

Unit 4: The Theme

The Annual History Day Theme

Each year National History Day selects a theme. When participating in history day, students will need to choose a topic related to that theme. In fact, one of the important components of a history day project is the student's ability to **relate** their topic to the theme. The annual theme frames the research for both students and teachers. It is intentionally broad enough that students can select topics from any place (local, national, or world) and any time 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; through oral history interviews; and by visiting historical sites. Remember: History Day projects aren't just reports with dates and facts; they are studies of a topic's **significance** and **importance** in history.

2022: Debate & Diplomacy in History

This year's theme, *Debate & Diplomacy in History, Successes, Failures, Consequences*, invites students to consider the complexities of how we interact with one another. As is always the case with History Day themes, this year's is broad and, as such, requires the student to consider first the terms themselves. As Ashley Foley Dabbraccio points out in the 2022 theme book: 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? This theme certainly lends itself to relations between states, but many of local, state, and national issues are driven by debate and diplomatic resolution. So as you're searching for a topic, cast your net wide. **Also it's important to remember that your student can choose a 'debate' or a 'diplomatic' initiative. It is not required that both be addressed in your students' topic.**

Download the 2022 Theme book and theme narrative at the [NHDGeorgia website](https://www.nhd.org/). While there check out the 2022 Theme video as well!

Strategies for discussing the theme

1. Begin with definitions - Find out what the terms mean. Start with a dictionary. Discuss.
2. Work through the vocabulary found in the narrative (word mapping, vocabulary triangles, examples) - make certain students are comfortable with the vocabulary in the text itself.
3. When reading the theme narrative - highlight the different questions/points in the text.
4. Annotate the theme narrative, including questions students come up with as they read it.