The United States

Lesson 2: History of the United States

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

Why is history important?

Terms to Know

- **indigenous** living or occurring naturally in a particular place
- **nomadic** describes a way of life in which a person or group lives by moving from place to place
- **pueblo** a town built by the Pueblo people in the American Southwest
- **colonist** a person sent to live in a new place and claim land for his or her home country
- **data** information
- **Manifest Destiny** the idea that it was the right of the United States to expand westward to the Pacific Ocean
- **annex** to take control of
- **secede** to withdraw from a group or a country
- **agriculture** growing crops and raising livestock to sell
- **reservation** an area of land that has been set aside for Native Americans
- **industry** manufacturing; making products to sell
- **civil rights** the basic rights that belong to all citizens
- **terrorism** the use of violence against civilians, by individuals or groups, to reach political goals

When did it happen?

- 1600
  - 1565 Spain settles St. Augustine
  - 1620 Pilgrims land at Plymouth
- 1700
  - 1776 Colonies declare independence
- 1800
  - 1789 Constitution is written
  - 1803 Louisiana Purchase is made
- 1845 U.S. annexes Texas
- 1861 Civil War begins
- 1900
- 1941 U.S. enters World War II
- 1964 Civil Rights Act becomes law
- 2001 Terrorists attack U.S.
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Lesson 2: History of the United States, continued

Early America

Guiding Question How did life in the United States change for Native Americans?

Native Americans are indigenous to North America. Indigenous describes the first people to live in an area. Native Americans belonged to dozens of different groups and had different ways of life using local resources.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ways of Life of Native Americans</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>East</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Plains</td>
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<tr>
<td>Southwest</td>
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<tr>
<td>Northwest</td>
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Europeans wanted to claim land in North America to use its valuable resources and increase trade. In the 1500s, the Spanish built outposts in the Americas. They founded St. Augustine, Florida. By the end of the 1700s, they had also settled parts of New Mexico, California, and Texas.

In the 1600s, the French claimed a vast stretch of land from eastern Canada to the Gulf of Mexico. Early on, they traded with Native Americans for furs. Later, the French built settlements, including New Orleans.

Also in the 1600s, the English began to send colonists to the Americas to live in this new place and claim land for their home country. The colonists first settled Jamestown, Virginia, in 1607 and Plymouth, Massachusetts, in 1620. Other settlements followed. Thirteen colonies formed.

Great Britain and France fought each other in the French and Indian War from 1754 to 1763. Each side had Native American allies. In the end, Great Britain won France’s colonies.

Soon after, Britain’s colonists began to resent the taxes and trade policies forced upon them by the British government. These American colonists declared their independence in 1776. The Revolutionary War followed. In 1783, Great Britain recognized American independence. The thirteen colonies became an independent nation called the United States of America.
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A Free Republic

Guiding Question  How did the new nation grow and expand?

At first, the United States was set up under a plan called the Articles of Confederation. But the national government was too weak. In 1787, delegates met and wrote a new plan for a national government called the Constitution.

<table>
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<th>Government Set Up by the Constitution</th>
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<tr>
<td>• federal system—powers divided between national government and states</td>
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<td>• three branches of government—executive, legislative, judicial</td>
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<td>• checks and balances—each branch of government limits the power of the others</td>
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<td>• popular sovereignty—the idea that government receives its power from the people</td>
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<tr>
<td>• limited government—the idea that a government may use only powers given to it by the people</td>
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<tr>
<td>• constitutional republic—government in which people rule through representatives they elect</td>
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George Washington was elected the first president in 1789. Also in that year, a Bill of Rights was added to the Constitution. The Bill of Rights listed rights that the government could not take away. Other amendments, or changes, to the Constitution followed. However, the Constitution still exists in its basic form after more than 200 years.

During the 1800s, the United States expanded west. In 1803, it doubled in size when President Thomas Jefferson purchased the vast Louisiana Territory from France.

