

# Us history from the constitution to andrew jackson essay examples

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America's history, from the Constitution to the presidency of Andrew Jackson, is full of fascinating social, political and cultural changes, all of which were vital components to making this country what it is today. All this started with the forming of the American Constitution, which has its own storied history stemming from previous attempts to create a governmental document for the new nation. The Articles of Confederation, Prohibition, and lack of voting rights for women and minorities presented the most important hurdles for the country to overcome in its infancy. Before the drafting of the Constitution, the Articles of Confederation were the official governing documents for the United States. However, they were fraught with issues – they placed far too great an emphasis on state's rights, including allowing them to print their own currency, making interstate trade nearly impossible. The overreliance on supermajorities in order to pass legislation also became a problem. With this in mind, the Articles were scrapped in favor of the more democratic Constitution we know today. One noticeable flaw that the Constitution had in its infancy was the lack of voting rights for blacks and women. At the time of ratification, only white men could vote for their senators, representatives, and presidents. This delay caused problems such as the suffrage movement and the Civil Rights movement. Luckily, amendments were created to offer these rights to these groups, but it should have happened much sooner to preserve the equality of the American people, and to prevent deeply-ingrained prejudices to form among races and genders, which leads to groups like the Ku Klux Klan forming. One other significant issue in these formative years of America was slavery, which dramatically affected (and defined) culture and society at that time.

During the Great Awakening of the 1700s, a cultural revolution was occurring in American society. A spiritual refreshment was taking place in America, revival of Christianity occurring on a great scale throughout the colonies. Regardless of denomination, whether Puritan or Dutch Reformed or Baptist, the Great Awakening increased interest in faith everywhere in America. Religion was becoming more and more of an integral part of Americans' lives, in New England and elsewhere. Nowhere did this movement have greater impact than in the Southern colonies, particularly those with larger African American populations.

In churches, African Americans were given more power and more religious personhood than they had as slaves. Often, Baptist churches would openly allow blacks to serve actively in congregations; in some instances, black preachers were common during this time. The presence of the church afforded blacks agency and freedom they did not receive on the plantation. During this time, the English hymn came to America, and this was blended with African musical styles among African Americans to form the early Negro spirituals. In this way, African Americans influenced church policy in very dramatic ways during the Great Awakening, injecting aspects of their culture into church culture.

In the South and elsewhere in the colonies that comprised America pre-Revolution, slavery was one of the most prominent economic institutions. Thirty percent of the wealth found in the South came from slaves, which was almost equal to the Southern land value at the time. This was contrasted with the nearly one percent of wealth in the Northern colonies that came from slaves. This substantial wealth that came from the South held

substantial sway over the creation of the Articles of Confederation. When the North attempted to tax slaves or limit the importation of slaves, the Southern delegates threatened to end the constitution; their slave-earned wealth and their steadfast commitment to hold onto it by any means necessary established slavery's influence over early American politics.

In the 1800s, America was at a crossroads - seeking to expand west of the Mississippi, its increasing power led it to make many interesting and controversial decisions along the way to establishing and maintaining its supremacy from the Pacific to the Atlantic. Relations with the Indians turned sour as America slowly but surely stripped them of their lands. The Market Revolution brought both innovation and health hazards to both male and female workers. In the meantime, the debate over slavery led to the secession of the Confederacy from the Union, leading to the bloodiest war in American history. All of these factors led to an increasing imperialism on the part of America, which sought to own all and control all. From expanding westward to preventing the secession of half the country from itself, the Union cemented its status as an empire.

The westward expansion of America saw the Native American people slowly but surely get crushed under the advanced technology and trickery of the Europeans. The United States government and its officials purposely made spurious deals to take the Cherokee land under threat of violence. This was part of American's plan for westward expansion - they needed to take care of the "Indian problem" as effectively as possible, using cunning to steal their land while inexorably crawling their way toward the Pacific.

This was the doing of Andrew Jackson, who was responsible for nine of

eleven treaties that removed southern tribes from their lands in the east, pushing them further west as they continued to expand - " their " right of occupancy" was subordinate to the United States' " right of discovery". Jackson's ideology was strongly focused toward the increase of power of the American people - he wanted to remove the chains that prevented opportunity for the lower classes to get ahead, and often discouraged legislation that would favor the upper class. These ideals led to the desire to create more opportunities for the American people, leading to the increased interest in westward expansion. Of course, America's desire to control others and increase its imperialistic control of whatever land and resources they could get their hands on in this period of American history was not limited to the Native American people.

The American Civil War was the culmination of a serious attempt by the Southern states of the Union to secede; the reasons for this decision were numerous, covering political, social and economic interests. Proponents of secession argued that the states had joined the Union voluntarily; therefore, they argued that states had the right to leave the Union. Before the 1860 presidential election, many Southerners had warned that if Lincoln won, the southern states would secede from the Union. In addition to that, in 1828 South Carolina experienced a sectional crisis during the presidency of Andrew Jackson, known as the Nullification Crisis, in which the Tariffs of 1828 and 1832 were not constitutional.

The Civil War was long fought and hard won by the Union, but President Lincoln was assassinated not long after that by pro-Confederacy rebels, leaving Andrew Jackson to ascend to the presidency. After the Union

defeated the Confederacy in the Civil War, many changes to the South came about through Reconstruction. The Constitution of 1866 was adopted as a condition for readmission to membership, but was overturned by the Reconstruction Acts passed by Congress. African Americans were given the right to vote and other rights as citizens. Federal troops were able to eliminate most of the "law whip", but at this point the "Invisible Empire" had done its job to intimidate Northerners. The white South, for many decades, openly violated Amendments. Wholesale deprivation of voting rights of blacks in the 1890s was achieved by intimidation, fraud, and deception. Among the various systems used were easy literacy tests, unfairly administered by whites for the benefit of illiterate whites.

The story of America up to this point was full of dramatic social, cultural and political changes. From the problems of the ratification of the Constitution, to the problem of slavery and the Great Awakening's effect on the black population, pre-Civil War times were eventful and dramatic. With the tensions and factors stemming from the slave problem (as well as other issues), the Civil War threatened to tear apart the country. Once that was finished, the painful Reconstruction period began under the administration of President Andrew Jackson.

## **Works Cited**

Carnes, Mark A., and John A. Garraty. *The American Nation: A History of the United States (Vol. 1: to 1877)*. 14th edition.