

# Sample Topic List: Conflict & Compromise in History

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The following is a list of topics for investigation in preparation for National History Day 2008. The list is not inclusive but provides a starting point for teachers and students to begin brainstorming ideas for research and presentation as National History Day entries. Some of the most exciting and interesting topics are local in nature. Students should be encouraged to look for topics in their own communities. Whether students choose to create papers, exhibits, performances, web sites or documentary presentations, they must be sure to place their topics into historical perspective and context and analyze the significance and impact of their topic in history.

**Note:** Many of the suggested topics listed under one category might also be listed under another or several categories. Students should remember that categories overlap. For example, the Crusades represent religious and political conflict; the Populist movement of the late nineteenth century represents political and economic conflict; and the segregation of African-American troops represent military, political and social conflict.

### Religious Conflict & Compromise

Religious history is rich in conflicts and compromises. Conflicts may be sectarian and communal in nature or may arise because of political or secular clashes. Sectarian conflicts occur between differing sects of the same religion, for example, between Protestants and Catholics or between Puritans and Anglicans. Communal conflicts take place between people of different religious faiths, for example, between Muslims and Jews. Often religious conflicts have been closely tied to or have been instigated by political conflicts or the clash of scientific or secular ideas with religious doctrine.

- Oliver Cromwell v. Charles II
- For the Sake of Divorce: Henry VIII v. Rome
- No Compromise: Galileo v. the Vatican
- Here I Stand: Martin Luther and the Indulgences
- Jan Hus and the Czech Protestants
- The Crusades: No Compromise for Faith
- Muslims and Hindus in India
- Conflict in the Middle East: Palestine and Israel
- Conflict in India: Sikhs v. Hindus
- Reverend Moon v. Conventional Religion
- Darwin v. Creationism: The Scopes Trial of 1926
- John Humphrey Noyes and the Oneida Community
- Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II: The Reluctant Crusader
- Islam of the West (Islamic Spain) and its Alliances with Christianity of the East (Byzantium)
- One Step Ahead of the Inquisition: The "New" Christians Who Followed the Conquistadors to Mexico

## Military/Wartime Conflict & Compromise

War seems like the ultimate conflict between nations (and sometimes within nations). Such hostilities are usually caused by political conflict, but sometimes they are influenced by religious, social or economic conflicts. Wartime policies have often caused conflicts and compromises on the home front as well as abroad. Students should remember that battles themselves only express conflict; they do not alone offer reasons for the antagonisms behind the battles. It is important for students to examine the battle within the larger context of the war in order to understand its significance.

- General Sherman's War on Civilians
- Vietnam Military Policy and Civilian Protest
- Military and Political Conflict: The Use of Chemical Weapons
- Social Conflict During War: Japanese Interment
- King Rajaraja Conquers Ceylon
- Segregation of Troops: Conflicting Loyalty
- French Troops Refuse to Fight in World War I
- Women in the Military
- To Drop or Not to Drop: Truman and the Atomic Bomb
- After the War: Should Rosie Return to the Home?
- Conflict Between The Franks and the Eastern Empire (807)
- Invasion of the Visigoths Into Italy (401)

## Political Conflict & Compromise

Political conflict and compromise take place not only between nations but within nations as well. Conflict between nations often occurs over control of resources, territorial claims or diplomatic concerns and has sometimes resulted in military conflicts. Conflicts between nations have been settled by diplomatic negotiations and religious alliances and through outside parties like the United Nations, and sometimes they officially result in compromises called treaties. Political conflict within nations may be local or national in nature and often involve social, racial, ethnic or cultural conflict and compromise.

- Reconstruction: Conflict and Compromise in the South
- Munich Compromise: Conflict of Chamberlain
- Compromise of 1850
- Compromise of 1877
- Treaty of Versailles: Prelude to the Second World War
- Eleanor Roosevelt and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- United Nations Peace-Keeping Missions: Conflict Interventions
- United Nations Security Council
- Conflict Among Supporters: National v. American Women's Suffrage Associations
- The Battle over the Air Waves: The FCC v. Private Radio Industry
- The Big Three: Conflict and Compromise at Yalta



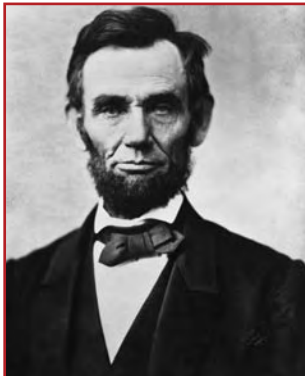
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- Antebellum Politics: The Nullification Controversy
- Conflict and Compromise: FDR and the Lend-Lease Policy
- Conflict over Representation: The Boston Tea Party
- English National Interest v. Irish Neutrality in World War II
- Afghan Resistance: Precipitating the Crumbling of the Soviet Union
- The Rule of Abar: "The Great Mughal" Over India
- King Henry IV and the Edict of Nantes
- The Establishment of the Manchu Dynasty in China
- The Peace of Utrecht
- The Japanese Constitution of 1889

### Social and Cultural Conflict & Compromise

Some of the most harsh and agonizing conflicts in history were social and cultural. Sometimes conflicts existed without compromise, but many of these conflicts spurred major changes and initiated important progress among varying groups. Topics include those related to religious, ethnic, racial, civil rights and human rights.

