

## 2018 THEME NARRATIVE:

# ***CONFLICT & COMPROMISE IN HISTORY***

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National History Day (NHD) students will spend the 2017–2018 school year delving into a topic based on the theme *Conflict & Compromise in History*. You will ask questions that lead you down the path of discovery of not just what occurred, but how it occurred and, most important, why it happened and what the consequences were. As you set out to research your topic, you will discover the basic facts first, but then you will need to look deeper. You will go on to examine the factors that contributed to the development of your event, its influence on history, and the effect it had on the community, society, nation, and the world.

Each year National History Day uses a theme to provide a lens to study history. The theme is always broad enough so that you can select topics from any place (local, national, or world history) and any time period. Once you choose your topic, you investigate historical context, historical significance, and the topic's relationship to the theme by conducting research in libraries, archives, and museums; through oral history interviews; and by visiting historic sites.

This year's theme, *Conflict & Compromise in History*, requires you to view history through multiple perspectives. Compromise can sometimes prevent a conflict, but what happens when it does not? If a conflict occurs, how can compromise help to end the conflict? What happens if a failed compromise leads to an even larger conflict? Throughout this academic year, you will need to ask yourself these questions and more.

**How can compromise prevent future conflict? Is compromise simple to reach?** Compromise has been used to prevent future conflict, but that does not mean it was easy. Consider First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt's work to create the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Or look further back to the Constitutional Convention, when the Founding Fathers created the Connecticut Compromise to balance the needs of larger and smaller states. How did the individuals involved work together to create compromise? Were they able to ensure that these compromises would lead to continued peace? What did they need to give up in order for these compromises to occur?

**What happens when a compromise lasts for only a short time?** Many times a compromise works only for a short time, until the conflict bubbles to the surface again. In the years leading up to the American Civil War, there are many examples of the U.S. government working to compromise and prevent conflict. Think of the Three-Fifths Compromise or the Missouri Compromise. Do you believe the leaders felt that the peace they achieved through those compromises would last? Was war inevitable, or could those compromises have been more successful? Sometimes a compromise leads only to a pause in the larger conflict. Consider the actions of British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain; did the compromise he proposed, known as appeasement, lead to World War II? Would that conflict have taken place even without appeasement? Did appeasement delay or hasten the onset of the war?

**What happens when groups or individuals fail to reach a compromise? Does that always lead to conflict?**

Look to Australian history to see an example of what happens when a group fails to compromise. When British settlers first arrived in Australia, they happily traded and coexisted with the Aboriginal community. How long did that peaceful scenario last? What conflicts arose when the 1861 Crown Lands Act was established? Or consider Queen Mary I of England, a devout Catholic who refused to allow her subjects to worship as Protestants. How did her lack of compromise lead to conflict? How does history remember her today?

**What happens when an attempt at compromise brings about a conflict?** Sometimes an attempt to compromise can lead to a conflict. Mahatma Gandhi is remembered as one of history's most famous peaceful protesters. Did a conflict ever result from his actions? The Salt Marches, led by Gandhi in 1930, began as a peaceful protest against British rule of India, but how did they end? Did that demonstration lead to conflict, and did the protesters manage to negotiate a compromise? Consider the fight by women in Great Britain for the right to vote. The three organizations led by women, the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies, the Women's Social and Political Union, and the Women's League, all had very different views on how to achieve the vote. What conflicts did they have with each other, and how did they use compromise to work together to achieve their goal?

**What happens when neither side is willing to compromise?** Compromise often results from conflict, but sometimes those involved in a conflict are unwilling to compromise. George Washington faced many conflicts, some of which were resolved through compromise, while others were not. The first conflict within the new United States of America was a risky uprising in 1794 by western Pennsylvania farmers rebelling against the liquor tax. What was Washington's reaction to this revolt? Did he compromise with the Whiskey Rebels? Consider the Haitian Revolution, which began in 1791. What effect did this anti-slavery and anti-colonial insurrection have on the institution of slavery in the Americas and beyond?

**How can compromise resolve an ongoing conflict? How has compromise been used to end conflict throughout history?** Consider the peace treaties that typically end wars. How are such treaties created? What kinds of compromises must be forged to negotiate peace after a conflict? Think of the Potsdam Agreement. How did the Allied Powers of World War II work together to control Germany? How did that agreement end the conflict in Europe? How did that compromise affect international relations during the following years?

Students interested in labor history will encounter conflicts in the form of strikes. The Pullman Strike of 1894, for example, pitted the Pullman Company and the U.S. government against the American Railway Union. What conflicts arose out of that strike? How did the government attempt to compromise once the strike ended? Another example is the conflict between factory owners and groups fighting for better working conditions for workers, as well as higher wages and shorter working hours. *Muller v. Oregon* was a landmark case in gaining shorter working hours for women. Were all the parties involved happy with that decision? Which group had to compromise in order to allow women the right to shorter work hours?

**What causes conflict between people?** Throughout history, differences in gender and race have resulted in numerous conflicts. The 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment was ratified in 1870, giving African American men the right to vote. Women sought suffrage as well; how did they compromise at that point in their struggle? What conflicts resulted throughout the nation? The American Civil Rights Movement was a long and difficult battle for equal rights for African Americans. Education was just one element. The *Brown v. Board of Education* decision ended segregation in schools. How did the courts compromise with both parties? How has that decision affected schools around the nation?

Religion has often led to conflicts. The Crusades were religious wars that involved numerous nations for hundreds of years. How did that conflict begin? How was it resolved? The conflict between French Catholics and French Protestants during the late 1500s disrupted the peace and unity of France. King Henry IV signed the Edict of



Nantes in 1598 to help restore unity. How did that edict help the French people? Were both sides satisfied with the compromise? Why or why not?

Artists have created paintings, plays, and literature to depict the world around them throughout history. At times, their work sparked conflict by drawing attention to existing issues. Think of Upton Sinclair's novel *The Jungle*, a groundbreaking work that opened people's eyes to ethical issues within the food industry. How did the government react to the resulting outrage? What did officials create to appease both the people and the food industry?

No matter which topic you decide to research, be sure to place it within its historical context. Examine the significance of your topic in history and show development over time. Begin by reading secondary sources, and then move on to seek out available primary sources. Using your research skills, you should be able to clearly explain the relationship of your topic to the theme, *Conflict & Compromise in History*. Based on that understanding, you can develop quality papers, performances, exhibits, websites, and documentaries for National History Day.

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