Period 4: 1800-1848

AP United States History

Jefferson's Era and the Courts

Period 4 runs from **1800** to **1848**. Three things happen at once: democracy widens, the economy transforms, and the country expands - and each one deepens the argument over slavery.

National parties continued to debate the **tariff** , the national **bank** , and **internal improvements** (federally funded roads and canals). These were arguments about how much power the national government should have.

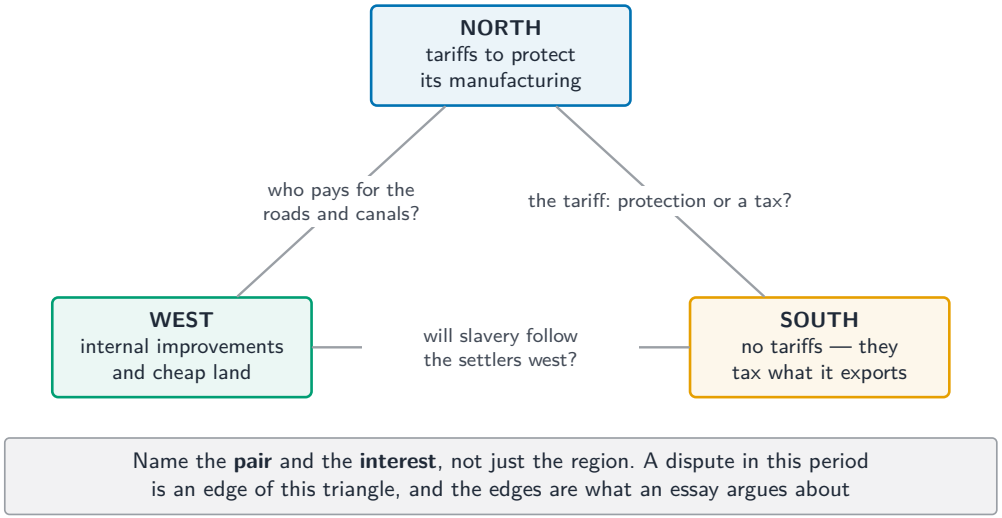
The Supreme Court settled part of that argument. Its decisions established the **primacy of the judiciary** in determining the meaning of the Constitution - the principle of **judicial review** - and generally strengthened federal power over the states.

Expansion began early: after the **Louisiana Purchase** , the government sought influence and control over the West, sending expeditions and negotiating with American Indian nations.

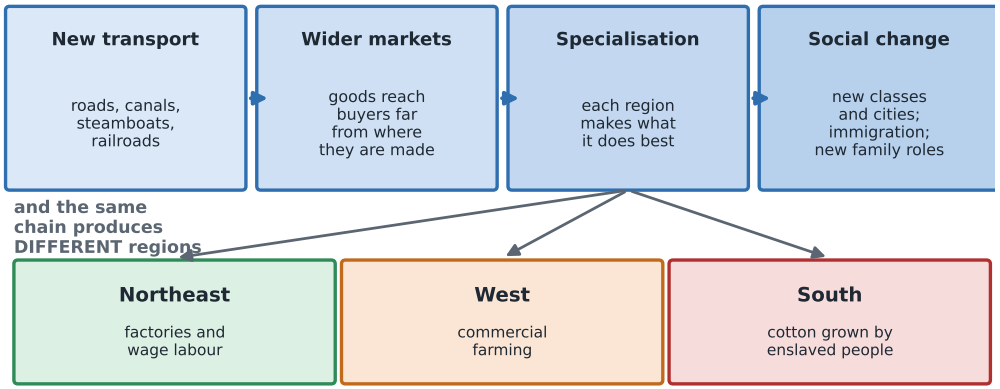
Politics, Regions, and the World Stage

As the country grew, **regional interests** diverged. The North favoured tariffs to protect manufacturing; the South opposed them as a tax on its exports; the West wanted internal improvements and cheap land. Nearly every political dispute of the period maps onto that triangle.

