

## THESIS & THEME CONNECTION

A thesis expresses the *historical argument* of your NHD project in 2-3 sentences. In much the same way that an attorney presents evidence to support a case in court, your historical argument must be based on evidence. The evidence comes from the primary and secondary sources you discovered during your research. A strong History Day thesis:

- Clearly identifies what your topic is
- Sets your topic in time and/or place
- Briefly summarizes your historical argument
- Makes at least one meaningful theme connection

Use these prompts to begin building your thesis statement.

**YOUR TOPIC:** Boil down your topic into one sentence or phrase.

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**WHEN & WHERE:** *At a time when... After Reconstruction... Before WWII... During the 1960s...*

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**THEME CONNECTIONS:** How do you see *Communication and Understanding* in your topic?

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**HISTORICAL ARGUMENT:** This is **your** assessment of the evidence, not a repetition of facts.

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Revise and strengthen your thesis as you find new information. A strong thesis evolves as you rethink what you've learned about your topic.

# THESIS EXAMPLES

## For the theme Revolution, Reaction, & Reform

At a time when Blacks in Mississippi were not allowed to vote, and Freedom Summer set the stage for revolutionary changes, Fannie Lou Hamer showed leadership by helping to found the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party in 1964 and giving a memorably passionate speech at the convention. Although there were early failures and it was an arduous journey, Hamer's leadership helped result in the Civil Rights Act of 1965. Hamer's leadership resulted in a legacy of voting and political empowerment for black Mississippians.

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Beginning in 1517, Martin Luther sparked resistance against Roman Catholic religious practices, especially the sale of indulgences, corruption, and the emphasis on salvation through good works. Luther's Reformation ignited a religious revolution, created a new sect of Christianity, and later brought change to the Roman Catholic Church.

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Under the banner "Reform, Freedom, Law and Justice," Emilio Zapata commanded revolutionary forces in southern Mexico to uplift agrarian peasants through land reform. Zapata's role in the Mexican Revolution helped foster a new constitution in 1917. This was later used to redistribute property to the nation's rural poor.

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In response to the stock market crash of 1929, President Franklin D. Roosevelt initiated a revolutionary "New Deal." This government reaction brought reform to the U.S. banking system and helped get Americans back to work. Roosevelt's goal of restoring economic stability would go unmet, however, until the country mobilized for war.

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Following World War I, Adolph Hitler blamed Germany's hardships on the country's Jewish population, fostering a genocide later known as the Holocaust. International reaction to the atrocities of World War II led to a reform of the Geneva Convention in 1949 to include the protection of civilian persons in times of war. The Fourth Geneva Convention laid the groundwork for international humanitarian law and is used to regulate and enforce wartime crimes even today.

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Beginning in 1944, Dr. Norman Borlaug conducted research surrounding disease-resistant wheat varieties. His successes in agricultural reform sparked the Green Revolution in several developing nations then struggling with starvation. Reaction to Borlaug's work has been mixed as the farming practices have accomplished higher yields while also undermining small-scale farms and presenting negative environmental impacts.

## MAKING A HISTORICAL ARGUMENT

An argument is different from an opinion, and more than a simple restatement of facts. It is a reasoned conclusion that is supported by the **evidence** (information from primary sources) you discovered during your research. Remember, as a historian you must consider all sides of the situation. If you found evidence that contradicts your argument, discuss it! If there is controversy or debate, explore it!

<b>YOUR ARGUMENT</b>			
<b>CLAIM</b> Write three claims that support your argument.	Claim 1	Claim 2	Claim 3
<b>EVIDENCE</b> Support each claim with 3 or more facts from your research.	Evidence for Claim 1	Evidence for Claim 2	Evidence for Claim 3
<b>ANALYZE YOUR EVIDENCE</b> What does the evidence show? What perspective does each source reflect?			

Courtesy NHD Hawai'i