2017 THEME NARRATIVE:
TAKING A STAND IN HISTORY

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For National History Day students, the 2016-2017 academic year will be filled with research related to the theme *Taking a Stand in History*. The theme is broad to encourage participants to delve into history, whether it be a topic from the ancient world or the history of their own city. Students need to begin research with secondary sources to gain a broader context, then progress to finding primary sources, 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, one must take a firm position on an issue. Historically, people have taken a stand in support of an issue, such as the demonstrators in Tiananmen Square who protested for greater freedom in China. Sometimes taking a stand involves opposing the status quo—for example, Martin Luther's act of nailing his Ninety-Five Theses to the door of the All Saints' Church in Wittenberg, Germany. Taking a stand could even involve fighting against a powerful movement, such as Queen Liliuokalani's fight against annexation to maintain Hawaiian independence. These examples show well-known individuals taking a stand. How did these people defend their position?

When looking at different individuals and groups who took a stand, there are examples of those who used force, words, and economic power to make their voices heard. These people are remembered because they had an impact on history and inspired others to follow them. Remember that there is a difference between opposition and truly taking a stand. What do you think has to happen to move from opposition to taking a stand?

Can a group of people take a stand? Yes. Think back to how the Indian National Congress protested to end British Control of India. Or look even further into the past at the Magna Carta, considered one of the world's most important documents. It would never have been written if it were not for a group of rebellious English barons who took a stand against an all-powerful King John in 1215. How did American colonists, many of them women, take a stand against King George III? In the more recent past, numerous nations came together to stand up for the rights of individuals after World War II. Why and how did the United Nations agree to the Declaration of Human Rights in 1948? What can be accomplished when nations come together to stand up for individual rights? Perhaps you could explore these questions and more by writing a paper.

Grassroots movements can become something more through the dedication of followers. Think of the Temperance Movement during the Progressive Era. Although the movement for temperance began much earlier, the Progressive Era sparked a revival that led to the 18th Amendment and a 13-year prohibition of alcohol.

Why was this issue brought back into the spotlight by the Progressive Era? Why was this movement successful? As historians, you must look at the lasting legacy of the actions of individuals and groups. What

happened because of their stand? What changes occurred in the short-term? How about the long-term? Did they leave the world, their country, or their town better or worse?

Many times those who take a stand emerge as great historical leaders. George Washington was a gifted leader who influenced the lives of many. He took numerous stands throughout his military and political career. Yes, he led the Continental Army in the American Revolution, but Washington also took a stand against disease by inoculating his army against smallpox during a time when many questioned the validity of this procedure. Why did he decide to go against the mindset of the time? How do you think this has shaped his lasting legacy?

Often those who take a stand have to overcome opposition. Like the soldiers of George Washington's time, many Americans feared Jonas Salk's polio vaccine in the twentieth century. How did Salk seek to prove the validity of his medicine? How did his stand help shape the future of medicine?

Times of crisis and war often lead to conflicts between the rights of the people and those of the government. Consider the Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798, the suspension of the writ of habeus corpus during the U.S. Civil War, or the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II. Often these situations led to court cases where an individual or group challenged the right of the government to restrict liberties. There are many case studies of people standing up to protect liberties. John Peter Zenger, Lucy Stone, William Lloyd Garrison, Eugene V. Debs, and John Lewis all took stands. How does the judicial process provide an avenue to take a stand?

One of the most visible ways to take a stand is related to military action. Alexander the Great, Charlemagne, Joan of Arc, Napoleon I, and Douglas MacArthur are just a few who have led armies in taking a stand. In contrast, you might consider why an individual might take a stand *against* military action. For example, how did Siegfried Sassoon, a British soldier in World War I, use poetry to take a stand? What consequences did he face as a result?

Taking a stand does not necessarily need to involve military force or a political enemy. In the late 1800s, a group of French artists rebelled against the Salons, a popular venue for artists to display their work. They felt rejected and unwanted so they put on their own shows and were later known as the Impressionists. What legacy did these artists leave? Do you think the Impressionist Movement inspired later artists and other movements? You might decide to tackle those questions by creating an exhibit or a documentary.

Sometimes the best way to take a stand is to walk away. Russia has always had a wonderful reverence for the ballet world, but the ballet dancers of the Soviet Era felt limited by government policies that restricted creative expression. As a result, some dancers, including Rudolf Nureyev and Mikhail Baryshnikov, defected to other countries. How did their stand influence artist expression? How were they affected as individuals? Perhaps you want to explore this topic through a performance.

Many women have taken a powerful stand in history. Consider Queen Elizabeth I's stand against marriage or Catherine the Great's efforts to bring Enlightenment ideas to the Russian Empire. Alice Paul took a stand to push the women's suffrage movement into the national spotlight in the early twentieth century. How was she able to garner so much attention? How did Eleanor Roosevelt respond when the Daughters of the American Revolution refused to let Marian Anderson perform in their concert hall? Can you think of other examples of women taking a stand throughout history?

What happens when taking a stand fails to result in an immediate change? Often many people and groups must take a stand to bring change to a society. Any movement for social and political change can require years. Ending slavery, establishing child labor laws, and fighting against Jim Crow segregation laws and prohibition took many attempts at change. What part has the media played in such instances? How can a failure later become a success?

Sometimes failure is temporary. In 1892, the People's Party, or Populist Party, articulated its goals in a document known as the Omaha Platform. While none of its goals (a graduated income tax, direct election of senators) were achieved in 1892, many of the ideas were carried on by Progressive Reformers and enacted in the next 50 years. Looking back through history, are there similar examples where a group might have failed initially?

