



Turning Points in History

The 2024 National History Day theme will connect to topics from every part of the world and area of study in history. When you start to select your topic, don't forget to first look in your own backyard! Investigate the connections that Ohio has to some of history's many turning points. Below we've broken down the theme to help you choose a topic.

What is a turning point?

Ever wonder how we got to where we are today? Throughout history, there have been millions of turning points, each shaping history in its own way. We can think of **turning points** as the **points in history where significant change happens**. They are specific moments in time where an idea, event, person or action causes change. These shifts can be social, cultural, political or economic. Sometimes change happens immediately and sometimes it takes a while to see the results, but change does happen.

Events that altered the course of history

When we think of turning points in history, the first things that come to mind are the key events that led to change. Turning point events are wide and varied. They can be seemingly small events, like a small protest that sparks local change, or large and widespread, like an election that changes the course of a country. History is full of battles that changed the tides of a war, movements that started with a speech and so much more.

- *On May 4, 1970, a group of students gathered at Kent State University to peacefully protest the United States' expanded involvement in the Vietnam War. A confrontation with the Ohio National Guard resulted in the death of four students. The Kent State Shootings mark the first time a student was killed in an anti-war gathering in US History. How did this event change the country's views on protest? How was this event a turning point in the Vietnam War?*

People who changed their world

There are many turning points in history that have happened because of a person or group of people. They may have sparked a new social movement, made a wartime decision or created a new tool that we now can't live without. The choices and actions of leaders, activists, scientists, politicians and so many more have sparked global and local change.

- *Michikinikwa, also known as Chief Little Turtle, was an influential Myaamia leader in the late 18th century. He rose to prominence through his military service to his community, became a council speaker for the Myaamia at the Treaty of Greenville, and was key in uniting the diverse Myaamia villages into the Miami Nation. What effect did Michikinikwa have on society? How did his involvement help to spark change in the Miami Nation? Visit the [OHD Research Guidelines: American Indian History](#) to help you explore this, and other American Indian topics, further.*

Ideas as turning points

Thoughts and ideas have the power to create lasting change. Whether it's a new political idea, a change in society or a groundbreaking invention or innovation, they all got their start from a tiny idea. These ideas have the power to spark change in many different parts of history.

- *Superman first appeared in Action Comics #1 by Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster in 1938. The publishing of Superman is widely seen as the beginning of the superhero genre and has served as an influence in other*





comics, TV and film. How did the work of Siegel and Shuster act as a turning point in the world of comics? What influence has Superman had on society?

Multiple Perspectives

Whenever significant changes happen, it's good to remember that more than one perspective is involved. A turning point in history has many key players and it's important to think about everyone who is involved. Think about the people and groups that are important to your topic. Who was affected by the turning point? Who instigated the changes?

- *In October 1995, the presidents of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, and Croatia met in Dayton, Ohio to discuss ending years of ethnic warfare. The peace agreement that was negotiated at the Wright-Patterson Air Force Base became known as the Dayton Accords. What perspectives should be considered when investigating the Dayton Accords? How did the Dayton Accords impact different groups?*

Impacts and Effects

When you start considering a topic, keep in mind that turning points in history are all about change. Turning points are so influential that things cannot stay the same once they happen. It's important to think about the **before** and **after** of the topic you choose. Make sure you think about what led up to the turning point and what developed or changed as a result of your turning point.

Don't forget to check out the **Local History Topic List** for more help on how to explore this year's theme of [Turning Points in History](#). We're so excited to see what topics you select and the projects you create this year!



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