

A Level History – The Making of a Superpower, The USA 1865-1975 – Paper 1

The course begins with America emerging from a bitter and bloody Civil War which has taken place from 1861 until 1865. Four million African Americans find themselves freed from slavery and for nearly all Americans life has been turned upside down.

One of the most important things for you to understand is that America as you know it today was completely different to the America we find at the start of the course. The Western Frontier still hadn't been won and America did not own all of the territory which now makes up the United States of America.

The work below will hopefully give you an insight into what America was like before 1865 and introduce some of the key terms and people that you will come across.

Task 1

You are going to be using GCSE Pod in order to complete some research into life in America before 1865. Go to the section where you would have found the pods on the Cold War topics: AQA History: Paper 1 Understanding the Modern World. Choose the topic America, 1840-1895: Expansion and Consolidation.

You are going to use the podcasts to research and make notes about the following:

A. Expansion: Opportunities and Challenges

C. Consolidation: Forging a nation

Overall these podcasts and the notes you will be making will give you an insight into how America was very different in 1865 when we start the course. It will make you realise how far America has come to be the superpower it is today.

A. Expansion: Opportunities and Challenges

Listen to the podcasts in this section in order and answer the following questions:

1. What was difficult about living in America in 1840?
2. Who were the Plains Indians?
3. Describe the key features of how the Plains Indians lived.
4. How were the Great Plains viewed in early American history? Why were they viewed like this?
5. What does the phrase Manifest Destiny mean?
6. Who were the Mormons and where did they settle?
7. Why did people decide to move West? What was it about the Western Frontier that

attracted them?

8. What was the Californian Gold Rush and what impact did it have?

9. What was the Homestead Act of 1862?

10. Who were the Pioneer Migrant Farmers?

C. Consolidation: Forging the Nation

Listen to the podcasts in this section in order and answer the following questions:

1. Who were the Homesteaders?

2. What problems were there for farmers on the Plains?

3. What happened during the Great Sioux War? Who was involved and what were the consequences?

4. Explain what happened during the Wounded Knee Massacre in 1890.

5. When were African Americans freed from slavery?

6. What does the term Reconstruction mean? What did the different states of America have to do after the Civil War?

7. Who were the main political groups in America after the Civil War? What were each groups aims?

8. What are the rights of the individual states in America? How is the system of governing in America different to Britain?

Task 2:

Complete the following research activities to get a head start on the content that will be taught at the very start of the course:

1. Complete a fact file on Abraham Lincoln – what was he best known for – what years was he president etc.
2. What is the US Constitution and what are the amendments?
3. What do the 13th, 14th and 15th Amendments state?
4. What was the Freedmen's Bureau? What did it do?
5. Create a fact file on Andrew Johnson and Ulysses S Grant – the next two presidents studied.

Further reading

If you want to do some further reading we recommend but this is not essential at this point:

Hugh Brogan: The Penguin History of the United States of America, published by Penguin in 2001, ISBN 014025255X, currently available on Amazon for £11.99 new or there are used copies available.

Videos

The below video gives you an insight into the lack of unity in America in 1860. John Green does a

number of these videos which might be worth checking out:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=roNmeOOJCDY&list=PL8dPuuaLjXtMwmepBjTSG593eG7ObzO7s&index=18>