



A crowd of people from East and West Germany celebrating the fall of the Berlin Wall at the Brandenburg Gate, November 9, 1989. Wikimedia Commons.

Students should think broadly and consider the various ways in which a topic influenced the course of events. The launch of the satellite Sputnik by the Soviet Union in 1957 was a catalyst for the Space Race. But in what ways did it have an impact on American education? What was the National Defense Education Act (1958) and how did it influence changes in the American school curriculum?

Thinking about turning points in technology, the television, radio, and computer come to mind. But what about

refrigeration or frozen food technology? What impact did these have for families, restaurants, grocery stores?

These are only a few examples of the millions of historical turning points.

Regardless of the topic chosen, students must be sure to analyze and draw conclusions about their topic's significance as a turning point in history. How do historians determine historical impact—change and consequences? They do so by placing their topics into historical context, which is exactly what NHD students must do after choosing their topics. Historical context is the larger setting in which a topic took place. Students should consider the relevant economic, social, intellectual, religious, cultural, and political conditions of the place and time and pay attention to how their topic developed.

I could spend many more pages on topics and ideas for study related to all types of events, ideas, places, and people, from local to world history, but that would limit the fun of guiding students in discovering the past for themselves, which is, after all, the point.



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