

OHIO HISTORY DAY

Frontiers in History: People, Places, Ideas

The 2023 National History Day theme will connect to topics from every part of the world and area of study in history. When you start to select your topic, don't forget to start with your own backyard! Investigate the connections that Ohio has to the frontiers of innovation, exploration and transformation. Below we've broken down the theme to help you choose a topic.

What is a frontier?

When thinking about a frontier, the first image we have is of the American West, but it can be so much more! While a **frontier is actually defined as any line or border that separates two countries**, we use the word in many other ways. In U.S. history, it's traditionally seen as the border between the "settled" U.S. and the "unsettled" wilderness. We can think about frontiers much closer to home. Think local or even personal. Trying new things, challenging yourself, and making new friends can all be ways of exploring a personal frontier. What's important to remember is that a frontier can be able more than just physical spaces.

The People Who Lead the Charge

Behind every great change in history are the people who took the lead, spearheaded a movement, or rose to a challenge. Leaders, inventors, political activists, artists, educators and scholars, among others, have all created change and broken barriers. They used their passion, intelligence, and drive to cross a frontiers physically and socially.

- *Victoria Woodhull, born in Homer, Ohio, was a leader in the women's suffrage movement and became the first woman to run for the presidency in 1872. She was actively involved in the labor movement and a supporter of women's rights. How did her advocacy lead to change for women in the political and social spheres? Did her work break down any barriers? What change did her efforts cause?*

The Ideas that Move Us Forward

Another way to think about frontiers is to think about the ideas that ignite change in all kinds of areas. Groundbreaking inventions, politics, and social movements have all been impacted by the ideas of individuals or groups that push against the status quo to change society.

- *During the late 1800s and early 1900s, the U.S. experienced a time of widespread social and political activism and reform called the Progressive Era. The progressive movement worked to address problems like labor practices, women's rights and civil rights. Changes including the 40 hour work week, women's suffrage, and education reform resulted from this movement. How do these ideas fit into the theme of a frontier? What impact did the ideas of the Progressive Era have on future generations?*

The Boundaries that Spark Discovery

Physical frontiers are borders that we generally think of as the places where the "civilization" meets the unsettled, wild wilderness. While we may think first of the American West, many other locations have also held the name of frontier at different points in history. When thinking about places that are frontiers, don't think about what a place is today, but instead what it represented for the people that investigated it.

- *A significant part of the Cold War, the Space Race of the 1960s saw America and the Soviet Union competing to prove their technological and intellectual superiority by being the first to explore the frontier of space. How did the competition between these two nations promote the exploration of the **unknown**? What developments that resulted from the Space Race have changed the way that we live now?*



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Multiple Perspectives

Because frontiers are ideas and locations that meet at a border, there will most likely be more than one perspective to think about. It's also important to keep in mind that frontiers are not always unknown ideas, uncharted paths, or uninhabited lands. Many of the frontiers that have been crossed were already explored and inhabited by different groups. Think about who defines a frontier, in physical space and ideas, and how those definitions can include or isolate different groups. As you choose your topic, be sure to look at the perspectives of all those involved.

- *Before the 1670s, Ohio was populated by numerous Native Americans even though European settlers viewed Ohio as an unsettled frontier. After the French-Indian War, a group of tribes came together to create the Western Confederacy and solidify the border between European settlers and Native American land. How did these boundaries create tension with Native American Tribes and European settlers? When did Ohio stop being seen as a frontier? Visit the [OHD Research Guidelines: American Indian History](#) to help you explore this, and other American Indian topics, further.*

Change the landscape of the world

When thinking about your topic, it's important to remember that once a frontier has been investigated, then everything after must change. Things cannot stay the same. So think about what factors led to the exploration of your frontier and what developed or changed as a result of the exploration. Think about **before** and **after** when defining your topic in relation to frontiers.

Don't forget to check out the **Local History Topic List** for more help on how to explore this year's theme of [Frontiers in History: People, Places, Ideas](#). We're so excited to see what topics you select and the projects you create this year!