

2022 Virginia History Day Topic Ideas

The following topics are just a few of the many possibilities that would make for compelling National History Day projects. Use the attached discussion question to think about the topic in terms of this year's NHD Theme – *Debate and Diplomacy in History: Successes, Failures, Consequences*. Follow the link to get started with some basic research.

General Subjects:

- Public Debates (speeches, protests, novels, music, art)
- Resistance Movements (strikes, revolts, revolutions, civil rights)
- Leaders (diplomats, politicians, generals)
- Organizations (League of Nations, UN, alliances)
- Government Documents (laws, treaties)
- Symbols (emblems, flags, statues)
- Secret Diplomacy (spies)
- Debate Technology (print, radio, TV)
- Trade (unions, tariffs, taxes)
- War (start of wars, peace treaties)

Virginia Specific

- Cultural differences led to complicated interactions between Powhatan Indians and English colonists at Jamestown.
 - Discussion Question – How did Powhatan diplomacy differ from English diplomacy? Were there similarities?
 - Get Started - <https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/united-states-history-primary-source-timeline/colonial-settlement-1600-1763/virginia-relations-with-native-americans/>
- After the arrival of the first enslaved people to Virginia in 1619, colonial governments eventually passed laws that applied to people based on the color of their skin.
 - Discussion Question – What arguments did colonial rulers use to justify race-based laws? How did people of African descent participate in these debates?
 - Get Started - <https://www.historyisfun.org/learn/learning-center/how-did-slavery-develop-in-colonial-virginia-2/>
- In the years leading up to the American Revolution, Patrick Henry supported revolutionary action with fiery speeches.
 - Discussion Question – What were Henry's main arguments in his public addresses? What were the arguments of those that opposed him?
 - Get Started - <https://www.historicstjohnschurch.org/patrick-henry>
- Dunmore's Proclamation offered freedom to enslaved people in Virginia who supported Great Britain against the Revolutionaries.

- Discussion Question – How did the issue of slavery effect diplomacy between Great Britain and the Revolutionaries during the war?
- Get Started - https://www.gilderlehrman.org/sites/default/files/inline-pdfs/01706_fps_1.pdf
- In the spring of 1860, Virginia debated which side to support in the brewing Civil War.
 - Discussion Question – What diplomatic tactics did the Confederacy and United States use to convince Virginians to join their side? What kind of debates did Virginians have among themselves over which course of action was right?
 - Get Started - <https://encyclopediavirginia.org/entries/virginia-convention-of-1861/>
- In the early 1900s, John Mitchell Jr. advocated for African American civil rights with his newspaper *The Richmond Planet*.
 - Discussion Question – How did African Americans respond to the implementation of Jim Crow laws? What types of arguments did they make against them?
 - Get Started - https://www.encyclopediavirginia.org/John_Mitchell_Jr_1863-1929#its2
- President Woodrow Wilson, born in Virginia, used the aftermath of WWI to reimagine the way nations engaged with one another on the world stage.
 - Discussion Questions – What were the guiding principles Wilson emphasized in this new kind of diplomacy? How effective was Wilson in implementing his ideas?
 - Get Started - <https://www.woodrowwilson.org/about-woodrow-wilson-1>
- Barbara Johns and fellow students led a strike to protest school segregation in Virginia.
 - Discussion Question – What arguments did pro- and anti-segregationists make in support of their positions? How did the actions of ordinary African Americans influence these debates?
 - Get Started - <https://www.virginiahistory.org/collections-and-resources/virginia-history-explorer/civil-rights-movement-virginia/brown-i-and-brown>

Colonial Period

- Beginning in the mid-1700s, philosophers, writers, and scientists proposed a new way of thinking about the world, known as the Enlightenment.
 - Discussion Question – What kind of arguments did Enlightenment thinkers make to advocate for new types of government? How did these debates shape our world today?
 - Get Started - <https://www.britannica.com/event/Enlightenment-European-history>
- Throughout the 1600s and 1700s, American Indian nations resisted European encroachment on their land.
 - Discussion Question – How did Native American diplomacy affect the growth of European colonies in North America?
 - Get Started - <https://www.mountvernon.org/library/digitalhistory/digital-encyclopedia/article/native-american-policy>

