

# Debate and Diplomacy in History: Successes, Failures, Consequences

## *Tennessee-related topics*

Students should keep in mind that the topics below are simply that, topics. When deciding on a topic, ask yourself these questions:

Am I interested in my topic?

Will I enjoy researching this topic for the entire school year?

Is my topic narrow enough that I can manage it within the constraints National History Day places on project length? (10 minute documentary and performances, 500 word limit exhibits, etc.)

Does my topic relate to the theme of “Debate and Diplomacy in History: Successes, Failures, Consequences?” Am I looking at a debate or diplomatic event that has taken place in history?

Will I be able to find primary sources that will help me research and interpret my topic?

Once you’ve decided on a topic, be creative with your titles! Use your title to tell us exactly what your specific research project is. And don’t forget to address the “Successes, Failures, Consequences” part of the theme. If there are both successes and failures, you’ll want to address both. And be sure to examine the consequences of your debate or diplomatic event.

If you have questions or want some feedback on your topic selection, do not hesitate to contact your state coordinator, Kelly Wilkerson, at [historyday@tennesseehistory.org](mailto:historyday@tennesseehistory.org).

To learn more about these topics, visit the online edition of *The Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture* available at <http://tennesseencyclopedia.net>.

### **Cordell Hull**

Students could pursue a variety of diplomacy topics related to Cordell Hull. Just be sure that you do more than provide a biography of Cordell Hull. This Tennessee born diplomat served the United States as Secretary of State under Franklin Delano Roosevelt. A staunch proponent of free trade, Hull saw free access to markets and raw materials as the key to world peace and progress. Responsible for establishing the United Nations, Hull is most well known for his work to establish a positive relationship between the U.S. and Latin America.

### **The Scopes Trial: The Debate Over Evolution**

Held in Dayton, TN in 1925, the Scopes Trial represents an intense debate of the teaching of evolution in America.

### **“The Perfect 36”: Tennessee Debates the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment**

Tennessee played a significant role in the debate over giving women the right to vote in America. Tennessee was the 36<sup>th</sup> state to ratify the 19<sup>th</sup> amendment giving the United States the ¾ majority required to amend the Constitution.

### **James K. Polk and the Annexation of Texas**

This would be a great topic that falls under BOTH debate and diplomacy. Tennessean James K. Polk served as president of the United States as the US moved forward to annex Texas. Ultimately, the US would go to war with Mexico over the issue.

### **Tennessee Debates a State Income Tax**

A state income tax has been a polarizing topic throughout Tennessee’s history. Students may wish to examine this topic but be sure to place the topic in historical context and not focus solely on the more recent debate over an income tax in Tennessee.

### **The Tennessee Lottery: Debate over State-Sanctioned Gambling**

Like the income tax, the lottery in Tennessee has been a polarizing topic. Again, students will want to consider the long debate over gambling in Tennessee throughout our recent history.

### **Tennessee Debates Slavery**

Students could examine many aspects of the debate over slavery in Tennessee. For example, the populations of the three grand divisions disagreed over slavery, the Tennessee legislature debated slavery, and the debate played out in the state’s newspapers. Manumission Societies and individuals like Elihu Embree took part in the debate over slavery in Tennessee.

### **Tennessee’s “Night Riders” and The Debate over Tobacco Prices**

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the debate over tobacco prices in northern middle Tennessee and western Kentucky escalated into a series of violent acts that became known as the Black Patch War.

### **Andrew Johnson vs. the Conservative Unionists: Debating Readmission of Tennessee to the Union**

As military governor of Tennessee, Johnson’s primary goal was to bring Tennessee back to the Union after its secession. The state’s Unionists disagreed over the question of slavery, however. This debate would continue until the end of the Civil War.

## **Debating Prohibition**

Prohibition, also known as the temperance movement, took hold in Tennessee in the late nineteenth/early twentieth century before it became a widespread national movement in the 1920s. Anti-liquor groups worked to encourage the passage of legislation by the Tennessee legislature to prohibit sales and manufacture of alcoholic beverages in Tennessee while liquor supporters fought against legislation. The debate over alcohol came to a head with the murder of prohibitionist Edward Ward Carmack. Legislation prohibiting the sale and manufacture of alcohol eventually passed the Tennessee legislature but was limited in impact. The debate over sale and manufacture of liquor in Tennessee continued on until the 1930s.