Soon after, Meriwether Lewis and William Clark led a group to explore the Louisiana Territory and western lands all the way to the Pacific. The Lewis and Clark expedition lasted more than two years. They mapped the land and rivers, and they recorded data about the plants and animals. They also made peaceful contact with Native Americans.

The United States also gained Florida from Spain and part of the Oregon Territory from Britain. Many Americans came to believe in Manifest Destiny. This was the idea that the United States should stretch from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific Ocean.
Meanwhile, some Americans settlers had moved to Texas, which belonged to Mexico. In 1836, they declared independence and set up a constitutional republic. In 1845, the United States annexed, or took control of, Texas. This angered Mexico. A border dispute followed, and the two countries went to war in 1846. The United States defeated Mexico. In 1848, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo gave the United States the area that today includes California and other western states. This added a large Spanish-speaking population to the country.

Moving west gave settlers new opportunities. However, they often settled on Native Americans’ land.

As the United States expanded west, different ways of life developed in the Northern and Southern states. The South depended on enslaved African workers to raise cotton. The North had factories. Some Northerners wanted to end slavery in the entire country.
Abraham Lincoln, who opposed slavery, was elected president in 1860. His election led 11 Southern states to *secede* from, or leave, the United States. They set up the Confederate States of America. In 1861, the Civil War began.

The war ended after four years of bloody fighting. More than 600,000 Americans had died. The North’s win united the country. Millions of African Americans were freed.

After the war, more Americans moved west to mine, farm, or ranch. Many settled on the Great Plains when the government promised them land there. The Great Plains became important for *agriculture*—growing crops and raising livestock. Cowboys in places like Texas herded cattle and drove them north to railroad stations. As western settlement continued, Native Americans were forced to live on *reservations* set aside for them. This land had poor soil.

States in the South passed laws taking away the rights of African Americans. Thousands of them moved from the South to the North in the Great Migration. It was part of a larger rural-to-urban migration that was occurring. Millions of people left rural areas and moved to cities to work in industry. *Industry* is manufacturing, or making products to sell. At the same time, people from Europe, Asia, and Latin America migrated to the United States seeking work too.

### A World Leader

**Guiding Question** *What role does the United States have in the world?*

During the 1900s, the United States fought in two world wars. World War I began in Europe in 1914. The United States tried to remain neutral but joined the Allied powers of Britain, France, and Russia when Germany sank an American ship. Germany surrendered in November 1918.

World War II broke out in Europe in 1939. German leader Adolf Hitler wanted an empire in Europe. Japan wanted an empire in eastern Asia. When Japan attacked the U.S. fleet at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, on December 7, 1941, the United States declared war. The United States and its allies defeated Germany in May 1945. In August 1945, the country dropped atomic bombs on Japan. Japan surrendered, and World War II came to an end. Nearly 55 million people around the world had died.
Lesson 2: History of the United States, continued

After World War II, the United States and the Soviet Union became the world’s two major powers. They competed for leadership in a rivalry known as the Cold War. The war was called “cold” because it never became “hot,” meaning no actual fighting occurred. The Cold War ended with the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991.

During the 1900s, women’s groups in the United States fought for and won the right to vote. Efforts were made to help women get pay equal to men’s pay for the same work. A civil rights movement for African Americans began. Civil rights are basic rights that belong to all citizens. The Supreme Court ruled against racial segregation, or separation, in public schools. Congress passed the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act in 1965.

The United States has gone through other changes since World War II. The population has doubled. There was an economic boom. Many people moved to the suburbs outside the cities and bought cars to drive to and from work. The interstate highway system was built.

The United States has also faced terrorism. Terrorism is violence against civilians for political goals. The worst act of terrorism was on September 11, 2001. Terrorists seized passenger planes and crashed them into buildings. After that, the United States carried out a war against terrorism in Afghanistan and other countries in Asia.

Writing
Check for Understanding
1. Expository Explain how life changed for Native Americans from before European settlement to the late 1800s.

2. Expository Tell about the Civil War: why it was fought, how it began, and how it ended.