

# 2017 THEME NARRATIVE TAKING A STAND IN HISTORY

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For National History Day students, the 2016-2017 academic year has focused on the theme *Taking a Stand in History*. The theme is broad, whether it be a topic from the ancient world or the history of the United States. Students use research with secondary sources to gain a broader context and finally make an argument about the effects of a topic in history.

**What does it mean to take a stand?** To take a stand, people have taken a stand in support of an issue, such as the Chinese people who protested for greater freedom in China. Sometimes taking a stand can be a religious act. For example, Martin Luther's act of nailing his Ninety-Five Theses to the door of the Wittenberg, Germany. Taking a stand could even involve a political act, such as Queen Liliuokalani's fight against annexation to maintain the independence of Hawaii.

happened because of their stand? What changes occur when they leave the world, their country, or their town better than they found it?

**Many times those who take a stand emerge as great leaders who influenced the lives of many.** He took numerous risks throughout his career. Yes, he led the Continental Army in the American Revolution. He was the first to inoculate his army against disease by inoculating his army against smallpox. What were the risks of this procedure? Why did he decide to go against the odds? How did his stand shape his lasting legacy?

**Often those who take a stand have to overcome opposition.** At the time, many Americans feared Jonas Salk's polio vaccine. Why? What was the validity of his medicine? How did his stand help shape the world?

Times of crisis and war often lead to conflicts between individuals and the government. Consider the Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798, the suspension of the writ of *habeas corpus* during the Civil War, or the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II. In many cases where an individual or group challenged the rights of others, they were successful. How many case studies of people standing up to protect liberties? Who were they? Garrison, Eugene V. Debs, and John Lewis all took stands. Why? How did they take a stand?

**One of the most visible ways to take a stand is related to leadership.** Charlemagne, Joan of Arc, Napoleon I, and Douglas MacArthur are all examples of leaders who took a stand. In contrast, you might consider why an individual

**What happens when taking a stand fails to result in change?** Many groups must take a stand to bring change to a society. Some changes require years. Ending slavery, establishing child labor laws, and prohibition took many attempts at change. What projects that were a failure later become a success?

Sometimes failure is temporary. In 1892, the People's Party platform document known as the Omaha Platform. While none of the goals (no senators) were achieved in 1892, many of the ideas were implemented in the next 50 years. Looking back through history, are there any that failed initially?

**What happens when someone fails to take a stand?** Many nations that refused to get involved in events outside their borders. How do you decide when to intervene in another country's affairs, and when not to?

**When deciding on a topic for your NHD project, it is important to choose such a topic is to look at a well-known historical event. Most of us know about the Boston Tea Party and that the British executed the Boston Massacre, but have you heard of Ebenezer Stevens? How did his actions have consequences of his actions? Perhaps you might want to look at the consequences of his actions?**

Another way to find a new spin on an old topic is to look at the lives of Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King, Jr. played significant roles in the Civil Rights Movement. Are there individuals from your hometown who played a significant role in the Civil Rights Movement?



# U.S. History

# SAMPLE TOPICS

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- Taking a Stand Against the British: The Reorganization of the Continental Army at Valley Forge
- Roger Williams' Stand Against Exile: The Establishment of Rhode Island
- Thurgood Marshall: Taking a Stand in Court Against Segregation
- The Power of Words: Thomas Paine's Fight Against Tyranny
- The War on Poverty: Johnson Stands for "The Other America"
- Taking a Stand in Art: Copley's Artistic Fight Against the British
- Horace Mann and the Fight for Quality Education

# European History

## SAMPLE TOPICS

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- Taking a Stand at Bosworth Field: Henry Tudor's Triumph
- The French Impressionist Movement: Taking a Stand Against the Salons
- Galileo's Stand Against the Church
- Standing Up to the Little Corporal: The Duke of Wellington's Win at Waterloo
- The Establishment of Cubism: Picasso and Braque's Stand Against Realism
- Kilmainham Gaol and Ireland's Fight for Home Rule
- Standing Against the Enemy: Sir Francis Drake at Cadiz
- Standing Against the War: Siegfried Sassoon's Use of Pacifist Poetry

# World History

## SAMPLE TOPICS

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- Diocletianic Persecution: The Plight of the Christians in Ancient Rome
- The Boxer Rebellion: Standing Against Westernization
- The Buddhist Crisis: The People Versus the Government
- Taking a Stand Against the British: Gandhi's Salt March to the Sea
- Taking a Stand Against the Emperor: Brutus vs. Caesar
- Chinese, American, and European Resistance to the Japanese Occupation of Nanking
- The Opium Wars Between China and Great Britain
- The Rise of Communism in China: Mao Zedong