

# Sleeping Through the Pain: How the Discovery of Modern Anesthesia Revolutionized the Medical World and Reformed Surgical Procedures

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This year was my third year participating in NHD and the theme was Revolution, Reaction, and Reform. While there were a variety of topics I could choose from, I picked the topic of the Ether Dome and the discovery of modern anesthesia because it was a medical related topic, and I was interested in going into the medical field in the future. This topic relates to the theme of Revolution, Reaction, and Reform because the discovery of modern anesthesia revolutionized the medical world, changing public reaction to surgery and reforming medical protocols, many still used today.

My thesis statement is, *The 1846 anesthesia demonstration at Massachusetts General Hospital's Ether Dome launched a worldwide revolution in pain management. Mixed reactions led to permanent reforms in medical knowledge, surgical procedures, and the public perception of surgeries.* In this project, I am trying to prove that the discovery of modern anesthesia revolutionized the medical world. For example, before 1846, surgeries were very painful for the patient, and surgeons could not operate carefully. However, after this discovery, surgical pain was nullified and doctors were able to work more carefully, changing the public's reaction to surgeries and opening a whole new world of possibilities.

This topic is important because without the discovery of modern anesthesia, surgeries today would have been vastly different. Many medical discoveries have been made possible as doctors and surgeons can perform riskier operations, learning more about the body. People should learn about this topic because sooner or later, we will have to undergo some sort of surgery. However, many of the forms of surgery we undergo would not be possible without anesthesia, as it would be too dangerous. Additionally, anesthesia has transformed the public's

reaction to surgeries, no longer seen as a last resort. This enables kids and older people access to potentially life-saving surgeries.

To narrow down my research, I first created an outline. Being a topic with a large impact on the medical field, there were many websites I used to find research, quotes, and medical journals. I also found many reports that people like John Snow wrote about certain events or inventions. One source that really helped me out was the [Ether Dome's exhibits](#). I had the chance to visit, and it provided me with many visuals and information about Ether Day, helping me develop my "The Ether Dome Demonstration" page. It also had exhibitions on previous surgical tools, giving me an idea of how surgeons operated back in the day.

The category I decided to do was a website. I chose it because I had created one the previous years, so I was familiar with the controls. I also thought this would help me better manage my time, because I could focus my attention on researching the topic. To narrow down the facts, I created an outline consisting of what I wanted to put on the menu of my website. This was a place for me to gather my thoughts and organize everything.