

Breaking Barriers in History

National History Day 2019-20

This introduction was adapted from the National History Day Indiana Student Guide for the North Carolina audience.

The **National History Day office** chooses a different theme each year to unite all National History Day projects. While your topic must connect to the theme, the annual theme is broad enough for you to pick a topic from any time period or place. The annual theme is designed to help you go beyond the names and dates in your research to finding the impact and significance it has had on the past and may continue to have on the present and future.

During the 2019–2020 school year, the annual theme is **Breaking Barriers in History**. Countless events and people in history connect to this theme, which makes it seem quite broad. While this means you can connect it to many different topics, it is always good to start with a definition.

By defining “barriers” you can get a better grasp on what questions you should be asking as you connect your topic to the theme. After defining “barrier,” consider several ideas related to this definition.

Barrier (n)

1. something material that blocks or is intended to block passage
 2. a natural formation or structure that prevents or hinders movement or action
 3. something immaterial that impedes or separates
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How have things in nature such as rivers, mountains, oceans or deserts acted as barriers?

Sometimes barriers are physical or natural structures that block movement. This theme lends itself to investigating how barriers have affected the movement of people for migration and exploration.

In addition to the barriers themselves, students can discuss the people who overcame these barriers, such as the first people to climb Mount Everest or reach the moon.

How can something be a barrier if it's not a physical structure?

Barriers can also be social or political norms. Racial barriers such as segregation and voting legislation fit into this topic and can be looked at through multiple viewpoints. Think of people or groups in history who defied the odds despite society telling them they would never succeed. Attitudes can be barriers, too. For instance, how did attitudes about people with disabilities alter after the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act?

Can barriers be positive?

Not all barriers are negative. For instance, many laws are created to protect rights or people. Vaccinations were created as a barrier against disease.

What if the barrier was not broken?

Sometimes a barrier must have a crack put into it before it can be broken. It's ok for a topic not to completely break down a barrier – the important thing is to address the whole story in your project. Susan B. Anthony did not live long enough to see American women get the right to vote. However, her work helped to pave the way for it to happen.

Why does a barrier exist?

This year's theme also allows you the opportunity to question why a barrier was put in place – whether it is legislation, social norm, or physical structures.

Most importantly, remember to ask why your topic matters today. As NHD says, “so what?” Did the breaking or building of a barrier have a lasting impact on society? Did it inspire future events that might not have otherwise been possible?

Ultimately, the answers to these questions must be found through **research**. Keep an **open mind** as you research and look for **examples of breaking barriers**.

While you can use any topic from any time period or place in history to relate to the theme, here are some **broad ideas** of places to look for topics:

Physical

Consider inventions or breakthrough scientific discoveries that have impacted the world today. How did these break barriers? Was the barrier broken because of the discovery, the person who did it, or both? Or look at physical barriers that have been built by people and eventually demolished.

Natural

Think of explorers who navigated oceans, rivers, and mountains. How were these accomplishments breaking barriers? What did they inspire? How is the world different because of these people and events?

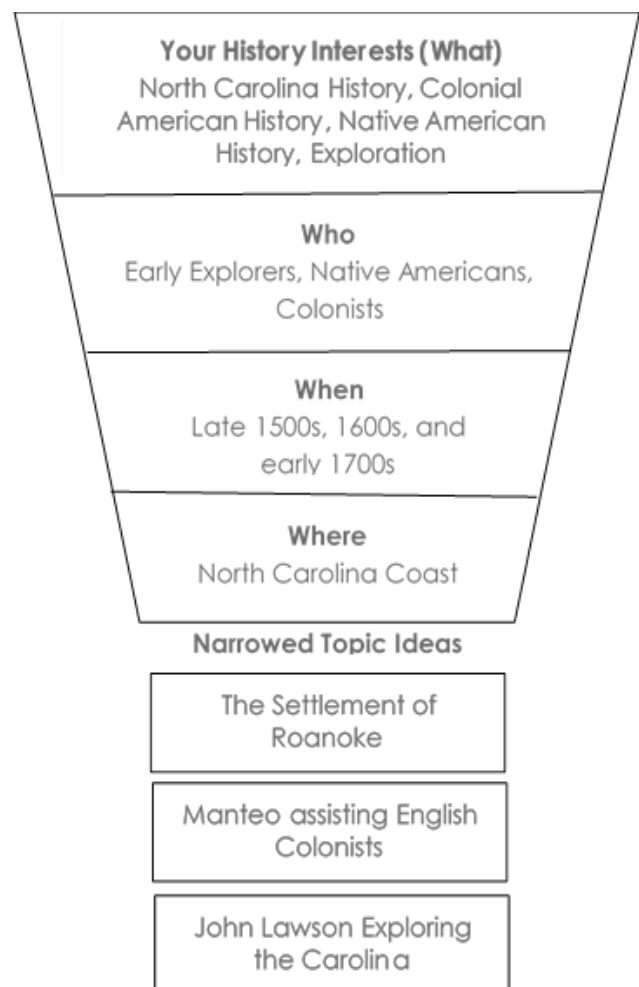
Ideological

Consider topics that relate to social equality, such as people and events within the Civil Rights and Women's Rights Movements. Who are some key figures nation-wide, or even in your own community who have pushed limits set forth by society?

Narrowing Down a Topic

As you choose your topic, remember not to be too broad. A topic such as, “The Civil Rights Movement: Breaking Down Racial Barriers,” might seem like a good choice at first, but it covers way too many events, people, and places. Broad topics like this one might make finding sources easy, but it will be that much harder to make a clear argument and stay within the word or time limits in your project category. Narrowing the topic down to something like, “Jackie Robinson: Breaking the Color Barrier in Baseball,” will help focus your research and the argument you would like to present.