- Ku Klux Klan, Southern Politics and Civil Rights
- Indian Removal Act of 1830
- New York City Draft Riot of 1863: Irish v. Blacks
- Changing Divorce Laws
- *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*
- *Bakke v. University of California-Davis*
- Conflict at Home and at Work: The Modern American Women's Movement
- Burlingame Treaty and the Chinese Exclusion
- National Origins Act of 1924: Ethnic Conflict and Compromise
- To the Back of the Bus No More: Rosa Parks and the Montgomery Bus Boycott
- Conflict in Salem: The Witchcraft Trials
- Racial Conflict and the Right to Vote: Southern Voting Rights
- Conflict From Within: Martin Luther King v. Malcolm X
- Badshakhkam: The Muslim Whom Gandhi Called "The Father of Non-Violence"
- Muslim Women in Anti-Colonialist Movements

### Economic Conflict & Compromise

Economic conflict may also take place between nations or within nations. Some of the most prevalent and obvious conflicts induced by economics are conflicts between labor and management. Conflict also occurs when practices do not match their economic theories, when nations engage in exploration for material gain and when agricultural concerns clash with industrial ones. Social and cultural conflicts have often resulted from the quest for economic gain, as in slave trade or the colonization of inhabited regions or independent peoples.

- For the Love of Money: Columbus v. the Arawaks
- Selling Souls for Sugar: Slavery and the Sugar Islands
- The Silver Question: Farmers v. Industrialists

- Labor v. Management: The Homestead Strike
- *UAW v. General Motors*: Sit Down for Compromise
- The Molly Maguires: Ethnic and Labor Conflict
- The National War Labor Board: Compromise for the Cause
- Conflict Underground: Mary Harris Jones and the United Mine Workers

### International Cooperation and Conflict Management

Early approaches to solve conflicts peacefully were through world congresses and international law, including projects by Dante (1265-1321), Erasmus (1466-1536), Hugo Grotius (1538-1645), William Penn (1644-1718), Abbe de Saint Pierre (1658-1743), Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) and Immanuel Kant (1724-1804).

Other approaches have been added in a series of great experiments such as the Hague Conference, the League of Nations, the International Court of Justice, and the United Nations with its specialized agencies. How do early views on world peace compare with modern approaches? How can international organizations and laws be effective?

- The Hague Conferences of 1899 and 1907
- Arbitration Treaties: President Taft, William Jennings Bryan
- Working for World Health: The Rockefeller Foundation
- The 1919-1920 League of Nations and the U.S. Senate
- The World Court: Its Creation and Decisions
- The Kellogg-Briand Pact (1928)
- The Nuremberg War Crime Trials and Principles
- What Specialized UN Agencies Do: WHO, FAO, UNESCO
- Economic Cooperation in the Workaday World: ILO, GATT
- UN-Resolved Conflict: Iran (1946), Indonesia (1947), Suez (1956), Cyprus (1968)
- UN Role in the Gulf War, Somalia, and former Yugoslavia

### Disarmament and Arms Control

Policy makers and peace movements have repeatedly urged disarmament and arms control to reduce the threat of war. Disarmament has also been linked to assistance for Third World countries and to the environmental and economic consequences of large military budgets, while the threat of nuclear destruction gave new urgency to disarmament. How have leaders sought a proper balance between national security and arms reduction?

- The Rush-Bagot Agreement of 1817
- Alliances and Arms Race as Causes of World War I
- Washington Naval Conference, 1921-1922
- Economic Causes of War: The Nye Committee
- Collective Security and the Cold War Containment
- The Partial Test Ban Treaty of 1963
- SALT I and II (1972 and 1979) and START (1980s)
- Problems of Verification: Iraq and North Korea
- Economic Reconversion at the End of the Cold War



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## Individual Values and Social Conflicts

Social conflict, whether as war or domestic violence, presents individuals with moral and ethical questions: What shall I do? What is right? When we raise questions about the basis on which violent force should or should not be applied, we dramatize the reality of individual choices in history. This means that issues of conflict, compromise and cooperation involve individual and social values, whether put in religious or ethical terms. On ethical grounds, individuals may fight unconditionally, as crusaders. They may support social violence conditionally—the so called “just war” position. Or they may repudiate violence altogether—the position of conscientious objectors or COs.

- Non-Violent Action: Labor and Civil Rights Sit-ins
- World War I: John Dewey v. Randolph Bourne
- Applications of William James’s “Moral Equivalent of War”
- Thoreau’s “On Civil Disobedience” and the Impact
- Quakers Confront the Civil War: Cyrus Pringle
- COs in World War I: Evan Thomas and Ernest Meyer
- COs in World War II: Civilian Public Service Camps

## Peace Movements

Since 1815, organized peace societies in the United States have cooperated with peace advocates abroad. Periodically, and in many countries, there have been political conditions in which members of various peace societies cooperated with one another and with other elements of the public in efforts to influence foreign policy (or in the case of labor and civil rights, domestic policy). Indeed, war policy has occasionally been challenged independently of peace organizations. In historic peace movements, both on-going societies and public coalitions, those issues of conflict, compromise and cooperation are joined to issues of political participation and social action.

- Opposing the War of 1812: The Hartford Convention
- Senator Charles Sumner: Opposition to the Mexican War
- William Lloyd Garrison: Peace and/or Abolition
- William Wilberforce: Individual Confronts a Nation
- Elihu Burritt and the League of Universal Brotherhood
- The Arbitration Movement and Latin America
- Anti-Imperialism in the Philippines War
- Opposition to Intervention in World War II
- Women for Peace in Wartime: The 1915 Hague Congress
- Socialists and World War I: America and Europe
- Political Pressures in the 1930s Neutrality Debates
- Civil Disobedience and Nuclear Testing in the 1950s
- “Ban the Bomb” Campaigns: United States and Europe
- Challenging War in the 1968 Presidential Campaign
- Nuclear Freeze: Citizen Peace Activism of the 1980s