

# AP US History

## Content Learning Objectives

(War of 1812 - Compromise of 1850)

### Period 4 (1800-1848)

The new republic struggled to define and extend democratic ideals in the face of rapid economic, territorial, and demographic changes.

Key Concept 4.1: The United States developed the world's first modern mass democracy and celebrated a new national culture, while Americans sought to define the nation's democratic ideals and to reform its institutions to match them.

1. The nation's transformation to a more participatory democracy was accompanied by continued debates over federal power, the relationship between the federal government and the states, the authority of different branches of the federal government, and the rights and responsibilities of individual citizens.
  - a. As various constituencies and interest groups coalesced and defined their agendas, various political parties, most significantly the Federalists and Democratic-Republicans in the 1790s and the Democrats and Whigs in the 1830s, were created or transformed to reflect and/or promote those agendas.
  - b. Supreme Court decisions sought to assert federal power over state laws and the primacy of the judiciary in determining the meaning of the Constitution.
  - c. With the acceleration of a national and international market economy, Americans debated the scope of government's role in the economy, while diverging economic systems meant that regional political and economic loyalties often continued to overshadow national concerns.
  - d. Many white Americans in the South asserted their regional identity through pride in the institution of slavery, insisting that the federal government should defend that institution.
2. Concurrent with an increasing international exchange of goods and ideas, larger numbers of Americans began struggling with how to match democratic political ideals to political institutions and social realities.
  - a. The Second Great Awakening, liberal social ideas from abroad, and Romantic beliefs in human perfectibility fostered the rise of voluntary organizations to promote religious and secular reforms, including abolition and women's rights.
  - b. Despite the outlawing of the international slave trade, the rise in the number of free African Americans in both the North and the South, and widespread discussion of various emancipation plans, the United States and many state governments continued to restrict African Americans' citizenship possibilities.

- c. Resistance to initiatives for democracy and inclusion included proslavery arguments, rising xenophobia, antiblack sentiments in political and popular culture, and restrictive anti-Indian policies.
3. While Americans celebrated their nation's progress toward a unified new national culture that blended Old World forms with New World ideas, various groups of the nation's inhabitants developed distinctive cultures of their own.
    - a. A new national culture emerged with various Americans creating art, architecture, and literature that combined European forms with local and regional cultural sensibilities.
    - b. Various groups of American Indians, women, and religious followers developed cultures reflecting their interests and experiences, as did regional groups and an emerging urban middle class.
    - c. Enslaved and free African Americans, isolated at the bottom of the social hierarchy, created communities and strategies to protect their dignity and their family structures, even as some launched abolitionist and reform movements aimed at changing their status.

Key Concept 4.2: Developments in technology, agriculture, and commerce precipitated profound changes in US settlement patterns, regional identities, gender and family relations, political power, and distribution of consumer goods.

1. A global market and communications revolution, influencing and influenced by technological innovations, led to dramatic shifts in the nature of agriculture and manufacturing.
  - a. Innovations including textile machinery, steam engines, interchangeable parts, canals, railroads, and the telegraph, as well as agricultural inventions, both extended markets and brought efficiency to production for those markets.
  - b. Increasing numbers of Americans, especially women in factories and low-skilled male workers, no longer relied on semisubsistence agriculture but made their livelihoods producing goods for distant markets, even as some urban entrepreneurs went into finance rather than manufacturing.
2. Regional economic specialization, especially the demands of cultivating southern cotton, shaped settlement patterns and the national and international economy.
  - a. Southern cotton furnished the raw material for manufacturing in the Northeast, while the growth in cotton production and trade promoted the development of national economic ties, shaped the international economy, and fueled the internal slave trade.
  - b. Despite some governmental and private efforts to create a unified national economy, most notably the American System, the shift to market production linked the North and the Midwest more closely than either was linked to the South.
  - c. Efforts to exploit the nation's natural resources led to government efforts to promote free and forced migration of various American peoples across

the continent as well as to competing ideas about defining and managing labor systems, geographical boundaries, and natural resources.

3. The economic changes caused by the market revolution had significant effects on migration patterns, gender and family relations, and the distribution of political power.
  - a. With the opening of canals and new roads into the western territories, native-born white citizens relocated westward, relying on new community systems to replace their old family and local relationships
  - b. Migrants from Europe increased the population in the East and the Midwest, forging strong bonds of interdependence between the Northeast and the Old Northwest.
  - c. The South remained politically, culturally, and ideologically distinct from the other sections while continuing to rely on its exports to Europe for economic growth.
  - d. The market revolution helped to widen a gap between rich and poor, shaped emerging middle and working classes, and caused an increasing separation between home and workplace, which led to dramatic transformations in gender and in family roles and expectations.
  - e. Regional interests continued to trump national concerns as the basis for many political leaders' positions on economic issues including slavery, the national bank, tariffs, and internal improvements.

