



Honors' American History 1&2 (Reconstruction—Today)



Unit #1: "How'd We Get Here?" Blue Book Review

Question 1-A

Today, the United States is home to the most powerful economy in the world. However, the economic history of the United States is immensely linked to the development of Western civilization. The American colonies progressed from marginally successful colonial economies to small, independent farming economies, which in 1776 became the United States of America. Over the course of those years, the United States grew from 13 English colonies with distinct economies and institutions to a large, integrated, industrialized economy. Still, if it had not been for the economic domination of its mother country England, things might have played out quite differently. After all, American economics takes root in the quest of European settlers for economic gain in the 16th, 17th, and 18th Centuries. This colonial drive is traced to the economic growth of Europe during the Renaissance, which was, in actuality, a "rebirth" of the economic prosperity enjoyed prior to the economic stagnation of the Middle Ages. Such Medieval economic decline was the result of the collapse of the Roman Empire, whose economy had grown entirely too big due to its vast military exploits. Still, Rome's economic domination was based on a financial blueprint first established by the Ancient Greeks, Indians, Chinese, and Egyptians. Trace the role played by economics in the development, prosperity, decline, destruction, and warfare of civilizations from Ancient History until 1877, when the United States was fresh out of Reconstruction and basking in the economic glow of its Second Industrial Revolution.

Question 1-B

Historians often refer to the Founding Fathers as "godlike" because of the documents they produced (*Declaration of Independence*, *Constitution*, and *Bill of Rights*) and the influence these had on shaping the government of the United States. How much credit is really due to the Founding Fathers? From what sources did they (and other Americans) pull their ideas? Assess the validity of the statement: "*The American form of government is merely a potpourri of ideas, some successful and some not, taken from the thinkers and struggles that came before it.*" In addition, how do the documents that govern Americans (and the principles they outline) make the U.S. Government unique from other world governments?

Question 1-C

The Civil War in the United States lasted four years and resulted in over 1.1 million total casualties... more than all of the country's earlier wars combined... and remains, to this day, the deadliest war ever waged by Americans. Ironically, the seeds of dissolution were planted in the early stages of the republic by the very men who helped create it. The fabric of the Union ultimately tore with the formation of the Confederate States of America, but the notions of states' rights and secession were far from just Civil War issues. They slowly embedded themselves into the minds of the American public and flared up on numerous occasions prior to the commencement of hostilities in 1861. Trace the history of states' rights and secession from America's early days as a republic up to the eve of the Civil War. How (and why) does secession remain an integral part in the discussion of states' rights today?