## **Diplomacy Ignored: William Walker's Attempt to Americanize Nicaragua**

An advocate for manifest destiny, William Walker went to Nicaragua in 1855 with the intention of colonizing the country. Other Central American countries were concerned, however, and began efforts to remove Walker and his troops from Nicaragua. In 1856, Walker became president of the country but continued to face challenges from neighboring countries. Walker was eventually executed for piracy in Honduras in 1860.

## **Desegregation & Civil Rights**

The desegregation of schools and other public facilities in Tennessee involved much debate. Students could choose any number of topics related to desegregation.

## **The New South Debated: Agriculture vs. Industry**

During the New South period (1877-1920), Tennesseans struggled with the desire to continue the agricultural way of life they knew before the Civil War destroyed the landscape vs. the coming industrial age and the opportunities it offered.

## **Debate over capital punishment in Tennessee**

Tennesseans have debated the effectiveness of capital punishment as a criminal deterrent and morality of the practice since the founding of the state. A NHD project on this topic would examine both sides of the arguments and the history of capital punishment.

## **Highlander Folk School: Civil Rights Debated or Highlander Folk School: Labor Issues Debated**

The Highlander Folk School, originally headquartered in Grundy County, Tennessee, was instrumental to the struggle by southern activists to obtain rights for workers and African-Americans in Tennessee and the surrounding states between the decades of the 1930s and 1960s. The school held workshops to educate, organize, and train leaders in both the Labor and Civil Rights. Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King, Jr., and many leaders of the organized labor movement, participated in classes at Highlander Folk School. Looking at the debate over the Civil Rights Movement or in the Labor Movement through the involvement of Highlander Folk School would be a great local NHD topic.

### **Elizabethton Textile Strikes: Labor vs. Management**

In 1929 in the city of Elizabethton, TN, workers at area textile plants began to strike over low wages, unfair promotion practices, and petty regulations that applied only to women. The strikes led to a reactivation of a local branch of the United Textile Workers Union of America and the dispatch of 800 National Guardsmen to deal with the strikers. Interested students could examine the debate between labor and management in the textile mills in Elizabethton for an excellent NHD topic.

### **Debating Labor Reform: Harriman Hosiery Mills**

Another way to look at the debate over labor reform in Tennessee would be a project on the Harriman Hosiery Mills Strike of 1933-1934.

### **Logging, Coal Mining, or Dam Building: Debating Our Use of Natural Resources**

Debates have occurred in Tennessee throughout history over the removal and/or control of natural resources in order to provide energy and products for the nation's residents. Students could examine any of the debates over logging and coal mining in the Appalachian Mountains, the removal of copper in Polk County, or the building of dams throughout Tennessee for an NHD project.

### **Tellico Dam and the Little Tennessee River: Debating the Snail Darter**

In the late 1970s, as TVA moved to build the Tellico Dam on the Little Tennessee River, a great debate took place over flooding an area known to have been one of Tennessee's greatest archaeological sites and the only home to the snail darter fish. This would be a great project for a student interested in conservation.

### **Debating Worker's Rights: The Memphis Sanitation Strike**

In February 1968, African American workers in the Memphis sanitation industry walked out of work in response to poor treatment from white supervisors, horrible working conditions, the city's refusal to recognize the labor union, and fulltime jobs that paid so little workers lived below the poverty level with no health insurance. The Memphis Sanitation Strike would result in a better work situation for sanitation workers, the revival of a labor movement in Memphis and throughout the South, and the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr.

### **Debating Secession: Tennessee Leaves the Union**

As the country divided in the years immediately before the American Civil War, Tennesseans in each of the three grand divisions of the state had differing ideas on how Tennessee should proceed. The debate played out in individual homes, communities, and eventually with the Tennessee legislature.