Take a look at this example of how you can use Who, What, When, and Where questions to narrow down your broad history interests into narrowed down topic ideas.



Breaking Barriers in N.C. History

Topic Ideas in North Carolina History

These topic ideas 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 explore the list carefully. Some ideas will need to be narrowed down based on how you would like to approach the topic. A great place to start exploring many of these topics is on www.NCpedia.org.

African American History

Black Wallstreet
Charlotte Hawkins Brown
David Walker's Appeal
Ella Baker
Golden Frinks
Hammocks Beach State Park
Hannah Bond
Harriot Jacobs
John Carruthers Stanly
Julius Chambers
Lunsford Lane
Maritime Underground Railroad
Moses Grandy
Ocean City Beach, N.C.
Omar Said
Royal Ice Cream Sit-in
Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Ed.
The Green Book in N.C.
The Greensboro Four
Thomas Day

Art, Entertainment, & Fashion History

Ava Gardner
Black Mountain College
Doc Watson
Earl Scruggs
Molly McCoy Hancock
Nina Simone
Selma Burke
The Artwork of John White
Willie Otey Kay

Environmental or Agricultural History

Biltmore Forrest School
Carolista Fletcher Baum
Great Smoky Mountains National Park
Lucy Stowe
Margaret Nygard
Mount Mitchell State Park
N.C. Fisheries Commission Board
N.C. Zoological Park
N.C.'s Natural Heritage Program
N.C.'s Turpentine Industry
The Mangum Terrace
Washington Duke

Fight for Civil Liberties or Freedom

(Also see African American & Women's History Sections)
1986 N.C. Lesbian & Gay Pride Parade, Durham
A Pledge to Violate the Stamp Act
Ella May Wiggins
Halifax Resolves
Jacob Henry
Senator Sam J. Ervin Jr.
Speaker Ban Law
The First Provincial Congress

Journalism or Photography History

Charles Kuralt
George Masa
Harry Lewis Golden
Mary Bayard Morgan Wooten
Photography of Hugh Mangum
Sandra Hughes
Willis Gustavus Borne

Colonization or Defining Borders

Dividing the Carolinas
Fort San Juan
N.C. Barrier Islands
N.C. Ceding its Western Lands
The Carolina Charter
The Lederer Expedition
The Lost State of Franklin
The Roanoke Colony
The Walton War
The Watauga Settlement
War of Sugar Creek
William Bryd II and *The History of the Dividing Line*

Maritime History

Chicamacomico Life-Saving Station
Civil War Blockade Runners in N.C.
Graveyard of the Atlantic
N.C. Lighthouses
Pea Island Lifesavers
Privateering/Piracy
Lawrence E. Allen Sr.
Submarine Warfare off N.C. Coast

Medical History

1864 Yellow Fever Outbreak in N.C.
1918 Spanish Flu Outbreak in N.C.
Annie Lowrie Alexander
Dr. Catherine Wilfert
Dr. Susan Dimock
Leonard Medical School
The Union Field Hospital at the Battle of
Bentonville

Military History

Battle at Hatteras Inlet
Battle of Asheville
Battle of Averagesboro
Battle of Bettis's Bridge
Battle of Charlotte
Battle of Cowan's Ford
Battle of Elizabethtown
Battle of Guilford Courthouse
Battle of Kings Mountain
Battle of McIntyre's Farm
Battle of Moores Creek Bridge
Battle of Plymouth
Battle of Wahab's Plantation
Fort Anderson
Fort Dobbs
Fort Fisher
Fort Macon
Kiffin Yates Rockwell
New Bern as a Union Occupied City
"Old Hickory" Breaks the Hindenburg Line
Spanish Invasions of Colonial N.C.
Submarine Warfare off N.C. Coast
The 1st North Carolina Colored Volunteers
The House in the Horseshoe
The Montford Point Marines
Torrence's Tavern

Native American History

1853 case State v. Noel Locklear
Augusta Conference
Cherokee Removal and the Trail of Tears
Junaluska
Manteo and Wanchese Travel to England
N.C. Commission of Indian Affairs
Qualla Boundary
The Cherokee Code Talkers
The Lowry War
The Lumbee Pursuit of Education
The Tuscarora War
Thomas Oxendine
Tryon's Line and the Proclamation of 1763

Overcoming Adversity

Chang and Eng Bunker
Lady Olga
Millie-Christine McCoy
Tiny Broadwick

Sports History

Althea Gibson
College Basketball & the N.C. Civil Rights
Movement
Dr. Frank Jobe
Hang Gliding in N.C.
Junior Johnson
Michael Jordan
Sugar Ray Leonard

Science, Technology, & Engineering

Dr. Catherine Wilfert
Gertrude B. Elion
Linn Cove Viaduct
Malcom McClean
Richard Jordan Gatling
Ronald McNair
The North Carolina Railroad
The Wilmington & Weldon Railroad
The Wright Brothers
William E. Thornton (Astronaut)

Women's History

Anna Julia Cooper
Annie Lowrie Alexander
Beulah Louise Henry
Connie Guion
Cornelia Petty Jerman
Dr. Catherine Wilfert
Dr. Susan Dimock
Edenton Tea Party
Elizabeth Rumbough Baker Dotterer
Fannie Parker
Gertrude McKee
Gertrude Weil
Katherine Lee Harris "Kate" Adams
Lillian Exum Clement
Lucy Stowe
Madelon Battle Hancock
Margaret Wake Tryon
Selma Burke
Susie Marshall Sharp
Susie Sharp
The Struggle for Women's Suffrage in N.C.