

6th and 7th Grade U.S. History Unit

Reasons for colonization: (8.2A)

1. Religious freedom –
Puritans and the Church of England
William Penn and the Quakers
2. Economic Gain –
Businesspeople who wanted opportunity to make money
Certain crops were grown to make money such as tobacco in Virginia
and rice in South Carolina.
3. European Rivalries –

Most of the powerful countries of Europe (England, France, and Spain) saw colonies as a way of becoming more powerful economically and politically. The European powers began competing with each other for control of land in North America.

Ex. – England captured the Dutch colony of New Netherlands in 1664 and renamed it New York.

Important Dates in Colonial History: (8.1C)

- 1607** – founding of Jamestown (first permanent English settlement in North America) (8.1C)
- 1619** - meeting of the Virginia House of Burgesses (first legislative assembly in North America)
- 1620** - writing of the Mayflower Compact (a document that served as a model for self-government in the colonies)

American Revolution:

Two main reasons for the revolution: (8.4A)

1. Economic restrictions – Great Britain passed laws which taxed colonial trade and prohibited the colonies from trading directly with any other country except Great Britain.
2. Lack of political representation – the colonists did not have representatives in Parliament, the British legislature. When Parliament passed a series of taxes on the colonies – Sugar Act (1764), Stamp Act (1765), and the Townshend Acts (1767) – the colonists became angry. Their argument was summed up with “no taxation without representation.”

Important Dates, Events and People of the Revolution:

1775 – **Battles of Lexington and Concord** – first battles of the revolution (8.4C)

1776 - Writing of the **Declaration of Independence** (8.1C)

Announced the American colonies’ independence from Great Britain and its ruler, **King George III**. (8.4B)

Main political principles found in the document: (8.4C)

Equality – “all men are created equal”

Unalienable rights – basic rights of all human beings, such as life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness

Consent of the governed – a government is based on the agreement of the people being governed.

Written by Thomas Jefferson - issued on July 4, 1776 (8.4B)

The colonists were encouraged to declare their independence by a pamphlet, *Common Sense*, written by **Thomas Paine**. (8.4B)

1777 – **Battle of Saratoga** – turning point of the American Revolution.
(8.4C)

The American victory convinced the French that the Americans could win. The French began sending much-needed supplies, money, and troops to support the Continental Army.

1781 – **Battle of Yorktown** – last major battle of the American Revolution.
The British surrendered to the Continental Army. (8.4C)

1783 – **Treaty of Paris** – which ended the American Revolution. (8.4C)

Reasons for the American Victory:

1. Distance from Great Britain – Thousand of miles of ocean between Great Britain and her colonies. It took time (12 weeks) to send news, orders, supplies, and troops. This complicated the war effort for the British.
2. The Continental Army – commanded by General George Washington. The main strategy was to preserve his army and keep from being defeated decisively.
3. Battle of Saratoga – this brought in French support for the colonists. The American Ambassador to France, Benjamin Franklin, helped to convince the French to support the cause of the colonists against Great Britain.

The Articles of Confederation:

In 1781 the thirteen states adopted the Articles of Confederation, the nation's first constitution. The Articles provided for a weak national government. The state governments, not the national government, held most of the power. Many national problems could not be solved because the national government was too weak.

The Philadelphia Convention (1787):

In 1787, representatives from the states met in Philadelphia to revise (change) the Article of Confederation. Fifty-five of the nation's leaders attended including George Washington who was president of the convention. The representatives quickly decided that a new national constitution (a plan of government) was needed to replace the existing Articles of Confederation. It was agreed that a stronger national government was necessary. They wrote the Constitution that we still have today. Included in the Constitution were the following:

- The concept of **popular sovereignty** (the will of the people)
The people decide, by majority rule, what they want.
- The Constitution created a federal system of government (federalism). The Founding Fathers created a system where power is shared between the national government and the state governments. This division of powers is called **federalism**. Some powers are given to the national government; some powers are given to the state governments; and some powers are shared by both the national and state governments.
- The Constitution allows for three branches in our federal government through the concept of **Separation of Powers**. The constitution defines each branch and outlines the responsibilities and limitations of power for each. The legislative branch (House of Representative + Senate = Congress) makes laws. The executive branch (President) carries out and enforces the laws. The judicial branch (Supreme Court) interprets the laws.

- The Constitution authorizes each branch of government to share its powers with the other branches and thereby check their activities and power. Through the system of **Checks and Balances**, the President can veto a law passed by Congress, but Congress can override the veto. The Senate confirms appointments made by the President, and the courts can declare laws passed by Congress as unconstitutional.
- The **Bill of Rights** (the first ten amendments to the U. S. Constitution) were added in 1791. When the Constitution was sent to the states for approval, many citizens feared the new national government would use its powers against the people. They demanded the addition of a “Bill of Rights” guaranteeing individual liberties or rights, such as the freedom of religion, speech, press, assembly, petition, the right to keep and bear arms, etc.

