Sample Topic List

This is a sampling of topics related to Kentucky history that may relate to this year’s NHD theme in some way. Sources are meant to provide a starting point for students to learn more about these topics. KHS in a source indicates the Martin F. Schmidt Research Library at KHS. Articles from The Register of the Kentucky Historical Society are on JSTOR. If you do not have access to JSTOR through your school, you can sign up for a free account and save three articles at a time. KHS also has print copies of the Register in the Martin F. Schmidt Research Library.

Literature and Art History

Enid Yandell

Artist and social activist.

Primary Sources


Secondary Sources


Wendell Berry

Novelist, poet and activist (notably for environmental sustainability).

Primary Sources


(The collection is not online, but students may come to the Kentucky Historical Society to conduct research using the original documents).

Secondary Sources


William Wells Brown
Abolitionist lecturer, playwright and historian. Brown was born into slavery, gained his freedom and is considered the first published black novelist.

Primary Sources


Secondary Sources


Education
Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA) of 1990
Legislative response to improve Kentucky schools after the Kentucky Supreme Court declared them to be inefficient and inequitable.

Primary Sources

Secondary Sources

Cora Wilson Stewart  
Rowan County Schools superintendent who created a model for adult education in Kentucky and the United States.

**Primary Sources**

Stewart, Cora Wilson. *Country Life Readers*. 1915. [https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uva.x001164145;view=1up;seq=1](https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uva.x001164145;view=1up;seq=1).

Cora Wilson Stewart Photographic Collection. University of Kentucky, Lexington, Ky. [http://exploreuk.uky.edu/?f%5Bsource_s%5D%5B%5D=Cora+Wilson+Stewart+Photographic+Collection%2C](http://exploreuk.uky.edu/?f%5Bsource_s%5D%5B%5D=Cora+Wilson+Stewart+Photographic+Collection%2C).

**Secondary Sources**


Albert E. Meyzeek  
Educator and civil rights activist who worked for desegregation and better housing for blacks in Louisville. His efforts led to the start of the Louisville Urban League.

**Primary Sources**


**Secondary Sources**


Rufus B. Atwood  
Educational activist and leader and president of Kentucky State University.

**Primary Sources**


Photograph. R.B. Atwood, Kentucky State University president, and Lyman T. Johnson, leave federal district court in Lexington, after the court ruled in favor of Johnson’s admission to the University of Kentucky, 1949. 1949. University of Kentucky, Lexington, Ky. [http://kdl.kyvl.org/catalog/xt75736m0s6q_165_1](http://kdl.kyvl.org/catalog/xt75736m0s6q_165_1).

**Secondary Sources**


**Medicine**

**Mary Breckinridge and the Frontier Nursing Service**

Founder of the Frontier Nursing Service to provide health care to people who did not have access to it. FNS nurses are well-known as midwives, delivering babies in Eastern Kentucky.

*Primary Sources*


Various subjects. Frontier Nursing Service Oral History Project, Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History, University of Kentucky, Lexington, Ky. http://kdl.kyvl.org/?c=kyead%3Bcc%3Dkyead%3Bview%3Dtext%3Brgn%3Dmain%3Bdidno%3Dkukohfns&commit=search%26f%5Bformat%5D%5B%5D=oral+histories%26q=frontier+nursing+service%26search_field=all_fields.

*Secondary Sources*


**Politics**

**Henry Clay**

One of the most influential politicians of the 19th century. History remembers him as the Great Compromiser. His Compromise of 1820 and Compromise of 1850 sought a solution to the question of the expansion of slavery into new states.

*Primary Sources*


“Clay, Henry, 1777-1852: Guide to Research Collections.” Biographical Director of the United States Congress. http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/guidedisplay.pl?index=c000482. Several are located in Kentucky or Indiana, including collections located at the Kentucky Historical Society, the Filson Historical Society, the University of Kentucky, Western Kentucky University, Ashland: the Henry Clay Estate, the Indiana Historical Society and Indiana University.
“Primary Documents in American History: Compromise of 1850.” Web Guides. [https://www.loc.gov/rr/program/bib/ourdocs/Compromise1850.html](https://www.loc.gov/rr/program/bib/ourdocs/Compromise1850.html). This page has links to original transcripts of Congressional speeches and debates regarding the proposed Compromise of 1850. Clay features prominently, as do John C. Calhoun, Daniel Webster, and other notable statesmen who debated its passage. The page also contains links to other websites with such information as newspaper articles from 1850, and it has a selected bibliography of secondary sources.

