

Triumph & Tragedy Sample Topics

Research Tip: Topic Talks

As a way to introduce the students to the theme, do "Topic Talks." Each day the teacher tells or assigns students to tell the story of three to five topics off the list. Discuss with students how the topics presented connect with the theme. Brainstorm a list of where students would go to begin their research on the presented research topics.

The following list provides examples of topics related to this year's theme. The list is not inclusive: rather it provides a starting point for students and teachers to brainstorm ideas for National History Day topics. Students should keep in mind that many excellent research topics can be found by investigating their own local history. Choosing one of the topics below will not increase or decrease a student's chance of doing well at a National History Day contest.

- Jeremiah Rusk: Bay View Tragedy
- Rachel Carson: Banning of DDT
- Dickey Chappelle: Foreign War Correspondent
- Richard Bond: Congressional Medal of Honor Winner
- Wilma Rudolph: Polio Survivor to Olympic Medalist
- Hiroki Sugihara: Japanese Diplomat
- Cesar Chavez: Migrant Labor Reform
- Theodore Judah: Transcontinental Railroad
- The Triumphant and Tragic Voyage of Christopher Columbus
- Dorothea Dix and Mental Health Reform
- Buffalo Soldiers: Opening the West
- Martin Luther King: Non Violent Protest
- Thomas Cromwell: Suppression of Monasteries
- Columbus: Point of Contact
- John Carlos and Tommie Smith: Black Panther Movement
- Marion Anderson's Concert in Washington DC
- Alaska: Spanish Flu Epidemic
- Vincent Van Gogh: The Triumph and Tragedy of Genius
- San Francisco Earthquake and Fire: Change Born from Tragedy
- Mount Vesuvius and Pompeii: Destruction of a Culture
- Civil Rights: Freedom Summer
- Creation of the State of Israel
- Chicago Urban Housing Projects: Middle Class Housing
- Taos Pueblo Revolt 1640
- NASA: Shuttle Development
- Relocation of Japanese Americans During World War II
- Desegregation: Louisiana Schools
- Indian Wars of 1850s and 1860s
- The Triumph and Tragedy of the Roanoke Settlement
- Hay Market Riots: Labor's Tragedy
- Great Fire of London: Rebuilding Act of 1667
- Families in Struggle and Triumph on the Oregon Trail
- Red Scare 1919: Xenophobia in America
- Enactment of the Immigration and Naturalization Act, 1965
- The Marshall Plan: Economic Reconstruction of Europe

- Ellis Island Immigration Reception and Quarantine Station
- Bracero Program 1942
- Joseph Stalin and the Purge of Russia
- Invasion of Normandy: Military Triumph
- Polio Epidemic: Triumphant Cure
- Lowell Mill Girls: Rise of the Textile Industry
- Edward Doheny: Teapot Dome Scandal
- Dawes Act of 1857
- Penicillin: Saving Lives
- Kent State: Conflicting First Amendment Rights
- Fair Labor Standards Act: Breaker Boys
- U.S.S. Indianapolis: Miscommunication at Sea
- Robert Oppenheimer: Manhattan Project
- Alexander the Great: Personal Triumph and Tragedy
- Winston Churchill: Fight Against Tyranny
- John Brown: Abolitionist Movement
- Rape of Nanking: Japanese Invasion of China
- Eleanor Roosevelt: Human Rights
- Anwar Sadat: Struggle for Peace
- Industrial Revolution: Creation of the Assembly Line
- Everybody Down: History of the Canals
- Harriet Tubman and the Underground Railroad
- Treaty of Versailles: Triumph or Tragedy?
- SALT: A Triumph or a Tragedy
- Social Security Act, 1935
- Creation of the Stock Market:
- Ray Kroc: Fast Food Changes America
- Cultural Revolution in China
- Colonization: French in Vietnam
- Galileo: Triumphant Discoveries, Tragic Life
- War Coverage: Vietnam and the Media
- Battle of Waterloo: New Beginnings from the End
- Midway: Between Triumph and Tragedy
- Surrender of Japan: From Surrender to Success
- Civil Rights Act of 1865
- South Africa Apartheid and the Division of a Nation
- Rosie the Riveter: Women's Roles in WWII
- Saladin: Crusades
- Upton Sinclair: The Jungle Changes Federal Policy
- Marco Polo: Economy of the Silk Road
- Genghis Khan: Cartography and Power
- Interstate Highway System: Growth of the Suburban Neighborhood

Research Tip: Topic Selection.

When selecting topics for your national History Day Project: Many present day events come to mind; September 11, 2001 and Hurricane Katrina. Although both events fall into the theme of Triumph and Tragedy, they are too recent to understand the impact on coming generations. The general rule of thumb is don't choose a topic less than twenty-five years or until one generation has passed. Time gives historical perspective.