

AP United States History

Every topic handout in one volume

exercises.lol

Contents

1. Period 1: 1491-1607	2
2. Period 2: 1607-1754	8
3. Period 3: 1754-1800	13
4. Period 4: 1800-1848	19
5. Period 5: 1844-1877	25
6. Period 6: 1865-1898	31
7. Period 7: 1890-1945	37
8. Period 8: 1945-1980	43
9. Period 9: 1980-Present	48

Period 1: 1491-1607

AP United States History

Native American Societies Before Contact

Period 1 runs from **1491** to **1607** - from the eve of European contact to the founding of Jamestown. It exists to explain what the Americas were like *before* Europeans arrived, and what happened when three worlds met.

North America in 1491 held hundreds of distinct societies. They differed because they adapted to different environments, and the CED groups them by region:

- In the **Southwest**, the spread of **maize** cultivation northward from present-day Mexico supported permanent settlement, **advanced irrigation**, and greater social complexity.
- In the **Great Basin** and the western **Great Plains**, dry conditions produced largely **mobile lifestyles**.
- In the **Northeast**, the **Mississippi River Valley**, and along the **Atlantic seaboard**, societies developed **mixed agricultural and hunter-gatherer economies**, which favoured permanent villages.
- In the **Northwest** and present-day **California**, abundant ocean resources allowed settled communities without farming.

The pattern to hold on to is **adaptation**: the environment shaped the society, and the society reshaped the environment.

REGION	ENVIRONMENT	WHAT IT PRODUCED
Southwest	maize spreads north from Mexico	permanent settlement, advanced irrigation
Great Basin & western Plains	dry conditions	largely mobile lifestyles
Northeast, Mississippi Valley, Atlantic seaboard	mixed farming and hunting-gathering	permanent villages
Northwest & California	abundant ocean resources	settled communities WITHOUT farming

ADAPTATION — the environment shaped the society, and the society reshaped the environment

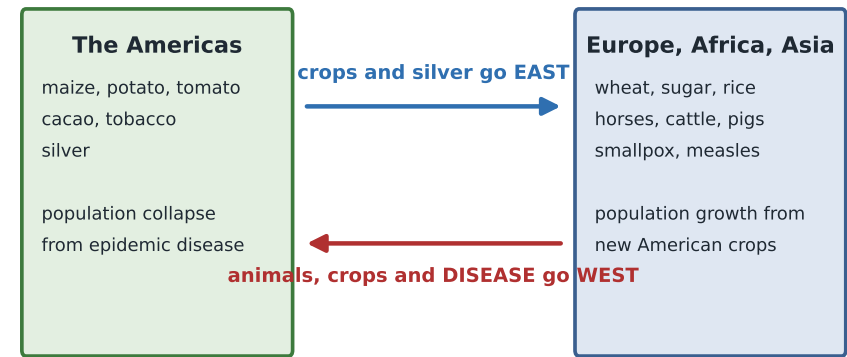


Why Europeans Crossed the Atlantic

European exploration was driven by a search for **new sources of wealth**, expanded trade routes, and the spread of **Christianity**. Spain and Portugal moved first, and Spain's American empire followed.

Two changes made the voyages possible: improvements in **maritime technology**, and more organised methods of financing trade, especially the **joint-stock company**, which spread the risk of a voyage across many investors.

The Columbian Exchange



disease → demographic collapse → labour shortage → encomienda → Atlantic slave trade

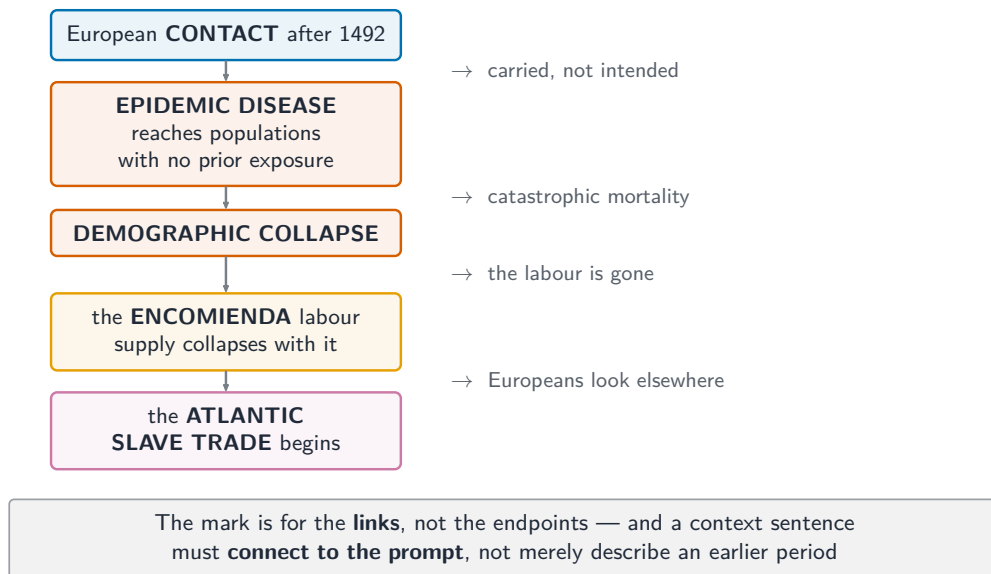
the causal chain Period 1 exists to explain

The Columbian Exchange moved crops, animals, people and disease in both directions, with very different consequences on each side

The **Columbian Exchange** is the transfer of plants, animals, people, and diseases between the Americas and the rest of the world. It is the single most important development of Period 1, because almost everything else follows from it.

