

How did you choose your topic and how does it relate to the annual theme?

When I heard about the 2025 theme of rights and responsibilities throughout history, I realized I could connect it with one of my favorite things- the national parks. Throughout my whole life, I have been obsessed with our nation's natural beauty, and I knew I had to relate my project to it. Since I had never explored the history of the national parks before, I began researching it to see if it would relate to the theme. It ended up being a perfect fit, because a lot of conservationists at the time saw protecting nature as both a government responsibility and a right for future generations to enjoy.

How did you conduct your research?

For my more general sources, I used Google to find information, while using the National Archives to find primary documents. I also used an app called Perplexity to investigate more specific and pertinent sources that were not findable in the archive. For my multimedia, I utilized photo galleries on the National Park and the Library of Congress websites. Because I had used Noodletools for school projects in the past, I decided to use it on this project to store my bibliography and take notes on my sources.

How did you create your project?

When I picked my topic, I knew a website would be the best format because it would incorporate the multimedia necessary to tell the full story leading to the Organic Act. I created my project through NHDWebCentral, adjusting its settings and using graphics to better fit the topic. To organize my writing, I drafted all my paragraphs in a Google Document so that I could keep track of my word count and ensure a strong, united argument.

What is your historical argument?

As industrialization began to destroy wonders of the United States like Yellowstone and Yosemite, preservationists grew nervous that all the natural heritage of America would disappear. They believed that humans had the right to appreciate nature in their lives and that future generations deserved it too. In an effort to protect the commercialization of their prized lands, conservationists turned towards the government, seeing the issue as a responsibility only it could hold. The resulting movement culminated in the Organic Act of 1916, establishing the National Park Service, demonstrating the balance of rights and responsibilities, and pioneering the protection of nature worldwide.

In what ways is your topic significant in history?

The National Park Service was the first of its kind in the world, and it influenced the creation of conservation organizations in a multitude of other countries. Without the intervention of naturalists who fought to protect America's wilderness, wonders like Yosemite and Yellowstone would have been destroyed by humans decades ago. The Organic Act of 1916 forever changed the way people viewed nature, altering it from something expendable to something to be appreciated.