

2024 NHD® Annual Theme Overview for North Carolina

The **National History Day®** office chooses a different theme to unite all NHD projects each year. While your topic must connect to the theme, the annual theme is broad enough for you to pick a topic from any time in history or location in the world. Before getting started, check with your teacher to ensure they don't have guidelines on topic choice.

During the 2023–2024 school year, the annual theme is **Turning Points in History**. This guide will help you think about this theme, how to narrow topics to a good size for an NHD project and brainstorm some possible topic ideas.

What is a Turning Point?

Merriam-Webster defines a turning point as “the point at which a significant change occurs,” in other words, a significant moment.

So, what is a turning point in history?

A turning point in history is an event, idea, or action that directly, or sometimes indirectly, causes change. Occasionally, these may be intentional, such as social movement pushing for change, while others may be unintended, like Alexander Flemmings' discovery of Penicillin.

Turning points might have immediate repercussions, making their significance evident to people at the time. However, the impact is often clear only in retrospect, and it takes time to see the full extent of the change. Think of this in terms of the history you have witnessed yourself. The global pandemic that struck in 2020 changed society almost immediately. However, changes and impacts are still playing out; only time will show how much it changed.

As you explore ideas, remember that a turning point can be a personal decision in one person's life or a political choice affecting millions. It can be an event or idea with global or local consequences or the life of a single person whose actions inspire or influence others. The effect of a turning point in history might be social, political, economic, or cultural. It might lead to positive or negative change. It could even be a combination. History is often complicated.

Regardless of your selected topic, remember to go beyond just describing the facts and present how your topic affected individuals, communities, nations, or the world, depending on its scale. Simply put, you want to show in your project:

- what it was like before the turning point.
 - what the turning point was.
 - how this turn changed the direction of where things were heading before that point.
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Important to Remember as You Hunt for Topics

As you hunt for topics, look for ones that you will be able to show both **historical context** and **historical significance**. Historical context considers what was happening during your topic's time that influenced it. As you think of topics, remember that you will need to be able to answer these questions eventually:

- › What factors contributed to the turning point?
- › Why did the turning point develop? How did it create change?

Historical significance examines the impact of your topic and demonstrates why it matters today. As NHD likes to say, you must answer the “**so what?**”

- › What were the immediate and long-term consequences?
- › What impact did the turning point have on the people who experienced it? How did they, in turn, affect it?

