated its 200th Anniversary of statehood on March 1, 2003. The history of Ohio statehood, however, begins much earlier. One of the provisions in the Paris Peace Treaty ending the Revolutionary War was the establishment of boundaries that would allow for American expansion	Northwest Ordinance -National Archives Northwest Ordinance -National Constitution Center 1804 Map of the United States 1806 Map of the United States Rufus Putman Ohio Map 1804 Maxwell's Code	Early Ohio

	westward. This area became known as the Northwest Territory. In 1787, Congress passed the Northwest Ordinance to establish a government for the territory and to provide a method for admitting new states into the Union once the population reached 60,000 inhabitants. Why is the Northwest Ordinance so important? What reforms did it make into law?		
Ohio Inventors	Ohio has been the birthplace of numerous significant inventors. Of note: Thomas Edison, The Wright Brothers, Charles F. Kettering, Garrett Morgan, and James Murray Spangler. While their inventions were all different, each created a revolutionary change in the world.	Ohio Inventors https://ohiomemory.ohiohistory.org/archives/tag/ohio-inventors	

Topic Ideas: Revolution, Reaction, Reform in History 2026

5th Grade:

<i>Topic/Dates:</i>	<i>Description:</i>	<i>Research:</i>	<i>Category:</i>
The <i>Codex Mendoza</i> (the 16 th Century)	The Codex Mendoza is an Aztec codex, believed to have been created around the year 1541. It contains a history of both the Aztec rulers and their conquests as well as a description of the daily life of pre-conquest Aztec society. The codex is	Codex Mendoza The Codex Mendoza with Dr. Daniela Bleichmar Mayan Civilization Mexico and Central America Aztec Civilization	Ancient Civilizations

	written using traditional Aztec pictograms with a translation and explanation of the text provided in Spanish. In what ways were Aztec ideas about society revolutionary? How did the Codex's painted images depict the history of the Aztecs and their conquest by the Spanish during the sixteenth century in Mexico? Why was it created? In what way did it define gender roles or issues of discipline?	Life in the Province of the Aztec Empire Mayan Vase	
Inca Civilization (1200 to 1533 AD)	The Inca Civilization was the largest ancient civilization in pre-Columbian America. They resided in modern-day Peru and had a flourishing society. How did the Inca structure their society? What led them to success in the early 13 th century? How was this revolutionary?	Ancient Peruvian Art from Archeology of the Empire of Incas Inca Civilization Exploring the Early Americas: Pizarro and the Incas Ancient Peruvian Art from Archeology of the Empire of Incas Inca Civilization	Ancient Civilizations
European Explorers (15 th to 17 th century) Columbus Cortez Pizarro Hudson Ponce de Leon Magellan Cabot Champlin Cartier	Beginning in the 15 th century, European countries sponsored trips around the world and sent explorers in search of gold, spices, riches, and land that they could claim as their own. These European Explorers believed they had a responsibility to their country of origin to find and conquer more land and goods that their leaders felt they had the right to own. These	The Age of Exploration-Primary Sources Letters from Hernan Cortes Letters of Cortés The Journal of Christopher Columbus European Colonization of the Americas World Explorers-PBS Education	European Explorers

	<p>explorations forever changed the way we view the world and had some devastating effects on the ancient civilizations who had occupied these “unexplored” lands. What were the reactions to these explorations?</p>	<p>European Colonization of the Americas World Explorers-PBS Education <i>Travel with Great Explorers: Explore with John Cabot</i> by: Cynthia O'Brien <i>Travel with Great Explorers: Explore with Henry Hudson</i> by: Tim Cooke <i>Travel with Great Explorers: Explore with Ponce de Leon</i> by: Cynthia O'Brien <i>Travel with Great Explorers: Explore with Jacques Cartier</i> by: Marie Powell <i>Travel with Great Explorers: Explore with Christopher Columbus</i> by: Cynthia O'Brien <i>Travel with Great Explorers: Explore with Samuel de Champlin</i> by: Cynthia O'Brien <i>What was the Age of Exploration?</i> by: Catherine Daly <i>Who was Marco Polo?</i> By: Joan Holub <i>Who was Christopher Columbus?</i> By: Bonnie Bader <i>Who was Ferdinand Magellan?</i> By: S.A. Kramer <i>Who was Ponce de Leon?</i> By: Pam Pollack</p> <p>Letters from Hernan Cortes Letters of Cortés The Journal of Christopher Columbus Exploring the Early Americas: Pizzaro and the Incas The Age of Exploration-Primary Sources</p>	
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