**Secondary Sources**


**John J. Crittenden**

“Disciple” of Henry Clay. He tried, unsuccessfully, to propose a compromise to avoid the Civil War.

**Primary Sources**


**Secondary Sources**


**Beriah Magoffin**

Governor who declared Kentucky to be neutral when the Civil War started.

**Primary Sources**

Message of Gov. Beriah Magoffin to the General Assembly of Kentucky: February 1862. KHS. https://khscatalog.on.worldcat.org/search?queryString=Message+of+Governor+Beriah+Magoffin+to+the+General+Assembly+of+Kentucky%3A+February+1862.#/oclc/30376998. (The collection is not online, but students may come to the Kentucky Historical Society to conduct research using the original documents).


Secondary Sources


Kentucky Statehood

Kentucky became the 15th state on June 1, 1792.

Primary Sources


Secondary Sources


John Sherman Cooper

Co-author of the Cooper-Church Amendment to limit the powers of the U.S. president regarding American military presence in Cambodia during the Vietnam War.

Primary Sources

Secondary Sources

President Lyndon Johnson’s “War on Poverty” and Kentucky
The “War on Poverty” was a series of government programs President Johnson started in 1964 to help poor Americans. Photos of Johnson’s visit to rural Kentucky that year put a face to Americans living below the poverty line.

Primary Sources

Various Subjects. 1987-1993. War On Poverty Oral History Project, Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History, University of Kentucky, Lexington, Ky. http://kdl.kyvl.org/?f%5Bformat%5D%5B%5D=oral+histories&f%5Brepository_facet%5D%5B%5D=University+of+Kentucky&f%5Bsource_s%5D%5B%5D=War+On+Poverty+Oral+History+Project&page=2.

Secondary Sources


Bloody Monday
Members of the “Know-Nothing” party, which was anti-Catholic and nativist, rioted on August 6, 1855, an election day, attacking Irish and German immigrants in Louisville.

Primary Sources

Secondary Sources

Gov. Martha Layne Collins and Toyota of Kentucky
First female governor of Kentucky (1983-1987). Instrumental in Toyota establishing an auto assembly plant in Scott County in the late 1980s. The $800 million plant was the largest Japanese investment in U.S. at the time.

Primary Sources

Secondary Sources

Labor
Harlan County Coal Miners and Labor Unions
Coal miners and union organizers clashed throughout the 1930s with coal firms and the law over the rights of miners; specifically, better wages and working conditions.

Primary Sources


Secondary Sources
Kentucky Women Activists

Laura Clay
Women’s suffrage leader in Kentucky. Advocated for married women’s property rights and the joint guardianship of children.

Primary Sources


Secondary Sources


Madeline McDowell Breckinridge
Turn-of-the-century social reformer. Fought for child labor laws, schools, playgrounds and hospitals. Her involvement in the women’s suffrage movement helped lead to the Kentucky legislature’s ratification of the 19th amendment.

Primary Sources


Secondary Sources


Emma Cromwell
Legislative choice for state librarian in 1896. Cromwell also served as secretary of state, state treasurer, director of state parks and later, Kentucky’s director of library and archives.

Primary Sources


Secondary Sources

**Carrie A. Nation**

Activist. Nation believed that drunkenness was the cause of numerous societal problems. She used violence to express her views and gained national attention which eventually helped lead to the passing of the 18th Amendment—Prohibition.

**Primary Sources**


**Secondary Sources**


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**Civil Rights Movements in Kentucky**

**Moneta J. Sleet, Jr.**

Photojournalist. Sleet was assigned to cover the civil rights movement, specifically the young up-and-coming Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and won a Pulitzer Prize for his coverage of King’s funeral in 1968.

**Primary Sources**


**Secondary Sources**


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**Whitney M. Young, Jr.**

Civil rights leader. Director of National Urban League.

**Primary Sources**


Secondary Sources

Andrew Wade, Carl and Anne Braden
The Bradens were white civil rights activists in Louisville. Wade was a black Korean War veteran to whom the Bradens transferred the deed of sale of a home in a white neighborhood, triggering violence.

Primary Sources
Various subjects. Anne Braden Oral History Project, Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History, University of Kentucky Collections. http://kdl.kyvl.org/?f%5Bformat%5D%5B%5D=oral+histories&f%5Brepository_facet%5D%5B%5D=University+of+Kentucky&f%5Bsource_s%5D%5B%5D=Anne+Braden+Oral+History+Project.

