

Unit 1: Period 1 (1491-1607)

Big idea #1: Native American populations in the Americas were diverse peoples with differing ways of life shaped by the environment in which they lived.

Big Idea #2: Europeans came to the Americas for various reasons.

Big Idea #3: The Columbian Exchange resulted in massive changes in Europe and the Americas.

Big Idea #4: The arrival of the Spanish fundamentally changed the social and economic makeup of the Americas.

Big Idea #5: As a result of their interaction with each other, Europeans and Native Americans' understanding of each other changed over time.

Unit 2: Period 2 (1607-1754)

Big idea #1: The Spanish, Dutch, French, and English projects of colonization were motivated by different goals.

Big Idea #2: The British colonies in North America differed from each other in their goals, population makeup, and society.

Big idea #3: What kept colonization viable was the great wealth being generated by the transatlantic trade.

Big Idea #4: As European colonies became more established, European powers maintained differing policies in their interactions with Native American peoples, which often led to conflict.

Big Idea #5: All British colonies depended more or less on enslaved African laborers, but some enslaved people actively rebelled against the system.

Big idea #6: Colonial society both resembled English society and developed its own character.

Big Idea #7: British colonial policies led to an increasing mistrust in the American colonies.

Unit 3: Period 3 (1754-1800)

Big Idea #1: The French and Indian War led to increased land for the American colonies and a greater burden of taxation.

Big Idea #2 : British colonial policies, specifically taxation without colonial representation in Parliament, led to the Revolutionary War.

Big Idea #3: Enlightenment ideals exhibited a major influence on the American Independence movement, especially exhibited in Thomas Paine's Common Sense and the Declaration of Independence.

Big Idea #4: Despite Britain's military and financial advantages, the American Patriots won the Revolutionary War and gained independence.

Big Idea #5: The Articles of Confederation was the first constitution of the United States of America, and it failed largely because the federal government was too weak.

Big Idea #6: The Constitutional Convention was called to draft a new Constitution to rectify the weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation.

Big Idea #7: The Constitution of the United States created a new central government defined by federalism and the separation of powers.

Big Idea #8: The ideals of the American Revolution affected society in America in terms of gender roles and debates about slavery, while they also inspired revolutions in France and Haiti.

Big Idea #9: The presidencies of George Washington and John Adams set precedents for the way America would behave regarding the relationship between the federal government and state governments, economic policy, and foreign policy.

Big Idea #10 : Ideas about American national identity found expression in art, literature, and architecture, and while there were national expressions of American identity, there were also strong regional representations as well.

Unit 4: Period 4 (1800-1848)

Big Idea #1: In the Era of Jefferson, political parties continued to argue about policy, the Supreme Court established its role in American government, and the U.S. greatly expanded its territorial holdings.

Big idea #2: As federal power grew during this period, regional interests often conflicted with and opposed it.

Big Idea #3: During this period, the United States sought to establish its place as an independent nation on the world stage by claiming territory and consolidating control over the Western Hemisphere.

Big Idea #4: The Market Revolution was the linking of Northern Industry with Western and Southern farms which was created by advances in technology and had significant effects on the society and culture of the United States.

Big Idea #5: During this period, the demand for expanding democracy manifested itself in universal white male suffrage and the growing influence of political parties.

Big Idea #6: President Andrew Jackson made profound use of federal power on issues like the national bank, tariffs, federally funded internal improvements, and the forcible removal of American Indians from their lands.

Big Idea #7: Americans labored during this period to define a distinct American identity through language, philosophy, art, and religion.

Big Idea #8: The rise of democratic and individualistic beliefs and the social changes brought on by the Market Revolution led to a significant effort to reform American society.

Big Idea #9: Though the majority of southern white people did not own enslaved people, Southern culture ensured that the institution of slavery was part of the South's way of life, and thus, it was to be protected.

Unit 5: Period 5 (1844-1877)

Big Idea #1: Many Americans believed it was their Manifest Destiny to expand their nation over the whole of the North American continent.

Big Idea #2: The Mexican American War was caused by the annexation of Texas and resulted in large territorial gains for the United States.

Big Idea #3: Further acquisition of land led to an increasingly bitter debate over the future of slavery in America, which was temporarily resolved in the Compromise of 1850.

Big Idea #4: As more immigrants arrived in America, they created ethnic enclaves where they preserved their culture and faced opposition from nativists.

Big Idea #5: Tension over slavery increased because of conflicting regional labor ideologies, a fervent abolitionist movement in the North, and the arguments of Southerners regarding the constitutionality of slavery.

Big Idea #6: All attempts to compromise over slavery ultimately failed, which led to the rise of sectional political parties.

Big Idea #7: The election of Abraham Lincoln in 1860 without a single electoral vote from the South led to the secession of the Southern states.

Big Idea #8: Even though the North and the South mobilized their entire economies and societies to fight the Civil War, the North (Union) ultimately won because of advantages in population and industry, the leadership of Lincoln, and the successful strategy of cutting off the South from outside aid.

Big Idea #9: After the Civil War, America entered a period of Reconstruction which abolished slavery, amended the Constitution significantly, and sought to reunify the North and the South.

Big Idea #10: Reconstruction ultimately failed because of Northern weariness of forcing Southerners into submission and Southern insistence on maintaining their pre-Civil War society.