Abroad, the United States struggled to create an **independent global presence** . It fought the **War of 1812** 1812 , expanded foreign trade, and in the **Monroe Doctrine** declared the Western Hemisphere closed to further European colonisation - an assertion of influence well beyond the country's actual power at the time.



The Market Revolution



specialisation ties the regions together in trade while making them economically different

which is why expansion turned into a national crisis

The market revolution is a chain, not a list: each link is what turns the previous one into a change in how people lived

New **transportation systems** - roads, **canals** such as the Erie, steamboats, and then **railroads** - together with new technologies dramatically expanded manufacturing and agricultural output.

The mechanism is what the exam wants. Cheaper transport widened **markets** ; wider markets let regions **specialise** in what they did best; specialisation

tied the regions together in trade while making them economically different from one another.

The results by region: **factory production** and wage labour in the Northeast, **commercial farming** in the West, and in the South an intensified reliance on **cotton** grown by enslaved people.

Society and Culture in the Market Revolution

The market revolution changed how people lived, not just what they produced.

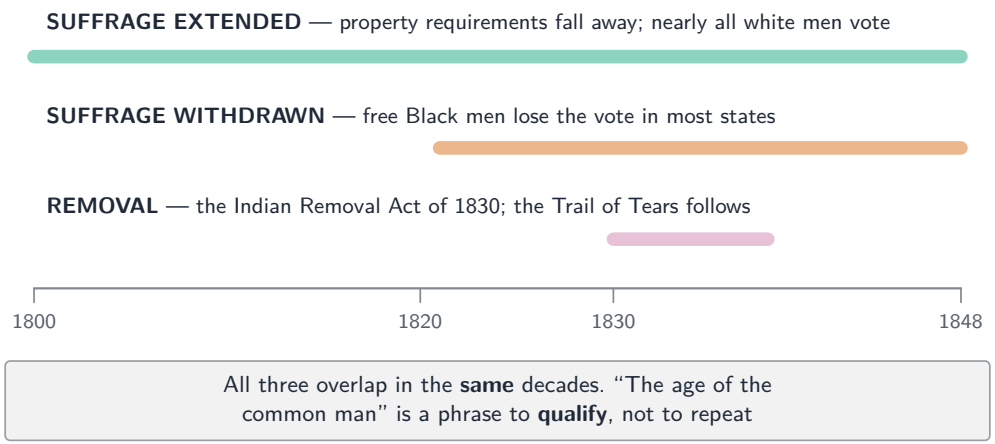
- Work moved out of the household and into **factories** and offices, producing a growing **middle class** and a new **wage-earning working class** .
- A **separation of home and workplace** encouraged an ideology assigning women a domestic role, even as many women worked for wages in mills.
- **Immigration** rose sharply, especially from Ireland and Germany, producing both a larger labour force and organised **nativist** hostility.
- **Urbanisation** accelerated, with the social problems that followed.

Expanding Democracy and Jackson

The transition to a **more participatory democracy** came through expanding **suffrage** - the removal of property qualifications for white men - along with new campaign styles and mass political parties.

The limits matter as much as the expansion: this widening applied to white men, while free African Americans in several states **lost** voting rights in the same decades, and women had none.

Andrew Jackson embodied and tested the new politics. His presidency featured a war on the national bank, the **nullification crisis** over the tariff, and the **Indian Removal Act** - the forced removal of southeastern nations along what became known as the **Trail of Tears** .



Religion, Reform, and American Culture

Democratic and individualistic beliefs, responses to rationalism, market changes and greater social and geographical mobility contributed to the **Second Great Awakening** among Protestants. Revival emphasised personal salvation and the possibility of moral improvement. Reformers formed **voluntary organizations** to change behaviour and improve society.

Try it – link belief to action. Temperance sought to reduce or end alcohol use. Explain how belief in moral improvement could encourage a reformer to campaign for temperance. Why is naming the revival and movement not enough to explain a connection?

