



# Rights & Responsibilities in History (4-5)

The 2025 National History Day theme asks you to think about how the connection between rights and responsibilities has changed over time and how this has affected people and their communities.

When you choose your topic, think about the rights people have, the responsibilities to protect those rights, and how governments and other groups help define these rights and responsibilities.

## MAKE IT ABOUT RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

You need to think about **both rights and responsibilities**. Whether your topic is about a political change, a new law, a court case, a protest, or a change in thinking, it happened because someone or a group of people did something that challenged rights and brought new responsibilities. When you use your rights, you also have a duty to act fairly and protect other people's rights. Rights and responsibilities are connected, like a tug-of-war between people and those in charge.

## MAKE IT ABOUT CONTEXT

One way to find issues of rights and responsibilities is to look at events in history that led to struggles for rights. As you research, learn about what happened before the rights and responsibilities you are studying.

## MAKE IT ABOUT IMPACT

The fight between people wanting rights and those in control has caused many important events in history. To understand why your topic is important, research how it affected people and their communities. Here are some questions to help you:

- What happens when rights are not given equally to everyone?
- Do people who have or demand rights also have responsibilities?
- How do rights & responsibilities affect a person's ability to work or earn money?
- Do rights and responsibilities apply to the environment, space, or animals?
- How do rights affect a person's choice in where to live, opportunity for education, and their ability to practice a religion?

### The Way Things Were

Rights & responsibilities, culture, and understanding before your topic.



### The Main Event

Your topic - the event, controversy, protest involving rights & responsibilities



### Shifted History

The significant ways in which life or society changed because of rights & responsibilities..



## THINK LIKE A HISTORIAN

Historical thinking requires that a topic be investigated and researched from different perspectives. Reflect on:

**Significance** - Is your topic significant in history?

**Chronology** - Identify the key events related to your topic and when they happened.

**Turning Points** - Think about the changes related to your topic. What caused these changes, and what happened because of them? Did your topic lead to progress or problems?

**Context** - Use primary sources to understand the context of your topic.

**Evidence** - Use a variety of sources to be sure your argument is strong.

**Historical Lens** - Understand different ways to look at history, like political, economic, environmental, social, and cultural history.