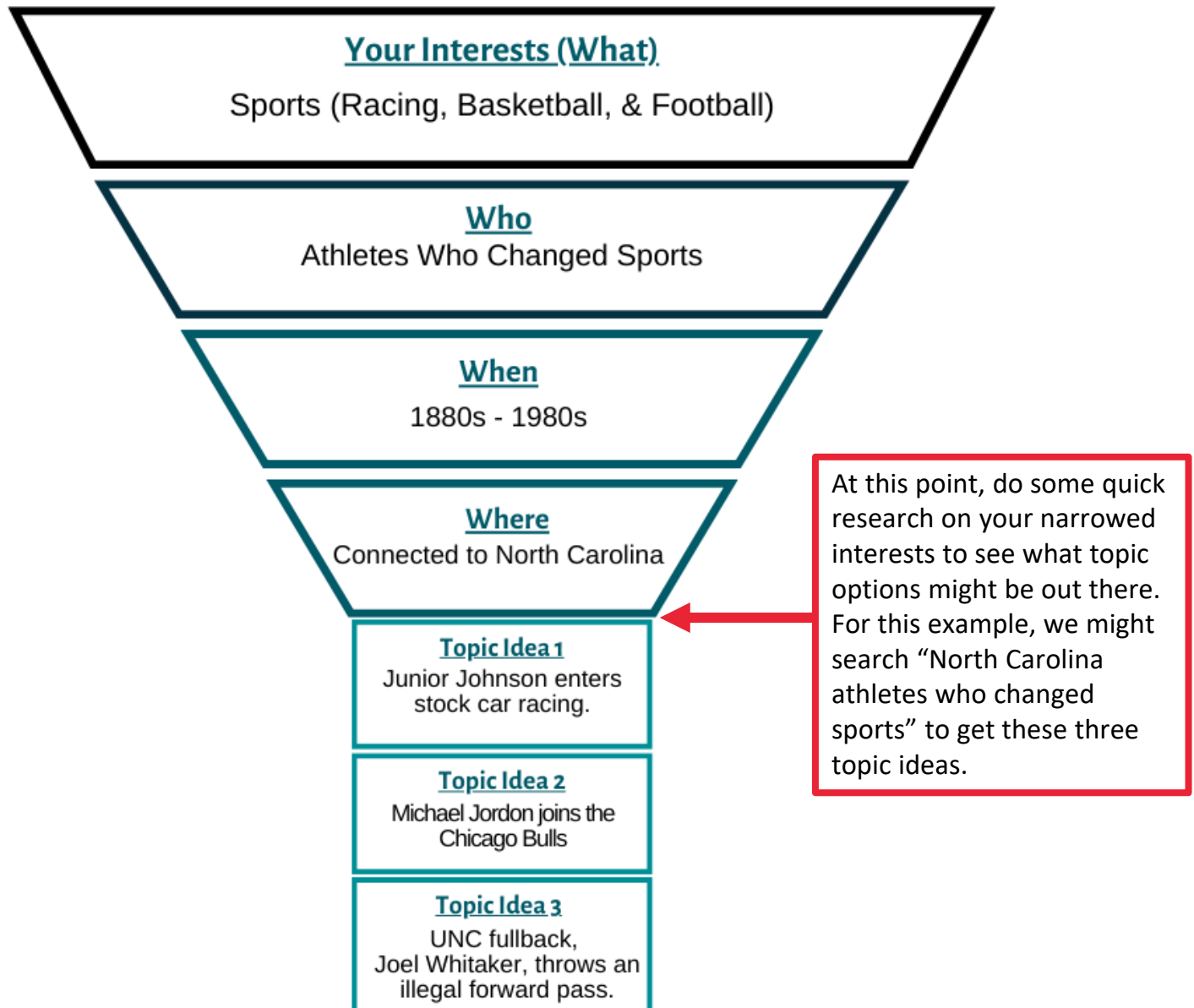
Ultimately, you will find the answers to these questions through **research**. Keep an open mind as you search your sources and discover examples of turning points. Investigate how your topic affected individuals, communities, nations, or the world and what changes occurred socially, economically, politically, or environmentally because of these impacts.

Narrowing Down a Topic

As you choose your topic, remember not to be too broad. A topic such as “World War II” might seem like a good choice at first, but it covers too much time and too many people, places, ideas, and actions. A broad topic like this example might make finding sources easy, but making a clear argument and staying within your project category's word or time limits will be much more work. However, if you instead looked at a specific turning point in World War II, such as the Battle of Stalingrad, it would help you focus your research and form a more manageable **historical argument**. Learn how to scale down broad ideas using the topic funnel on the next page.

Using a Topic Funnel

The chart below shows how you can use **Who**, **What**, **When**, and **Where** questions to narrow your broad interests into focus history topic ideas. Remember that everything has a history, so think of things that are interesting to you! The end of this handout has a blank topic funnel for you to use.



N.C. History Topic Ideas

The topic ideas listed on the following pages explore possible connections to this year’s theme within North Carolina history. Though sorted by type of history, many topic ideas fit into multiple sections, so examine the list carefully. NCpedia.org is a great place to start learning more about these topics.

North Carolina Turning Points in History Ideas

African American History

The 1971 Durham Schools Charette
Election of Harvey Gantt as Charlotte's Mayor
The Founding of Princeville
The Creation of the Palmer Memorial Institute
The Formation of Montford Point
North Carolina's 1865 Freedmen's Convention
Dorothy Counts & Charlotte School Integration
Creation of the NC Mutual Life Insurance Company
David Walker and His Appeal
The Royal Ice Cream Sit-in
The Greensboro Sit-in/Greensboro Four
The Wilmington Insurrection of 1898
Nat Turner's Rebellion Impacts in North Carolina
Hinton Rowan Helper, Anti-Slavery Debate
The Fire of New Bern
Levonina Frazier – Pepsi Model