Westward Expansion and Manifest Destiny:

1803 – President Thomas Jefferson purchased the Louisiana Territory from France which doubled the size of the United States. This became known as **the Louisiana Purchase**. Jefferson sent Meriwether Lewis and William Clark to explore the region and report on the Native American Indians they met. The expedition lasted two years. Lewis and Clark pushed westward all the way to the Pacific Ocean.

Manifest Destiny - By the 1840s, the western boundary of the United States was at the edge of the Rocky Mountains. Many Americans wanted to expand the nation to the shores of the Pacific Ocean. They claimed that it was the country’s Manifest Destiny - the belief that the United States was destined (intended or meant) to stretch across the continent from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific Ocean.

The Civil War (1861 – 1865)

Causes of the Civil War:

- **Sectionalism** – During the early 1800s, the Northeast, South and Northwest sections of the United States each developed their own different ways of life. These different ways of living led to sectionalism – many Americans felt greater loyalty toward their own section (region) than to the country as a whole. Such differences played an important part in leading to the Civil War.
- **Disagreement Over States' Rights** - Many Southerners believed in states' rights – the idea that since the states had created the federal government, each state could reject federal laws within its territory or even leave the Union (the United States) if it wanted to. Northerners argued instead that the Constitution was the work of the American people, and that states did not have the right to leave the Union.
- **Slavery** – One of the major institutions in the South was slavery. It was also the most explosive issue. Abolitionists (people who wanted to end slavery) played an important role in persuading others of the evils of slavery. Among the most important abolitionists were Frederick Douglass, Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman, and William Lloyd Garrison.

In the 1840s the United States gained new territories as a result of a war with Mexico. A problem arose as to whether slavery should be allowed in these territories. Southerners felt that only by extending slavery could they keep the balance between slave states and free states in the U. S. Senate. Many Northerners were shocked at the possibility of the further expansion of slavery.

In 1852, Harriet Beecher Stowe wrote *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, a novel about a loyal and loving slave named Tom. His master, facing financial problems, is forced to sell Tom to a slave trader. In the end, Tom dies, killed by his new master's cruel and vicious treatment. The book affected millions of people around the world by pointing out the evils and brutality of slavery. Many began to question the morality of one person "owning" another.

- **The Breakdown of Compromise** – to keep the Union together, the states had agreed to a series of compromises about the admission of “slave” and “free” states. The Missouri Compromise of 1820 and the Compromise of 1850 had kept the peace. However, in the 1850s, new events destroyed the earlier compromises. This breakdown of compromise made conflict between the North and the South inevitable.

Highlights of the Civil War

In 1860 **Abraham Lincoln** was elected President. As a member of the new Republican Party, he had campaigned against the extension of slavery to new territories. Although Lincoln said he would allow slavery to continue in those states where it existed, most Southerners did not believe him. Soon after his election, the Southern states declared that they were no longer part of the United States. They formed their own government, calling it the Confederate States of America. **Jefferson Davis** was elected the President of the Confederate States of America, or the Confederacy as the South came to be called. President Lincoln declared that he would take all necessary steps to keep the United States together. IN 1861, when Confederate troops attacked **Fort Sumter** in South Carolina, the fighting began. The Civil War divided many American families – in some cases, family members fought on opposite sides.

Robert E. Lee was the commander of the Confederate troops throughout the Civil War. After trying several generals as commander of the Union Army, Lincoln selected **Ulysses S. Grant** in 1864 who led the Union Army to victory in the Civil War.

The first major Union victory was at the Battle of Antietam in September, 1862. This victory allowed President Lincoln to issue the **Emancipation Proclamation** on January 1, 1863. According to the Proclamation, all slaves living in states fighting against the Union were declared free. Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation for the following reasons:

- It gave moral purpose to the war, making it harder for England and France to support the Confederacy.
- It freed slaves only in the Confederacy, providing an incentive to slave-holding border states to stay in the Union.
- It weakened the Confederacy by giving slaves an incentive to escape and join the Union Army.
- It elevated the war to more than just saving the Union – it now became a moral struggle to end slavery.

The **Battle of Gettysburg** was fought from July 1 – 3, 1863. This battle is considered the turning point of the Civil War. The Confederate Army retreated to Virginia on July 4 and would not be able to attack the North any more. This was the beginning of the end for the Confederacy.

On July 4, 1863 the Union Army led by General U. S. Grant won the **Battle of Vicksburg**. This victory was important because it gave the North control of the Mississippi River.

On November 19, 1863 President Lincoln traveled to Gettysburg to help dedicate a cemetery for 3500 soldiers at the site of the battle. Lincoln gave a short speech which became known as the **Gettysburg Address**. It has been recognized as one of the greatest speeches of all time. In it, Lincoln declared that the nation was founded on “the proposition that all men are created equal.” He ended with a plea to continue the fight for democracy so that “government of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from the earth.”

On April 9, 1865 **General Lee surrendered to General Grant at Appomattox Court House** in Virginia and the Civil War ended.

President Lincoln did not get to enjoy winning the Civil War for very long. On April 14, 1865 **President Lincoln was assassinated** while he watched a play at Ford's Theatre. The man who shot Lincoln was John Wilkes Booth, a Confederate supporter. The next morning, on April 15, President Lincoln died.