

Essay on a brief history of the us

[War](#), [World War 2](#)



1. After the Civil War ended in 1865, Reconstruction began. This was a period of difficulty and strife among the American people, as they had just finished a bloody years-long war against their own people. What's more, it had ended in the freeing of the slaves, creating a whole new subset of people who had to be accommodated and given the freedoms they had fought so hard to earn. The remnants of the Confederacy resented the Union's victory, and so Reconstruction was a very arduous time. Dissension was so high that Abraham Lincoln, the President of the United States at the time, was assassinated by an actor named John Wilkes Booth.

As time went on, America became a nation of immigrants, as the beginning of the 20th century saw the beginning of the Industrial Revolution and a surge in people of all nations immigrating to that country for its many opportunities. Italian, Irish, Spanish and Eastern European populations in that country grew, and industrialization led to the creation of many modern innovations, such as the telephone, the car, and the airplane. At the same time, working conditions for immigrants and lower class workers were atrocious, and it was not until sweeping reforms were made that it was thought to make a difference, seeing the start of unions and safety regulations, not to mention the end of child labour.

In the 1910s, World War I broke out, and America joined the Allied forces against Germany. After three years of bloody fighting, the Allies eventually won, spelling victory for American, British and French forces alike. In 1918, America prohibited the sale and consumption of alcohol, starting a three year long fight against booze in the cities, seeing the beginnings of the Italian mafia, and a rapid change in culture. Soon after, however, the Great

Depression hit America, sending them into a financial morass that left millions homeless and destitute. The stock market had crashed, leaving everyone penniless. Eventually, Prohibition was repealed.

Once World War II broke out, America hesitated in involving itself, mostly due to its own domestic troubles. However, in 1941, the Japanese forces attacked Pearl Harbor, a naval base, killing hundreds in a preemptive strike. This spurred the American forces to action, and they once again joined the Allied cause. After more years of fighting, the Allies won again, but not before stimulating the economy due to wartime production and manufacturing; the war also saw the creation of the atomic bomb, a powerful and devastating weapon that would ensure America's place in the world as a superpower.

From the 40's to the 80's, American would engage in a Cold War with Russia. Highlights of this conflict include the Cuban Missile Crisis in the 60's, McCarthyism and his search for Communists everywhere in American society, and the controversial Vietnam War, where America eventually withdrew in defeat after massive public outcry and a lack of tactical advantage.

In the 1960s, the counterculture movement started, coinciding with the Civil Rights Movement led by black leaders like Martin Luther King, Jr. - they sought to have the right to vote, to desegregate schools and shops, and have the same freedoms as whites. Rock music and the hippie movement also found their time in the sixties, as Vietnam protests and a 'free love' culture began to rise. Recreational drug use and casual sex were the staples

of the hippie movement, and gatherings such as Woodstock gathered some of the most radical, innovative musicians of the time, like Jimi Hendrix and Janis Joplin.

Free love of the 60s and 70s gave way to capitalism in the 80s, with the advent of the computer and a further push towards industry and technology. The Cold War was in full swing in its final decade, until in the late 80s or early 90s peace was reached between the two nations, resulting in tearing down the Berlin Wall.

Through a relatively peaceful 90s, the 21st century began on a tragic note for America, as radical Muslim terrorists attacked the World Trade Center of New York City on September 11, 2001. This resulted in a dramatic shift in policy for America - it was by far the most devastating attack on their soil in history. It resulted in the start of the War on Terror, resulting in invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq and a forever changed culture.

Some major themes of US history include war, strife, innovation, and power. From their history, it can be inferred that they strive to maintain their status as the dominant superpower in the world, and often that comes with problems both from the outside (terrorism, attacks) and the inside (paranoia, racism, protests). I'd say that, in light of 9/11, things are generally getting worse, due to the culture of fear that event established.

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I learned a great deal of this from the news, the media, books, movies and music. A lot of it came from popular culture, and its impression of America.

American films and songs give me my primary picture of their culture and history. I would listen to Elvis songs or see movies with Marilyn Monroe in them, and from that I would gauge what their culture was like at that point in time. I also would see popular culture references in modern movies from America, and I would try to figure out what they were referencing to gain that insight into their history. From that, I often assume that I am not getting the full picture, as I have not experienced life in America, but I cannot imagine it is dramatically different from how we live here.

The narrative I have in my head of America, as written down here, is often framed by the wars they participated in. Naturally, it is more difficult to remember times when there wasn't conflict, but it seems like America has perpetually been at arms with one country or another. At the same time, I cannot fault them for a lot of that, as often they are the victims of unprovoked attacks (Pearl Harbor, 9/11) that they feel require retaliation. The questions I ask myself having realized where I get my information are "is this really an accurate portrayal of Americans?" "Would an American see the history of his country in that way?" and "What kinds of things could America have done differently to achieve a different outcome?" I am not really sure if this is the way Americans see the history of their country; it may very well include many more instances of peace, innovation and wonder.

However, these are the landmark events that I have come to recognize and associate with America. This history makes me wonder if there could have been a more peaceful way to solve their problems; then again, I also understand the position they were in, attempting to respond to grave threats

to their security. Being such a diverse people, they have had so many problems with granting freedoms to its citizens, as well as dealing with crippling economic recessions. I believe the narrative I have established makes sense, but it is framed by what military or civil conflict they are participating in at that given time.