Agricultural History

Nicholas Nichols Nixon and Peanut Cultivation
Priestley Mangum and His Innovative Terrace
Silas McDowell and the Thermal Zone
The 1918 Pasteurization Initiative in Tarboro
Tobacco Whistleblower Jeffrey Stephen Wigand

American Indian History

Lumbee Organize Against the Ku Klux Klan, 1958
Sequoyah Creates the Cherokee Syllabary
The Tuscarora War
King Kilcoganen grants land to George Durant
Cherokee leaders visit London in 1730
NC colony establishes Indian Trade Commission
Cherokee establish the "Light Horse Guards"
Andrew Jackson signs the Indian Removal Act
The Killings of Allen and William Lowry
A Normal School for Indians opens in Pembroke
Eastern Band of Cherokee is Incorporated under NC law
Congress passes the 1956 "Lumbee Bill"
Harrah's Cherokee Casino Opens
Formation of Specific Schools
State or Federal Recognition of Specific Tribes
Chief Yonaguska Stands-up to Removal

Asian American History

Chang and Eng Bunker
Charles Soong Enrolls at Trinity College
George Masa
The Formation of the Hindu Society of N.C.

Arts & Entertainment

Formation of Black Mountain College
Ava Gardner's Discovery
André Leon Talley
Ernie Barnes' Retirement from Football
Romare Bearden Moves from NC to Harlem
Bennie Lydell Glover & the Record Industry Downfall
Molly McCoy Hancock Opens a Dress Shop
Theolonious Monk Impact on Jazz
Mel A. Tomlinson: Rubber-Band Man
Nina Simone
Formation of the North Carolina Museum of Art
Charlie Clay Poole Goes to New York
Creation of the North Carolina Symphony
Andy Griffin creates "What It Was, Was Football"
Thomas Wolfe Writes about Home
William Sydney Porter Creates a Pen Name

Civics and Government

1669 Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina
Bayard v. Singleton
Creation of UNC at Chapel Hill
Governor Sanford's North Carolina Fund
Governor William Woods Holden's Impeachment
Halifax Resolves
Jacob Henry's Speech
Mecklenburg Resolves
North Carolina's Prohibition Vote
North Carolina's Provincial Congresses
The Election of 1898
Placement of the State Capital
Stanly-Spaight Duel
North Carolina Congressional Gerrymandering
Helms-Hunt Senate Race
Speaker Ban Laws

Environmental & Natural History

The Extinction of the Carolina Parakeet
Movement to Save the Red Wolves
Brown Creek Soil Conservation District
Carl Schenck and the Cradle of Forestry
Creation of Mount Mitchell State Park
Creation of Cape Hatteras National Seashore
The North Carolina Zoological Park
R. W. Graeber and North Carolina Forestry
John Lawson Documents the Carolinas

Industry or Labor History

Burlington Industries
The General Textile Strike of 1934
North Carolina Gold Rush
Child Labor in North Carolina
Gastonia Strike: The Loray Mill 1929
Harriet-Henderson Cotton Mills Strike

Innovation in History

Construction of the Linn Cove Viaduct
Creation of Research Triangle Park
Ham, The “Astro Chimp”
Richard Gatling and the Gatling Gun
Henry Louis Smith and Early X-ray Experiments
Krispy Kreme Doughnuts Production
Pamlico County Schools Motorized School Bus
Reginald Fessenden’s N.C. Wireless Experiments
The Wright Brothers’ December 17, 1903 Flight
Electricity’s Impact on Rural Life in North Carolina
David “Carbine” Williams’ M-1 carbine rifle
Malcolm P. McLean’s Box

Hispanic and Latino American History

1995 Strike at Morganton’s Case Farms
Creation of El Centro Hispano in Durham
Creation of Latin American Coalition in Charlotte
Creation of Student Action with Farmworkers
Governor Hunt appoints H. Nolo Martinez

Journalism & Broadcasting

Charles Kuralt Tells the Good News
Edward Murrow Spotlights McCarthy on *See It Now*
James Davis Starts a Newspaper
Harry Golden Tackles Hard News with Satire

