

The American Yawp

VOLUME I: to 1877

Discussion Questions

1. Indigenous America

- How did Indian culture change over time?
- What were the key differences in how Native Americans and Europeans understood property?
- What motivated European exploration and colonization?
- What is the Columbian Exchange, and how did it change the world?
- How did Native Americans react to the arrival of Europeans?

2. Colliding Cultures

- Why did the Spanish, Dutch, French, and English treat Native peoples differently?
- What were some of the global effects of the colonization of the Americas?
- What role did missionaries play in Spanish colonization?
- Why did England want to create colonies?
- What explains the differences between Virginia and New England?

3. British North America

- How did political turmoil in 17th century Britain influence life in the colonies?
- What was the relationship between religion and government in the colonies?
- How and why did Virginia shift from indentured servitude to slavery?
- How did the trans-Atlantic slave trade work?
- How did geography influence life for enslaved people?

4. Colonial Society

- What caused the Consumer Revolution, and how did it change American life?
- How did the antislavery movement begin in North America?
- What were the causes and consequences of the Great Awakening?
- What role did American colonists play in the Seven Years War?
- How did Indian life change in the 18th century?

5. The American Revolution

- What were some of the differing ideas about empire and colonialism within England and the American colonies?
- How did England try to raise money from the colonists?
- Why did the United States declare independence?

- How did the United States win the war?
- In what ways did the Revolutionary War disrupt life for the people living in North America?

6. A New Nation

- How radical was the American Revolution?
- What were the successes and failures of the Articles of Confederation?
- What compromises were made at the Constitutional Convention?
- How did the French and Haitian Revolutions affect the United States?
- Was the United States founded as a Christian nation?

7. The Early Republic

- Did the United States draw more from the vision of Alexander Hamilton or Thomas Jefferson?
- What was Republican Motherhood and how did it change understandings of gender?
- How did slave rebellions, in the U.S. and beyond, change the life and laws of the nation?
- How did Native American nations interact with the U.S. in the early period?
- How did the War of 1812 change American life?

8. The Market Revolution

- What was the most significant technological advancement in the early nineteenth century, and why is it more important than the others?
- How and why did slavery disappear in the North?
- What major migrations reshaped American life?
- How did economic change influence gender roles?
- How did workers organize to improve their position?

9. Democracy in America

- How did American democracy change in the 1820s?
- How did the rise and fall of the national bank influence American life?
- What role did tariffs play in American politics?
- What issues motivated new political parties?
- Is Andrew Jackson's presidency best understood as tragedy, triumph, or irony?

10. Religion and Reform

- What was the Second Great Awakening?
- How did new religious movements respond to changing economic and gender relations?
- In what ways did religion inspire Americans to try to solve social problems?
- Why did antislavery Americans begin to demand the immediate abolition of slavery?
- How did the movement for women's rights form?

11. The Cotton Revolution

- Why was the South at the center of American commerce and diplomacy?
- How did white Southerners justify slavery?
- How did enslaved people endure their oppression?
- What were the effects of Nat Turner's Rebellion?
- How did gender affect southern society and women in the South?

12. Manifest Destiny

- What beliefs characterized Manifest Destiny?
- Why did the United States go to war against Mexico?
- What were the key principles of American foreign policy prior to the Civil War?
- Was the early United States an empire?
- Did American growth help or hinder national unity?

13. The Sectional Crisis

- How did policy makers compromise over the question of slavery in the West?
- What did the various political parties stand for in the 1850s?
- What was more significant, the Dred Scott decision or the Kansas and Nebraska Act?
- How did conflict over states' rights contribute to sectional conflict?
- Why did the South secede?

14. The Civil War

- What did the Confederacy stand for?
- What were the international ramifications of the Civil War?
- How and why did slavery end in the United States?
- How did the Civil War transform American government?
- Why did the Union win the war?

15. Reconstruction

- What important pieces of legislation were passed during Reconstruction, and how did they change American life?
- How did African Americans respond to emancipation?
- What role did terrorism play in Reconstruction?
- Why did Reconstruction end?
- Was Reconstruction a success or failure?