Key Concept 4.3: U.S. interest in increasing foreign trade, expanding its national borders, and isolating itself from European conflicts shaped the nation's foreign policy and spurred government and private initiatives.

1. Struggling to create an independent global presence, U.S. policymakers sought to dominate the North American continent and to promote its foreign trade.
  - a. Following the Louisiana Purchase, the drive to acquire, survey, and open up new lands and markets led Americans into numerous economic, diplomatic, and military initiatives in the Western Hemisphere and Asia.
  - b. The United States sought dominance over the North American continent through a variety of means, including military actions, judicial decisions, and diplomatic efforts.
2. Various American groups and individuals initiated, championed, and/or resisted the expansion of territory and/or government powers.
  - a. With expanding borders came public debates about whether to expand and how to define and use the new territories.
  - b. Federal government attempts to assert authority over the states brought resistance from state governments in the North and the South at different times.
  - c. Whites living on the frontier tended to champion expansion efforts, while resistance by American Indians led to a sequence of wars and federal efforts to control American Indian populations.

3. The American acquisition of lands in the West gave rise to a contest over the extension of slavery into the western territories as well as a series of attempts at national compromise.
  - a. The 1820 Missouri Compromise created a truce over the issue of slavery that gradually broke down as confrontations over slavery became increasingly bitter.
  - b. As over-cultivation depleted arable land in the Southeast, slaveholders relocated their agricultural enterprises to the new Southwest, increasing sectional tensions over the institution of slavery and sparking a broadscale debate about how to set national goals, priorities, and strategies.

### **Period 5: (1844-1877)**

As the nation expanded and its population grew, regional tensions, especially over slavery, led to a civil war – the course and aftermath of which transformed American society.

**\*\* Only part of this period will be covered in this Unit.**

Key Concept 5.1: The United States became more connected with the world as it pursued an expansionist foreign policy in the Western hemisphere and emerged as the destination for many migrants from other countries.

1. Enthusiasm for U.S. territorial expansion, fueled by economic and national security interests and supported by claims of U.S. racial and cultural superiority, resulted in war, the opening of new markets, acquisition of new territory, and increased ideological conflicts.
  - a. The idea of Manifest Destiny, which asserted U.S. power in the Western Hemisphere and supported U.S. expansion westward, was built on a belief in white racial superiority and a sense of American cultural superiority, and helped to shape the era's political debates.
  - b. The acquisition of new territory in the West and the U.S. victory in the Mexican-American War were accompanied by a heated controversy over allowing or forbidding slavery in newly acquired territories.
  - c. The desire for access to western resources led to the environmental transformation of the region, new economic activities, and increased settlement in areas forcibly taken from American Indians.
  - d. U.S. interest in expanding trade led to economic, diplomatic, and cultural initiatives westward to Asia.
2. Westward expansion, migration to and within the United States, and the end of slavery reshaped North American boundaries and caused conflicts over American cultural identities, citizenship, and the question of extending and protecting rights for various groups of U.S. inhabitants.
  - a. Substantial numbers of new international migrants – who often lived in ethnic communities and retained their religion, language, and customs – entered the country prior to the Civil War, giving rise to a major, often

- violent nativist movement that was strongly anti-Catholic and aimed at limiting immigrants' cultural influence and political and economic power.
- b. Asian, African American, and white peoples sought new economic opportunities or religious refuge in the West, efforts that were boosted during and after the Civil War with the passage of new legislation promoting national economic development.
  - c. As the territorial boundaries of the United States expanded and the migrant population increased, U.S. government interaction and conflict with Hispanics and American Indians increased, altering these groups' cultures and ways of life and raising questions about their status and legal rights.

Key Concept 5.2: Intensified by expansion and deepening regional division, debates over slavery and other economic, cultural, and political issues led the nation into civil war.

1. The institution of slavery and its attendant ideological debates, along with regional economic and demographic changes, territorial expansion in the 1840s and 1850s, and cultural differences between the North and the South, all intensified sectionalism.
  - a. The North's expanding economy and its increasing reliance on a free-labor manufacturing economy contrasted with the South's dependence on an economic system characterized by slave-based agriculture and slow population growth.
  - b. Abolitionists, although a minority in the North, mounted a highly visible campaign against slavery, adopting strategies of resistance ranging from fierce arguments against the institution and assistance in helping slaves escape to willingness to use violence to achieve their goals.
  - c. States' rights, nullification, and racist stereotyping provided the foundation for the southern defense of slavery as a positive good.
2. Repeated attempts at political compromise failed to calm tensions over slavery and often made sectional tensions worse, breaking down the trust between sectional leaders and culminating in the bitter election of 1860, followed by the secession of southern states.
  - a. National leaders made a variety of proposals to resolve the issue of slavery in the territories, including the Compromise of 1850, the Kansas-Nebraska Act, and the *Dred Scott* decision, but these ultimately failed to reduce sectional conflict.