Secondary Sources

School Integration in Louisville
The Louisville and Jefferson county school districts merged in the 1970s and began a system of busing to integrate schools.

Primary Sources

Secondary Sources

The March on Frankfort
A 1964 march of more than 10,000 people to show support for proposed legislation that would prohibit discrimination in employment and accommodations based on race, national origin, color or religion.

Primary sources

Secondary Sources

Gov. Edward Breathitt and Civil Rights Law
Kentucky governor. Oversaw the enactment of the South’s first state civil rights laws in the 1960s.

Primary Sources
Breathitt, Edward T. 2000. Interview by Betsy Brinson. February 24. KHS. https://khscatalog.on.worldcat.org/search?queryString=Breathitt%2C+Edward+T.+2000.+Interview+by+Betsy+Brinson%2C+February+24+online. (The collection is not online, but students may come to the Kentucky Historical Society to conduct research using the original interview).


Secondary Sources

Military

The Battle of Perryville
An 1862 battle in Kentucky. Confederate Gen. Braxton Bragg invaded the state to draw Union forces away from Southern strongholds.

Primary Sources

Secondary Sources

John Hunt Morgan
Confederate raider. Conducted raids on civilian and military targets throughout Kentucky, Indiana, Ohio, and Tennessee. Attacks on private property and banks tarnished his wartime reputation, but after his death in 1864 people increasingly regarded him as a hero.

Primary Sources

Secondary Sources

Sports

Muhammad Ali
Professional boxer, antiwar activist, philanthropist.

Primary Sources

Secondary Sources


Penny Chenery and Secretariat
Owner of 1973 Triple Crown winner Secretariat.

Primary Sources


Secondary Sources

Pee Wee Reese, Jackie Robinson and Happy Chandler
Jackie Robinson became the first black major league baseball player in 1947 due in part to support from baseball commissioner Happy Chandler, and Pee Wee Reese, his teammate on the Brooklyn Dodgers. Chandler and Reese were from Kentucky.

Primary Sources
Chandler, A.B. “Happy”. Various dates. Interviews by William J. Marshall. Baseball Commissioner Oral History Project, Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History, University of Kentucky, Lexington, Ky. http://kdl.kyvl.org/?f%5Bformat%5D%5B%5D=oral+histories&f%5Brepository_facet%5D%5B%5D=University+of+Kentucky%f%5Bsource_s%5D%5B%5D=Baseball+Commissioner+Oral+History+Project.

Secondary Sources:

1966 NCAA Championship Game: University of Kentucky and Texas Western
Most remembered for the racial make-up of players: five white starters for Kentucky and five black starters for Texas Western.

Primary Sources:
Video clip, 1966 Texas Western vs University of Kentucky NCAA Championship game. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V6-QpNV_lww](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V6-QpNV_lww).

Rupp, Adolph. Various dates. Interviews by Russell Rice. University of Kentucky Athletics Project, Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History, University of Kentucky, Lexington, Ky. [http://kdl.kyvl.org/?f%5Bformat%5D%5B%5D=oral+histories&f%5Brepository_facet%5D%5B%5D=University+of+Kentucky&f%5Bsource_s%5D%5B%5D=University+of+Kentucky+Athletics+Project&page=2].

Secondary Sources:


Other Possible Topics

- Lucy Harth Smith: Educator who advocated for the study of black history in schools.
- Dr. Thomas T. Wendell: Pioneer for African American mental health care.
- Charles W. Anderson: Kentucky’s first black legislator and advocate for African American education.
- Cassius M. Clay: Kentucky soldier, legislator, foreign ambassador and emancipationist.
- John J. Crittenden: Politician who worked to solve the Old Court/New Court Controversy.

Additional Online Resources

**Civil War Governors of Kentucky digital documentary edition**: [http://civilwargovernors.org/](http://civilwargovernors.org/). Learn more about Kentucky’s Civil War Governors at this website. Includes some teacher resources.


**Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History**: [https://kentuckyoralhistory.org/](https://kentuckyoralhistory.org/). The University of Kentucky holds many oral histories that cover a range of content areas and time periods, such as Appalachia, sports, education and the Korean War.

**Kentucky Historical Society**: [www.kyhistory.com](http://www.kyhistory.com). The Kentucky Historical Society has thousands of digitized documents and images of Kentucky people and events online.

**The University of Louisville Digital Collections**: [http://digital.library.louisville.edu/](http://digital.library.louisville.edu/). The University of Louisville has an extensive collection of photographs and other sources. Many, but not all, are Kentucky related.