Worked link. If people can change morally, harmful behaviour need not be accepted as permanent. Some reformers joined voluntary groups to persuade people to change. Temperance campaigns applied this approach to alcohol use and its perceived social harms. **Abolitionist and antislavery movements** challenged slavery, and a **women's rights movement** sought greater equality and opportunity. Revival was one influence, alongside rights arguments, reform experience and social conditions; the campaigns did not all have one identical cause.

Try it – methods and results. This evidence paraphrases the CED's source descriptions, not the original documents. In 1845, Dorothea Dix addressed Pennsylvania's legislature about conditions in jails and poorhouses while advocating humane treatment and asylum reform. The **Seneca Falls Convention** of 1848 expressed demands for greater equality and opportunities for women. Use Dix to test the claim that voluntary reform meant reform without the state. Why does a convention's demand not prove equality had already been achieved?

Worked distinction. Addressing a legislature sought public action: reformers outside government could try to change state policy or institutions. "Voluntary" did not

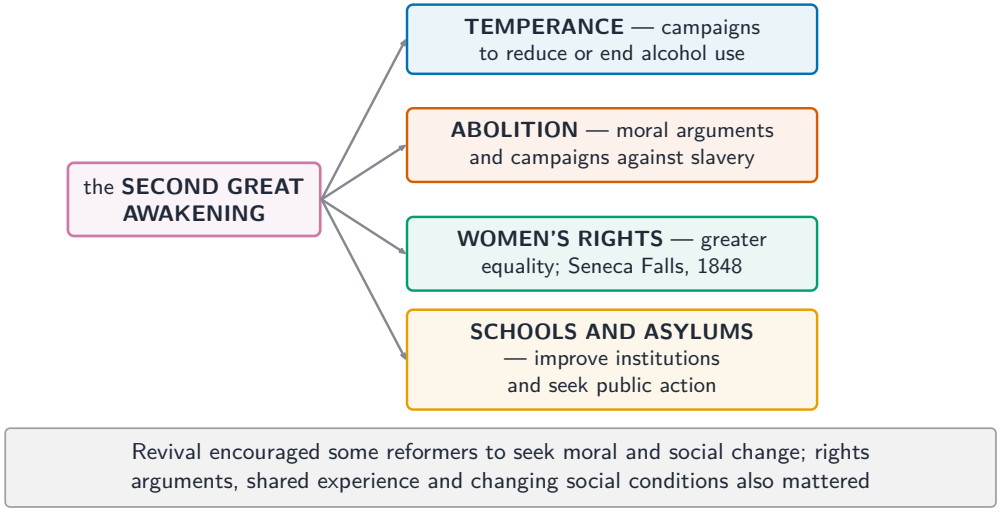
mean refusing state involvement. Seneca Falls expressed activists' aims, not the removal of all legal and political barriers. Likewise, northern emancipation increased the free African American population while many state governments continued restricting African Americans' rights. Separate aims, methods and outcomes.

Exam transfer – 2024 AP US History, Set 1, Question 1(a), adapted practice. Teaching paraphrases of the exam's interpretations: Melder stresses religious and reform activity bringing women together, giving them experience and encouraging challenges to restrictions. Lerner stresses class differences and middle-class women's frustration with political exclusion. Describe one major difference. Consult the full exam excerpts for the original task; these summaries are not quotations.

Teacher-written model. Melder emphasises how experience in religious and reform movements brought women together and encouraged activism. Lerner emphasises class differences and middle-class women's frustration at exclusion from political power.

Why this fits. The response contrasts causes each historian stresses. The official scheme accepts reform participation versus political-equality motivations, or unity versus class divisions. Saying both discuss women does not identify a difference. The contrast is one of emphasis, not proof that either historian denied every other factor. This is our teaching response, not an official sample or a guarantee of credit.

Ideas about national identity increasingly found expression in **art, literature, and architecture** 、 , while various groups maintained distinctive cultures of their own.



African Americans and the Society of the South

Antislavery effort in the South was largely limited to **unsuccessful rebellions** by enslaved people, which were met with harsher laws and tighter control.

Enslaved and free African Americans created **communities and strategies** to protect themselves: family and kinship networks, religious practice, music, and covert resistance - a continuation of the pattern from Period 2.