Moving **east** to Europe: American crops such as **maize** and the **potato** raised nutrition and helped drive **European population growth**. American **silver** reshaped global trade.

Moving **west** to the Americas: European animals, crops, and - decisively - **epidemic disease**. Populations with no prior exposure suffered catastrophic mortality, and this **demographic collapse** accompanied and enabled Spanish conquest.

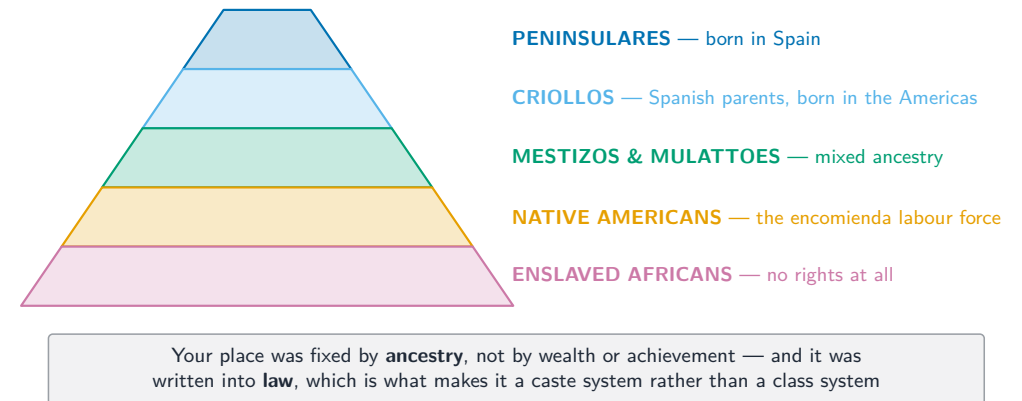


Labour, Slavery, and Caste in Spanish America

Spain built an economy that needed labour it did not have.

The **encomienda system** granted Spanish colonists the right to extract labour from Native American communities to support plantation-based agriculture and **mining**. When that labour collapsed with the population, Europeans turned elsewhere: traders **partnered with some West African groups** who already practised slavery to forcibly extract enslaved people, beginning the **Atlantic slave trade**.

Spain then organised the resulting society formally. The **caste system** defined the status of every group - Europeans, Native Americans, Africans, and people of mixed ancestry - and fixed rights and obligations by category.



Worldviews in Conflict

Europeans and Native Americans held **divergent worldviews** on religion, gender roles, family, land use, and power. Two ideas about land were especially incompatible: European **private property** against Native American systems of shared use.

The early years were shaped by **mutual misunderstanding**. As European demands on land and labour grew, Native peoples **resisted** - through accommodation, alliance, trade, and armed conflict.

Contact also started an argument *inside* Europe. Extended contact with Native Americans and Africans fostered a **debate among European religious and political leaders** about how non-Europeans should be treated and what rights they held - a debate that produced justifications for conquest as well as criticisms of it.

Thinking Like a Historian in Period 1

Every AP question about Period 1 is really a question about **causation** or **context**.

- **Contextualization** means placing a development in the broader circumstances that produced it. Period 1 supplies the context for almost every later question about colonisation.
- **Causation** asks what produced a change and what followed from it. The Columbian Exchange is the clearest chain in the whole course: disease caused demographic collapse, which caused a labour shortage, which drove the Atlantic slave trade.

Worked example (a real AP exam question). The 2023 exam set the long essay “Evaluate the extent to which the growth of transatlantic trade changed British North American colonial society.” Period 1 is not the answer to this question, but it earns the **contextualization** point that opens it: “Transatlantic trade grew out of the Columbian Exchange begun after 1492, which linked the Americas, Europe and West Africa in a single Atlantic system and established the plantation agriculture and coerced labour that later colonial trade depended on.” Notice the shape: **Evaluate the extent to which** wants a thesis that takes a position on *how much*, and the context sentence must connect to the prompt rather than simply describe an earlier period. A paragraph of unconnected background earns nothing.

Exam tips

- Period 1 is short but supplies **context** for later questions. Learn it as the origin of the Atlantic system, not as a list of dates.
- The strongest causal chain to memorise: **disease → demographic collapse → labour shortage → encomienda → Atlantic slave trade**.
- Name specific regions when describing Native societies. “Native Americans farmed” is too general; the Southwest, Great Basin, Northeast, and Northwest each had a distinct adaptation.
- Keep the **Columbian Exchange** two-directional. Answers that only describe what Europe gained miss half the concept.
- **Encomienda** is a labour system, not a land grant, and the Spanish **caste system** is a social hierarchy defined by ancestry.
- For any prompt, identify the **task verb** first: describe, explain, compare, or evaluate the extent. Each earns points differently.

