

Chapter 1: The Nation's Beginnings

Section 1: Many Cultures Meet:

The first Americans came from northeastern Asia between 15,000 and 40,000 years ago. The American Indians expanded southward, filling the continents of North and South America. They developed diverse cultures as they adapted to the different climates they inhabited. However, they shared many traits. An extended family with a single ancestor became a clan. Several clans made up a band of Indians. The Indians learned how to grow crops, which expanded the food supply and allowed the population to grow.

In the fifteenth century, Europeans began to expand by sea. The Portuguese took the lead. They reached West Africa below the Sahara. There, they expanded the slave trade. After 1500, colonial plantations created a demand for slaves in the Americas. Over the next three centuries, slave traders took at least 11 million Africans across the Atlantic. The transatlantic slave trade was called the Middle Passage. It weakened the West African economy while making European merchants and empires rich.

In 1492, Spain sponsored a voyage by the Italian sailor Christopher Columbus. He hoped to reach the Indies by sailing west, across the Atlantic. He explored several Caribbean islands, thinking that he had reached the Indies.

The Spanish quickly conquered a huge empire in Central and South America. The Spanish invaders were known as conquistadores. The conquistadores had many advantages, including horses and steel weapons. They also carried European diseases. Native Americans had no immunity to these diseases. Indians died by the thousands. These diseases made it easier for the Europeans to conquer and colonize North and South America.

The colonizers also introduced new animals into the Americas. In addition, they took American products back to Europe. This exchange of goods and ideas between Europe and the Americas is called the Columbian Exchange.

Section 2: The American Revolution

Spain established colonies in the present-day Southwest and Florida, where forts called presidios were set up for protection and missions were set up to convert Native Americans to Christianity. The French established colonies in Canada and along the Mississippi River valley in Louisiana.

In 1607, the English established their first enduring settlement at Jamestown in Virginia. The Virginia colonists elected a legislature known as the House of Burgesses. To the north, the English established a cluster of colonies called New England. Most of the colonists there were devout Protestants called "Puritans." They adopted the Mayflower Compact, which provided a framework for self-government. The English developed other colonies between New England and Virginia and south of Virginia.

The English colonists brought ideas about democracy and government with them to America. During the 1700s, ideas based on the Enlightenment, a philosophy that taught that human reason could solve

all problems, circulated among well-educated colonists. In the 1740s, concern about more rational religious services and decreasing church attendance led to a religious movement called the Great Awakening. The rise of new organized churches resulting from this movement increased tolerance of religious differences.

Between 1689 and 1763, the British and French fought a series of costly wars. The British Parliament wanted the colonists to pay new taxes to help the empire. The colonists resisted the taxes, asserting their rights as Englishmen. They cited the Magna Carta (1215), which limited the power of the king, and the English Bill of Rights (1689), which blocked the king from levying taxes without the permission of Parliament. The colonists would pay taxes levied only by their own elected assemblies. War broke out between the colonies and the British in 1775, at Concord, Massachusetts. In 1776, the 13 colonies adopted the Declaration of Independence, drafted by Thomas Jefferson of Virginia, who was greatly influenced by the Enlightenment idea of people's natural rights. The war continued until 1783, when the American colonists under the command of George Washington finally defeated the British army.

Section 3: The Constitution

In 1776, the former American colonies became states. Each state created a constitution and set up a government. Most state constitutions included a bill of rights, which listed the freedoms guaranteed by the state government.

In 1781, the 13 states adopted the Articles of Confederation, the first federal constitution. Under the Articles, power remained with the states. Because the government could not levy taxes, it could not pay its huge war debt. It also could not defend the American frontier. The Spanish tried to constrain western American settlements by closing the Port of New Orleans.

In May 1787, a convention was called to change the Articles of Confederation. The small states wanted the United States to stay a loose confederation. However, James Madison of Virginia advocated a strong national union. The delegates compromised by creating a bicameral legislature: a House of Representatives and a Senate.

Before the new Constitution would become law, 9 of the 13 states had to ratify, or officially approve, it. Supporters of the Constitution were known as Federalists. They wanted to create a strong central government. Opponents of the Constitution were known as Antifederalists. The Antifederalists thought the Constitution gave too much power to the national government. They also opposed the Constitution because it did not have a bill of rights. The Federalists promised to add a bill of rights. In 1789, Congress approved the federal Bill of Rights.

The Constitution divided power between the states and the nation. This division is known as federalism. The Constitution defined separate executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government. This division was meant to ensure a separation of powers. A system of checks and balances prevented one branch from taking control of the government. In addition, the founders worded the Constitution to permit flexibility. The Constitution has been amended 27 times.

Section 4: The New Republic

After the Revolutionary War, Secretary of the Treasury Alexander Hamilton created a financial plan to pay off the war debt. Critics from the South thought that it favored northeastern merchants by compensating them with tax dollars.

The French Revolution in 1789 started a war between Britain and France. The United States declared its neutrality but continued to trade with Britain and France. The British navy then began seizing U.S. merchant ships trading with French colonies. To avoid war, John Jay negotiated Jay's Treaty between Britain and the United States. Congress then passed the Alien and Sedition acts in 1798. The Alien Act made it more difficult for immigrants to become citizens. The Sedition Act made it a crime for citizens to publicly discredit the federal government.

Jefferson was elected President in 1800. In 1803, the Supreme Court enacted judicial review. This was the power to decide whether federal laws were constitutional. Also in 1803, Jefferson bought the Louisiana Purchase territory from France. It nearly doubled the size of the United States.

The British navy started seizing American merchant ships again. They also seized sailors from U.S. ships. This practice was known as impressment. As a result, Jefferson asked Congress to declare an embargo. It would stop trade by ordering American ships to stay in port. By 1812, war with Britain could no longer be avoided. The War of 1812 ended in 1815 with a U.S. victory.

The invention of the cotton gin, a machine that made cotton cheaper and faster to produce, led to a surge in cotton production in the South.

In 1823, President Monroe issued the Monroe Doctrine. It declared that European monarchies had no business interfering with American republics. In return, the United States promised to stay out of European affairs.