This year’s theme is “Exploration, Encounter, Exchange in History.” What do each of these things mean? Well, the theme is designed to be open to a wide interpretation – you can be creative with it!

**Exploration:** what it means to take a risk and go somewhere new. This does not have to be a physical exploration, it can also be thought of as a new idea, concept, or theory that is tested.

Examples:
Travelers (Vasco da Gama, Hernan Cortez, Ferdinand Magellan, Christopher Columbus)
Science (invention of the wheel, development of space travel, ships, trains, or airplanes and how they transformed ideas about what kind of exploration was possible)

**Encounter:** what is found at the new place.
Think about interactions with different people, unfamiliar environments, and new ideas.
(Meriwether Lewis and William Clark with west North America, Matteo Ricci with Chinese culture, the Columbian Exchange, Mongols, Aztecs, Incas with their neighbors). Or encounters between parties that already know each other (political, social, cultural differences between Athenians and Spartans and the Peloponnesian Wars, military encounters).

**Exchange:** how these connections influence the people, societies, cultures, and geographies that are connected.
Think about exchanges of goods, food, ideas, disease, gunfire. Exchange is not always good for both sides (Europeans who brought disease to American Indians). They are not always physical exchanges (exchange of ideas, beliefs, customs, like the spread of the world’s major religions or Darwin’s theory of evolution, politics in general).

**In History:** Topics must be at least 20 years old to be considered historical. If you are attached to a more current topic, see if you can find a way to make a connection to something older that is related. This will help you do better research and explain the impact on history.

While you do not need to include examples of exploration, encounter, and exchange, your projects must discuss at least one. However, these ideas really work together. Consider looking at incorporating all three parts of the theme with your topic if possible. You shouldn’t ignore one.

Each piece also does not need to be discussed equally (for example, one project may have the largest focus on encounter and exchange while simply mentioning exploration).