### **Debating the Tennessee Valley Authority**

The creation and operation of the Tennessee Valley Authority has created many debates that have played out throughout the agency's history. Students could examine the debate between the agency and residents who had to leave their properties because of dam construction, the debate among the three original directors who disagreed over the agency's goals and mission, the debate between the agency and private power interests, and the debate over the use of nuclear energy.

### **Cades Cove and the Great Smoky Mountains National Park**

For the residents of Cades Cove in the Great Smoky Mountains, the establishment of a National Park brought an end to their small Appalachian community. Students could examine the debate over "eminent domain" as it played out in the Cades Cove community between residents and the park commission.

### **Equality Debated: Title IX legislation in Tennessee**

Title IX of the Educational Amendment Act created more opportunities for women in education at the secondary and collegiate levels. Known mostly for its impact on sports, Title IX was debated nationwide. How did Tennessee handle Title IX? What were its successes, failures, and consequences?

### **Debate, Diplomacy, and Spanish Tennessee: Early Tennessee Leaders and their Conspiracy to Join Spain**

The leaders of the Cumberland Settlements (part of North Carolina) saw need for access to the Mississippi River (controlled by Spain) and pursued an opportunity to break relations with the United States to pursue a relationship with Spain. The Spanish Conspiracy came to an end in 1789 when North Carolina ratified the US Constitution.

### **Debate and Diplomacy: The Rise and Fall of the State of Franklin**

The independence movement that took place on the frontier after the American Revolution certainly came with its share of debate and diplomacy. In present day Northeast Tennessee, the creation of the State of Franklin led to debate between the Franklin and North Carolina governments as well as the need for diplomacy in interacting with the region's native Cherokee inhabitants.

### **Topics in Native American History**

The relationships between Native Americans and white settlers in the area that would become Tennessee offer several possible topics that would fall under "Diplomacy" in the 2011 National History Day theme. Consider some of the following topics for your projects.

### **Nancy Ward**

"Beloved Woman" Nancy Ward served a diplomatic role on behalf of the Cherokee nation in their negotiations with white settlers during the latter half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

## **Andrew Jackson and the Treaty of Removal**

The 1830 Indian Removal Act relocated all Native Americans living in the east to the west. John Ross led the initial resistance to this act but eventually the trip west became known as the Trail of Tears.

## **Treaty of Sycamore Shoals**

The Treaty of Sycamore Shoals was one of the most influential treaties in Tennessee history. The treaty transferred what is now central Kentucky and north central Tennessee to the Transylvania Land Company for 10,000 British pounds of trading goods. Little Carpenter's son, Dragging Canoe, refused to recognize the sale and vowed to turn Middle Tennessee into a "dark and bloody ground," a promise he kept through his leadership of the Chickamaugas. Henderson opened the Cumberland settlements as a result of this treaty.

## **The Treaty of Hopewell**

This treaty officially ended fighting between the United States and the Cherokees and ceded an area south of the Cumberland River for settlement in return for protection of Cherokee Land. White settlers ignored the treaty, however, leading to the more definitive Treaty of Holston.

## **The Treaty of Holston**

Signed at Knoxville in July 1791 by Territorial Governor William Blount, the Cherokees ceded all claims to the area east of the Clinch River and north of a line through Kingston to the North Carolina border for a sum of \$1,500.

## **Treaty of New Echota**

Signed on December 29, 1835, at New Echota, Georgia, the Treaty of New Echota finalized plans for the removal of the Cherokees and eventually led to the Trail of Tears.

## **Fort Loudon: Diplomacy with the Cherokee during the French and Indian War**

Numerous diplomatic missions were made by the British into the Overhill Cherokee Country. The involvement of the British with the Overhill Cherokees eventually led to their alliance against the French and the construction of the military fort, Fort Loudon. Relations between the British and the Cherokee broke down, however, and in 1760 the Cherokees captured Fort Loudon.

## **Diplomacy in the Southwest Territory**

As territorial governor, William Blount sought to purchase additional Cherokee-owned land for the Southwest territory that was occupied by settlers. The Cherokees and the Creeks, however, were given a raw deal and responded accordingly.