Medical History

Alice Threatt Perry Helps Veterans
Anne Penland Starts a Training Course
Dr. James Buren Sidbury – Establishment of Pediatrics
Karl Von Ruck Starts a Treatment for Tuberculosis
Creation of Leonard Medical School
Dr. Michael Hoke’s Innovation in Orthopedics
Dr. Perry Reaves’ Radiograph-scope
NC Artificial Limbs Program After Civil War
North Carolina Starts a Eugenics Board

Military History

Culpeper’s Rebellion
Battle of Kings Mountain
Battle of Guilford Courthouse
The Battle of Lindley’s Mill
The Battle of Alamance
Battle of Bentonville
Battle of Fort Fisher
Negotiations at the Bennett Place
The Shelton Laurel Massacre

Naval and Maritime History

The Death of Blackbeard
The Sinking of the *USS Huron*
The Sinking of the *Metropolis*
The Pea Island Life-Saving Station
The Building of one North Carolina’s Lighthouses
The Roanoke Voyages
Giovanni da Verrazzano – Explores N.C. Coast

Sports/Athletics

Dr. Frank Jobe Saves Baseball Careers
Michael Jordan Joins the Chicago Bulls
Charlie Sifford Plays on the PGA Tour
Junior Johnson Enters Stock Car Racing
UNC Fullback, Joe Whitaker, Throws a Forward Pass
WCU Ronnie Carr’s 3-point shot

Women’s History

Gertrude Weil Returns to North Carolina
Sarah DeRippe Falkener Moves to North Carolina
Barbara Bynum Henderson Writes a Poem
Mary Maria Petty’s Chemistry Lab for Women
Jane Simpson McKimmon forms a Tomato Club
Georgia “Tiny” Broadwick Takes a Leap
Lillian Exum Clement Stafford Wins an Election
Tabitha Holton Earns a License
Crystal Lee Sutton Gets Fired
Ella Mae Wiggins Writes a Song
The Creation of Salem College
NC Postpones Consideration of Women Suffrage
ERA Defeated in the State Senate

Looking for American or World History Topic Ideas?

Watch the [2024 NHD Theme Video](#), check out [DocsTeach 2024 NHD Page](#) from the National Archives, or visit the [NHD Theme Page](#). Also, try searching “Turning Points in World History” or replacing “world” with a specific geographical or topic area to get ideas flowing!

Topic Funnel Worksheet

Using **Who**, **What**, **When**, and **Where** questions can help you narrow down your broad history interests into focus topic ideas. Use this funnel template on this worksheet to brainstorm and narrow your ideas. See the checklist on the next page to double-check the strength of your top 3 choices.

What are your interests?

Who?

When?

Where?

Topic Idea 1

Topic Idea 2

Topic Idea 3

Checklist for a Selecting a Strong Topic

When it comes time to pick your topic, there are a few things you want to ask yourself to make sure that you choose a topic that works for you and will set you up for success.

Consider these questions to get started:

- ☐ **Does this topic fit the annual theme?** A strong topic will have a solid connection to the theme you can clearly show throughout your project. Can you explain how this topic was a turning point in history? If the answer is no or the turning point is hard to explain, there might be better topics for you to take on this year. If the answer is yes, move on to the next question.
- ☐ **Does this topic fit your teacher's guidelines?** If you are doing History Day as a class project, your teacher might have set guidelines for the types of topics you can choose. If so, ensure your choice fits those before moving on to the next question.
- ☐ **Are you interested in this topic?** Make sure you pick a topic that fascinates you. You will study your subject for several weeks, so you want to ensure it will not bore you!
- ☐ **Can you find sources on your topic?** There are some fascinating topics, but some choices might be hard to find sources for during research. Do a quick search to see if you can quickly turn up both primary and secondary sources connected to your topic. If not, you may want to pick another one.
- ☐ **Does your topic have historical significance?** Remember that a strong History Day project shows how a topic is significant in history. Though you don't need to show that your choice changed the whole world, you do want to be sure you can explain what changed in history because your topic took place.
- ☐ **Is your topic historic?** If your subject area is too recent, it may be more of a current event than history. You want to ensure your choice is far enough back to find both primary and secondary sources and evaluate its lasting impact. Though there is no hard rule, we suggest you try to find a topic from at least 25 years ago.