In the South, although the majority of southerners owned no enslaved persons, most supported the system. As overcultivation depleted arable land in the Southeast, slaveholders **relocated westward** , carrying slavery into new territory - which is precisely what made westward expansion a national crisis rather than a regional one.

Causation in Period 4

The period's reasoning skill is **causation**. The strongest chain to hold: the market revolution and westward expansion were engines of growth, and both drove the sectional conflict that Period 5 resolves by war.

Worked example (a real AP exam question). The 2023 exam set the long essay *"Evaluate the extent to which commercial development changed United States society from 1800 to 1855."* A high-scoring thesis takes a position on *how much*, and names the areas of change: *"Commercial development transformed United States society to a great extent between 1800 and 1855, creating a wage-earning working class and a distinct middle class in the North and drawing the West into national markets, though in the South it deepened rather than displaced an existing slave-based agricultural order."* Notice the shape: **Evaluate the extent** rewards a qualified position - "to a great extent, though…" - because that structure lets the essay use evidence on both sides. A thesis that merely says commercial development "changed society a lot" cannot be argued.

Exam tips

- Learn the market revolution as a **chain**: transport → wider markets → specialisation → different regional economies → social change.
- Give the **regional triangle** (North, South, West) when explaining a political dispute; tariff, bank, and internal improvements all fit it.
- Democracy expanded **for white men** while free Black men lost rights in several states. Saying so is what turns a description into an evaluation.
- Explain a link from the **Second Great Awakening** to reform through belief, organisation and action, rather than treating revival as the single cause.
- Southern westward migration matters because it **carried slavery west**, turning expansion into the central national conflict.
- On **Evaluate the extent** prompts, qualify your position. "To a great extent, although…" is the structure the rubric rewards.

Vocabulary card meanings

bank: A chartered institution that held deposits, issued notes, and made loans. internal improvements: Federally or state funded roads, canals, and later railways. primacy of the judiciary: The claim that courts have the last word on the meaning of the law. judicial review: The power of courts to strike down laws that conflict with the Constitution. Louisiana Purchase: The 1803 acquisition of a vast territory from France. regional interests: Aims that differed among North, South, and West. independent global presence: A foreign policy that tried not to depend on a European patron. War of 1812: The war between the United States and Britain that confirmed independence in practice. Monroe Doctrine: The 1823 warning that European powers should not recolonise the Americas. transportation systems: Roads, canals, and railways that linked regions. canals: Artificial waterways, such as the Erie, built for freight and passengers. factory production: Making goods with machines and wage labour gathered in one workplace. commercial farming: Growing crops mainly for sale, not only for the household. cotton: The fibre crop that expanded plantation slavery in the South. wage-earning working class: People who lived by selling their labour for pay. Immigration: The arrival of people from abroad who settled in the country. nativist: Hostile to immigrants and favouring people born in the country. Urbanisation: The growth of cities as a share of where people lived. more participatory democracy: Politics in which more white men could vote and hold office. Andrew Jackson: The president associated with expanded white male democracy and Indian removal. nullification crisis: South Carolina's attempt to void a federal tariff inside the state. Indian Removal Act: The 1830 law that pushed eastern Indigenous nations west of the Mississippi. Trail of Tears: The deadly forced march of the Cherokee and others to Indian Territory. Second Great Awakening: An early nineteenth-century wave of Protestant revival and reform. voluntary organizations: Associations people joined freely to pursue a moral or social aim. Temperance: The movement to reduce or ban alcoholic drink. Abolitionist and antislavery movements: Campaigns that demanded an immediate or gradual end to slavery. women's rights movement: Organising for women's legal and political equality. Seneca Falls Convention: The 1848 meeting that issued a declaration of women's rights. art, literature, and architecture: Cultural works through which Americans defined a national identity. unsuccessful rebellions: Uprisings by enslaved people that were defeated. communities and strategies: The families, culture, and tactics enslaved people used to endure and resist. relocated westward: Moved toward the interior, whether by choice or by force.