What happens when someone fails to take a stand? Diplomatic history includes many examples of nations that refused to get involved in events outside their borders. Nations must face challenging decisions of when to intervene in another country's affairs, and when to be isolationists and stay out.

When deciding on a topic for your NHD project, it is helpful to think outside the box. One way to find such a topic is to look at a well-known historical event, such as the Boston Tea Party, and dig a little deeper. Most of us know about the Boston Tea Party and that the Sons of Liberty were a part of its planning and execution, but have you heard of Ebenezer Stevens? How did he play a role in the rebellion? What were the consequences of his actions? Perhaps you might want to explore this topic by creating a website.

Another way to find a new spin on an old topic is to look to your own backyard. Many of us know that Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King, Jr. played significant roles in the civil rights movement, but are there individuals from your hometown who played a role? How do you think the small town movements influenced these movements at a national level? By digging beneath the surface of many famous historical events, researchers can find a treasure trove of fascinating stories of people and groups who took a stand in history.

Using these questions, students can choose a topic that interests them and has a strong connection to the *Taking a Stand in History* theme. Happy researching!

U.S. History
SAMPLE TOPICS



- 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
- Protecting the Environment: The Establishment of the National Park Service
- Protestants and the Fight for Temperance: The Founding of the American Temperance Society
- William Jennings Bryan: Standing Against Evolution
- Nat Turner: Taking a Stand Against Slavery
- Standing for Separation of Church and School: *Engel vs. Vitale*
- Muhammad Ali: Taking a Stand Against the Vietnam War
- Andrew Jackson's Stand Against the Bank
- Betty Friedan: Taking a Stand For Women's Rights
- The Pullman Strike of 1894: Taking a Stand for the Workers
- Standing Against Federal Authority: The Plight of the Farmers During the Whiskey Rebellion
- Standing Against the British: The Boston Tea Party and Its Consequences
- Rosa Parks: Sitting Down to Take a Stand
- The Fight for Social Equality: Jane Addams and Hull House
- William Lloyd Garrison: Taking a Stand with Words
- Fighting Unemployment: The Journey of Coxey's Army
- Taking a Stand Against Kingship: George Washington's Denial of Power
- Standing Against the President: Congress' Victory in Radical Reconstruction Against Johnson
- Taking a Stand Against the Trusts: Teddy Roosevelt as a Trust Buster
- Standing Against Big Business: The Sherman Antitrust Act
- Defiance in Leaps and Bounds: Jesse Owens and the 1936 Berlin Olympics
- Claudette Colvin and the Montgomery Bus Boycott
- The Astor Place Riots: Taking a Stand for Theater
- Standing Against Conquest: Chief Osceola and the Seminole Indians

European History
SAMPLE TOPICS



- 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
- Martin Luther: The Stand That Started the Reformation
- The Easter Uprising: Taking a Stand for Freedom
- A King Stands for Unity: King Henry IV and the Edict of Nantes
- Lech Wałęsa's Stand for Workers' Rights: The Establishment of the Gdansk Agreement
- The Pope Versus a King: Henry VIII's Stand Against the Catholic Church
- What Happens When No One Takes a Stand? Neville Chamberlain's Appeasement of Adolf Hitler
- Taking a Stand for Artistic Freedom: The Defection of Soviet Ballet Dancers to the United States
- Standing Against the Monarchy: Oliver Cromwell's Parliament Versus King Charles
- Standing Up to the King: The Peasant's Revolt to End Serfdom in England
- Sophie Scholl and Her Stand Against Hitler
- Taking a Stand Against the Monarchy: The Birth of the Magna Carta
- Standing Against Capitalism: The Soviets' Refusal of the Marshall Plan
- Standing for the Right of Free Health Care: Aneurin Bevan and the National Health Service
- Sir Thomas More: The Scholar Who Stood Up to a King
- Storming the Bastille: Standing Against the Excesses of the Monarchy
- The Velvet Revolution: Standing Against Communist Rule in Czechoslovakia
- Emmeline Pankhurst: Militancy for Women's Suffrage
- The Italian Unification Movement—Standing Together
- Germany's Atlantic Wall: A Military Stand
- The Yalta Agreement: Taking a Stand on a Post-War World
- Standing Against Slavery: Lord Mansfield of England
- Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Standing Against Hitler

World History
SAMPLE TOPICS



- 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
- Inca and Aztec Resistance to Spanish Colonization
- Taking a Stand at Dien Bien Phu
- Pancho Villa: Taking a Stand at the Mexican Border
- Nelson Mandela's Stand for Equality in South Africa
- Fray Cancer and Missions in the Sixteenth Century Caribbean
- The Sri Lankan Independence Movement
- Bishop Juan Gerardi: Standing for the Truth
- Toussaint L'Ouverture and the Haitian Revolution
- Asserting Afghan Women's Right to Work: Anahita Ratebzad
- Standing for Women in Government: Indira Gandhi
- Simón Bolívar and Venezuela's Stand Against Spanish Rule
- War Crimes Tribunals: Taking a Stand Against Genocide
- Deng Xiaoping: Opening the Chinese Economy
- The Romanov Family: Standing for Imperial Russia
- Emperor Meiji: Opening Japan to Keep Japan Standing
- Standing at an Impasse: The Korean War
- The Iranian Revolution
- Standing Against Saddam Hussein: The Persian Gulf War
- OPEC: Standing for Economic Rights
- Sir Henry Parkes: Taking a Stand for Australian Self Rule
- Genghis Khan: Standing to Unite the Mongols
- Standing for the Independence of Ghana: Kwame Nkrumah