American Revolution

- In the 1770s, the relationship between Great Britain and its North American colonies fell apart, leading to the American Revolution.
 - Discussion Question – What debates did colonists have over their future in the British Empire? What were Great Britain’s diplomatic responses to these debates?
 - Get Started - <https://www.virginiahistory.org/what-you-can-see/story-virginia/explore-story-virginia/1763-1825/causes-revolution>
- The Declaration of Independence called for an independent American nation.
 - Discussion Question – To whom and to what extent did the ideals of the Declaration of Independence apply at the time of its writing (1776)? What debates have Americans had since 1776 over its meaning?
 - Get Started - <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration/what-does-it-say>

Building a New United States

- After the American Revolution, the new United States found itself diplomatically isolated and vulnerable on the international stage.
 - Discussion Question – What foreign policies did early American presidents adopt to guide the country through dangerous times? Were some policies more effective than others?
 - Get Started - <https://www.mountvernon.org/library/digitalhistory/digital-encyclopedia/article/presidential-diplomacy/>
 - Get Started - <https://edsitement.neh.gov/curricula/monroe-doctrine-origin-and-early-american-foreign-policy>
- The debate over the future of slavery dominated American politics and culture throughout the mid-1800s.
 - Discussion Question – What tactics did various Abolitionists use to oppose the institution of slavery? What arguments did pro-slavery Americans use?
 - Get Started - <https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/african-american-odyssey/abolition.html>

The Civil War and Reconstruction

- Both the United States and Confederate governments were concerned about the participation of European nations in the Civil War.
 - Discussion Question – What strategies did the Confederate government use to try to convince European nations to intervene on its behalf?
 - Get Started - <https://civilwar.vt.edu/confederate-diplomacy/>
- The Emancipation Proclamation had an important effect on the meaning of the Civil War.
 - Discussion Question – How did the actions of enslaved people affect the debate over the necessity and meaning of the Emancipation Proclamation?
 - Get Started - <https://www.virginiahistory.org/collections-and-resources/virginia-history-explorer/american-turning-point-civil-war-virginia-1/wh-0>

- Following the end of the Civil War and spurred by the Transcontinental Railroad, American settlers rapidly moved into the West and forcibly occupied Native American land.
 - Discussion Question – How did the U.S. government, white settlers, and Native People view the series of treaties that were signed in the late 1800s? What were the similarities/differences in views?
 - Get Started - <https://americanindian.si.edu/nk360/plains-treaties#staging>
- In the late 1800s, supporters of the “Lost Cause” portrayed the Confederacy in a positive light and falsely declared the Civil War had nothing to do with slavery.
 - Discussion Question – How did Lost Cause ideology affect the debate over the legacies of the Civil War and relate to the enactment of Jim Crow laws?
 - Get Started - https://www.encyclopediavirginia.org/lost_cause_the

The 20th Century

- The passage of the 19th Amendment guaranteed American women the right to vote.
 - Discussion Question – What tactics did suffragists use to impact the national debate over the 19th Amendment?
 - Get Started - <https://www.virginiahistory.org/what-you-can-see/story-virginia/explore-story-virginia/1876-1924/virginia-and-women%E2%80%99s-suffrage>
- Throughout the 1930s, European governments applied the strategy of appeasement towards Hitler’s aggressive foreign policy.
 - Discussion Question – Why did countries adopt appeasement as a strategy and why did it ultimately fail?
 - Get Started - <https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/how-britain-hoped-to-avoid-war-with-germany-in-the-1930s>
- During the 1950s and 1960s, the U.S. Civil Rights Movement achieved international recognition in its fight for racial equality.
 - Discussion Question – How did the Civil Rights Movement affect the U.S.’s foreign policy?
 - Get Started - <https://history.house.gov/Exhibitions-and-Publications/BAIC/Historical-Essays/Keeping-the-Faith/Postwar-Foreign-Policy-Civil-Rights/>
- Beginning in the 1970s, the U.S. and Russia have signed multiple nuclear arms control treaties.
 - Discussion Question – How have nuclear weapons effected diplomacy in the 20th and 21st centuries?
 - Get Started - <https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/USRussiaNuclearAgreements>
- Throughout the Cold War, both Communist and western governments used professional sports to promote their social and political agendas.
 - Discussion Question – In what ways did athletes and diplomats collaborate to convey a unified message? In what ways did athletes disagree with diplomats’ efforts?
 - Get Started - https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/theme/sport-in-the-cold-war?_ga=2.33531514.5300869.1625599572-525664417.1625077807