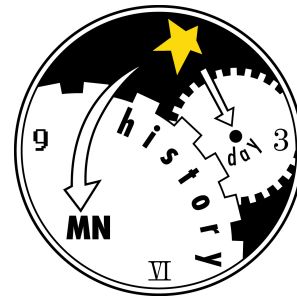


# National History Day 2012 Theme: Revolution, Reaction, Reform in History



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National History Day in Minnesota

The 2012 History Day theme, “Revolution, Reaction, Reform in History,” provides an opportunity to explore charged moments in history, the moments students often find most interesting.

Although narrowed topics will likely focus on one of the three R’s, we encourage students to identify connections to the other two, if possible. Revolutions come of reactions to reform; reform leads to reaction; and reaction explodes into revolution. Students must not force the issue and shoehorn the theme words into a topic, but there is a reason that these three words are included in one History Day theme.

Many students will begin with a revolution: American, French, Bolshevik, Industrial, Green. But tackling an entire revolution in one project is like taking on the entirety of World War II. Instead, encourage students to unearth the causes and effects of these revolutions, or a singular event. What led to the revolution, and what was the effect on its participants? Why was it revolutionary?

Similarly, many students will begin with reform: child labor, civil rights, immigration, social reform. But such changes to society do not happen overnight. Reforms can take decades to develop. If students isolate a particular incident or individual involved in the process of reform, they may find a more manageable topic. Why was this reform needed? Who were the reformers?

Reaction should not be lost in the shadows of the often-flashier Revolution and Reform. Reaction precedes and succeeds both of the other R’s. While students will find “action” in Revolution, and “change” in Reform, it is in Reaction that students will uncover the most human element of a historical story. What events led to reaction? How did people’s reactions cause, or halt, change?

Whatever the order and number of R’s in a student’s project, historical significance should be clear. Revolutions should be radical, thorough or widespread; reforms should be impactful changes; and reactions should not simply exist in a person’s thoughts.

Ultimately, this is a theme heavy with point of view. One man’s revolution is another man’s temper tantrum. One woman’s reform is another woman’s outrage. It is important to analyze how and why these points of view flourished or floundered as they grew from individual reactions to revolutions to reforms, and always with a historian’s unbiased eye. Remember, to the British, our revolutionary Americans were a bunch of ungrateful, greedy whiners.

## **Topic idea: American Revolution**

Reforms before the war: Stamp Act, Sugar Act, Intolerable Acts

Reactions before the war: Boston Tea Party, Sons of Liberty, Letters from a Pennsylvania Farmer

Reforms after the war: Constitution replaces Articles of Confederation, Northwest Ordinance

Reactions after the war: Shays’ Rebellion, British reaction to loss

## **Topic idea: Child Labor Reform**

Revolutionaries: Photographer Lewis Hine, organizer Mother Jones, National Child Labor Committee

Reactions: Newsies 1899 strike, Children’s Crusade

Gradual reforms: Florence Kelley, Children’s Bureau, Keating-Owen Act, failed Constitutional amendment, Fair Labor Standards Act

## **Topic idea: Historical Reactions**

Reactions can take the form of: protests, petitions, polls, boycotts, rallies, editorials, political cartoons, letters and diary entries, crimes, or campaigns, to name a few. People react out of fear, anger, joy, failure, success, morality, survival, supremacy and equality, to name a few. Find your favorite historical reaction — there are revolutions and reforms lurking there as well!