Unit 6: Period 6 (1865-1898)

Big Idea #1: In this period, continued westward migration and the advent of transcontinental railroad systems helped unify the nation's economy, in many cases in favor of industrialists and at the expense of farmers.

Big Idea #2: Americans moved westward for a variety of reasons, including economic opportunity and self-sufficiency, but the continued push West led to increasingly bitter conflicts with American Indians living in those lands.

Big Idea #3: Despite significant efforts to create a "New South," the southern states entrenched themselves in racial segregation and a continuing adherence to agriculture.

Big Idea #4: Technological innovation created the occasion for the rise and expansion of industrial capitalism.

Big Idea #5: Large-scale industrial production transformed the American economy during the Gilded Age.

Big Idea #6: While some Americans' standard of living improved, many in the labor sector found their lives unsustainable and fought for better treatment.

Big Idea #7: The industrial workforce expanded and became more diverse through internal and international migration.

Big Idea #8: As immigration increased during the Gilded Age, immigrants faced opposition from nativists and labor unions, but found help through private welfare programs like settlement houses.

Big Idea #9: Various groups sought to reform American society and economics into a more equitable reality.

Big Idea #10: Politics in the Gilded Age continued to resemble party divisions lingering from the Civil War, and they contended on the proper place of government in American life.

Unit 7: Period 7 (1890-1980)

Big Idea #1: Once the western frontier was settled, the United States debated whether it should expand into territories beyond its borders.

Big Idea #2: The United States' victory in the Spanish-American War led to further land acquisitions, and transformed America into a proper empire.

Big Idea #3: The Progressives wanted strong government intervention to reform society on issues like political corruption, social injustice, and economic inequality.

Big Idea #4: Although the U.S. began in a position of isolationism regarding World War I, mounting pressure brought them into the war, and the U.S. entry turned the tide of the war for the Allies.

Big Idea #5: U.S. involvement in World War I meant leveraging all its assets at home. Additionally, it created the occasion for the suppression of civil liberties, nativism, and significant migrations.

Big Idea #6: In the 1920s, new technologies focused the U.S. economy on the production of consumer goods, which improved standards of living and spread national culture.

Big Idea #7: The urbanization of America granted new opportunities for women and immigrants, gave rise to new forms of art, and emphasized regional differences.

Big Idea #8: The Great Depression caused policymakers to transform the United States into a limited welfare state with the New Deal, and further defined the goals of modern American liberalism.

Big Idea #9: Before entering WWII, the U.S. publicly maintained its traditional isolationism while simultaneously aiding the Allied efforts. But the U.S. entered the war after the attack on Pearl Harbor.

Big Idea #10: The required mobilization for the U.S. entry into WWII transformed American society economically, while creating the occasion for violations of civil liberties.

Big Idea #11: Once the U.S. committed to the war, Americans saw the war as a fight for the survival of democracy and freedom against fascist totalitarianism.

Big Idea #12: The war-ravaged condition of Asia and Europe, and the dominant U.S. role in the Allied victory and postwar peace settlements, allowed the United States to emerge from the war as the most powerful nation on Earth.

Unit 8: Period 8 (1945-1980)

Big Idea #1: The U.S. and Soviet Union engaged in a decades-long Cold War. The United States' main goal was the containment of communism.

Big Idea #2: Americans debated policies designed to expose suspected communists within the United States even as both parties supported the broader strategy of containing communism.

Big Idea #3: The U.S. economy grew significantly in the 1950s, creating the occasion for the Baby Boom, cultural conformity, and an increase in migration.

Big Idea #4: Gains were made for civil rights in the 1940s and 1950s which set the stage for further gains in the 1960s.

Big Idea #5: Building on the progress made in the 40s and 50s, the Civil Rights Movement won major victories in the 1960s with significant legislation outlawing racial discrimination.

Big Idea #6: Worldwide postwar decolonization was the occasion for increasing Cold War involvement for both the Soviet Union and the United States.

Big Idea #7: The Vietnam War was fought under the rubric of communist containment, and it created deep divisions among Americans about America's proper place in the world.

Big Idea #8: Lyndon Johnson's Great Society carried on the legacies of the New Deal, and is considered the high mark of American liberalism.

Big Idea #9: The Civil Rights Movement expanded to include Latinos, American Indians, Asian Americans, women, and gay and lesbian Americans.

Big Idea #10: Youth culture of the 1960s was defined by a rejection of social, political, and economic norms of their parents' generation.

Big Idea #11: A growing concern over environmental degradation led to the rise of the environmental movement.

Big Idea #12: Public trust in the government rapidly declined during the Vietnam War and the Watergate scandal, and that led to growing clashes between liberals and conservatives over the role of the federal government.

Unit 9: Period 9 (1980-Present)

Big Idea #1: The election of Ronald Reagan marked a significant shift in American politics from liberalism to a new kind of conservatism.

Big Idea #2: Ronald Reagan helped bring an end to the Cold War through speeches, diplomatic efforts, and military buildup.

Big Idea #3: The U.S. economy underwent significant changes in the 1990s due to the advent of new technological innovations like the computer and the transition to a service-based economy.

Big Idea #4: After 1980, migration and immigration affected U.S. culture and economics significantly.

Big Idea #5: The attacks of September 11th, 2001 marked the beginning of the War on Terror. Some Americans registered a growing concern over climate change.