US History I Review

Or
Everything You Should Have Learned in Eighth Grade

In the Beginning…

- Evidence suggests that the first human beings crossed into the Americas from Asia sometime between 20,000 and 40,000 years ago.
- Multiple waves of settlers arrived over the ages; some presumably crossed a land bridge during the Ice Age, and others presumably crossed by primitive watercraft.

Other Migrations?

- Multiple theories suggest that other migrations (or, at the very least, contacts) followed from Polynesia, China, Africa, and Europe.

Just the Facts, Please…

- Interesting theories aside, archaeological evidence proves that the Vikings established short-lived settlements on the coast of Newfoundland around 1,000 AD.

Native American Civilizations

- The Vikings abandoned their settlements due, in part, to resistance from the Natives (over whom they had no significant advantage).
- Over time, Native Americans developed sophisticated cultures and empires in Central and South America.

Pre-Columbian North America

- North America was a patchwork of diverse tribes. Religious practices, languages, political organization, diet, and material culture (clothing, tools, shelter, etc.) could vary dramatically over a very short distance. There were some common linguistic groups, however.

Columbian Contact

- Christopher Columbus, an Italian mariner sailing under the Spanish flag, arrived in the Caribbean on October 12, 1492.
- Columbus’ discovery inaugurated a new age of exploration and colonization. People, raw materials, animals, plants, and diseases were transplanted across the ocean in the following centuries.
Colonial North America

- European powers competed to control North America by establishing colonies. Early Dutch and Swedish ventures were absorbed by the British.

British America

- English colonies were established for many reasons, including both economic opportunity and religious dissent.

Relations with Mother England

- The English colonies became accustomed to running their own affairs for long periods because the English government was often distracted by European affairs (and a civil war).
- The colonies relied on England for protection from France until the French were finally driven from North America in 1763.

Seeds of Colonial Dissatisfaction

- England began to see the colonies as a source of revenue after 1763. The government was deeply in debt (partly from the expense of defending the colonies) and colonists paid a lower tax-rate than the citizens in England. Colonists resented paying taxes, especially those imposed by a parliament that did not include elected representation from the colonies.
- Colonists were very unhappy that the crown adopted policies favorable to Native Americans (Proclamation Line of 1763) and French Catholics (1763 Treaty of Paris and 1774 Quebec Act).
- Many colonists came from areas (Scotland, Ireland, Germany) or traditions (Puritanism) with less loyalty to the British crown.

Issue | British Perspective | Colonial Perspective
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Quebec | Purifying the conquered French would ease the burden of administration | The French were a defeated people who did not deserve light treatment
Taxation | Colonists paid less than citizens in the homeland; they ought to pay their fair share | Parliament should not be able to tax the colonies without colonial representation
Western Lands | Expansion would result in costly clashes with Native Americans | The British favored the "savages" over their own loyal subjects

Colonial Protests

The Revolution

- Relations grew worse as Parliament passed a series of laws (1765 Stamp Act, 1774 Townshend Acts) that inspired colonial protests (i.e., 1773 Boston Tea Party).
- Fighting began in 1775; independence was declared in 1776; military victory achieved in 1781, and peace secured in 1783.
- The American Revolution was unusual in that it was a largely conservative movement, led by the propertied classes and portraying the English government as infringing on the traditional rights of Englishmen.
Leading the New Nation

• The colonies each attained independence separately as a result of the Revolution, and national unity was far from guaranteed.

• The Continental Congress that directed the war adopted the Articles of Confederation to provide a legal framework for the new national government.

• The Articles created a single branch of government (Congress) with very limited powers. For example, it could not collect taxes or uniformly enforce the laws. It proved to be a very weak system.
• The weaknesses of Congress became so obvious that states began finding ways to work around it. Virginia and Maryland, for example, went to George Washington’s estate to settle a disagreement between themselves.
• When Massachusetts was rocked by Shays’ Rebellion in 1786 and 1787, many people became convinced that a stronger national government was needed to prevent a slide toward chaos.
• Delegates from every state were called to assemble in Philadelphia in 1787 and all but Rhode Island participated.

The Constitution

• The Convention decided not to amend the Articles of Confederation. Instead they drafted an entirely new plan for government. This was ratified by enough states to take effect in 1788, and George Washington took office as our first president in 1789. North Carolina and Rhode Island eventually ratified the new constitution in 1790.

US History: 1790 - 1829

• Presidents: Washington, Adams, Jefferson, Madison, Monroe, Adams
• Major Issues: Westward expansion and national consolidation following the Revolutionary War
• Major Events: Louisiana Purchase (1803), War of 1812, Missouri Compromise (1820)
• Political Developments: Emergence of the Two Party System, shift of power from New England to the South and West

US History: 1830 - 1860

• Presidents: Jackson, Van Buren, Harrison, Tyler, Polk, Taylor, Fillmore, Pierce, Buchanan
• Major Issues: Westward expansion, power of the national government, expansion of slavery, immigration
• Major Events: Indian Removal Act (1830), Mexican-American War (1846-1848), Kansas-Nebraska Act (1854), Dred Scott v. Sanford (1857)
• Political Developments: Expansion of the electorate, increasing regional competition
US History: 1860 - 1890

- **Presidents:** Lincoln, Johnson, Grant, Hayes, Garfield, Arthur, Cleveland
- **Major Issues:** Abolition of slavery, reconstruction, industrialization, urbanization
- **Major Events:** Civil War (1861-1865), Reconstruction (1865-1876)
- **Political Developments:** Expansion of the electorate, segregation, governmental reform, populism