Period 2: 1607-1754

AP United States History

Four Colonizers, Four Strategies

Period 2 runs from **1607** to **1754** - from Jamestown to the eve of the Seven Years’ War. Its central question is why European colonies turned out so differently from one another.

Each empire wanted something different, and that goal shaped everything else:

- **Spain** extracted wealth from the land, developing institutions built on **subjugating** native populations - the encomienda system carried over from Period 1.
- **France** and the **Netherlands** sent relatively few Europeans and relied on **trade alliances** with American Indians, especially in **fur**.
- **Britain** attracted a comparatively large number of **male and female migrants**, who came to settle and farm rather than only to extract.

That last difference matters most. Because British colonists arrived as families and wanted land, they displaced native peoples rather than trading with them - which made British-Indian relations more violent than French ones.

EMPIRE	WHAT IT WANTED	WHAT FOLLOWED
SPAIN	wealth extracted from the land	encomienda labour, a formal caste system
FRANCE & the NETHERLANDS	trade, above all in fur	few settlers, alliances and intermarriage with American Indians
BRITAIN	land to settle and farm	many male and female migrants, displacement, sustained conflict

An empire that came to **trade** made allies; an empire that came to **settle** displaced people. The goal predicts the relationship

The Regions of British Colonies

	New England	Middle colonies	Chesapeake	Southern coast and West Indies
Geography	cold, thin soil, short growing season	fertile, temperate	warm, long season, navigable rivers	long growing season, subtropical
Main export	mixed farming, fishing, shipping	cereal crops (the 'bread colonies')	tobacco	rice and sugar
Labour system	family labour	family labour and indentured servants	indentured servants, then enslaved Africans	enslaved Africans, a majority in places
Society	Puritan towns, high life expectancy	most ethnically and religiously diverse	scattered plantations, high mortality	rigid racial hierarchy

geography → the crop → the labour system → the society

Four regions, four economies: geography set the crop, the crop set the labour system, and the labour system set the society

British North America was not one place. Four regions developed distinct societies.

- The **Chesapeake** and **North Carolina** grew prosperous exporting **tobacco**, a labour-intensive crop. Labour came first from **indentured servants** and increasingly from enslaved Africans.
- The **New England** colonies, initially settled by **Puritans**, developed around small towns with **family farms**, a mixed economy, and unusually high life expectancy.
- The **middle colonies** supported a flourishing export economy based on **cereal crops**, and attracted the broadest range of European migrants, producing the most **ethnically and religiously diverse** region.
- The colonies of the **southern Atlantic coast** and the **British West Indies** used long growing seasons for **rice** and **sugar**, cash crops so labour-hungry that enslaved Africans became a majority of the population in places.

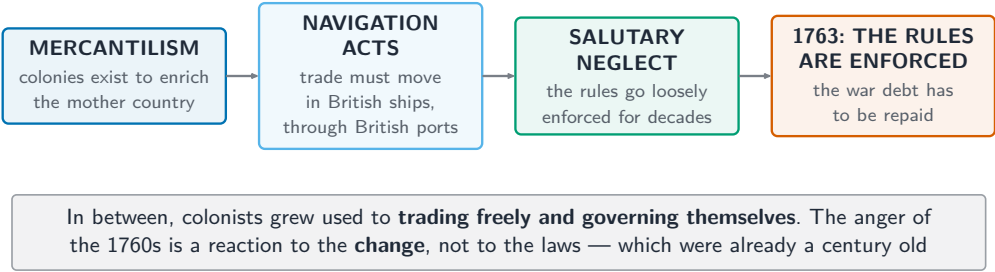
One political feature was shared. Distance from London, and Britain’s initially **lax attention**, let the colonies create **self-governing institutions** - colonial assemblies that later shaped resistance to imperial control.

Transatlantic Trade

An **Atlantic economy** developed in which goods - and enslaved Africans and American Indians - were exchanged around the ocean rim. Continuing trade increased the flow of goods in and out of American Indian communities, changing them too.

From the mid-seventeenth century, the British government tried to bring its colonies into a coherent imperial system, driven by **mercantilism** - the belief that colonies exist to enrich the mother country. The **Navigation Acts** required colonial trade to move in British ships through British ports.

Enforcement was loose for decades, a practice later called **salutary neglect**. Colonists grew used to trading freely and governing themselves, which is exactly why tightening the rules after 1763 provoked such anger.



Interactions with American Indians

Contact produced both **accommodation** and **conflict**, and the balance differed by empire and region.

Where trade mattered most - New France, the Dutch fur trade - alliances and intermarriage were common. Where land mattered most, conflict followed. British expansion led to sustained **military conflict** with American Indians over land, resources, and boundaries.

Resistance took organised forms. The **Pueblo Revolt** of 1680 drove the Spanish out of New Mexico for over a decade and forced lasting changes in Spanish policy - the clearest example in the course of native resistance succeeding.

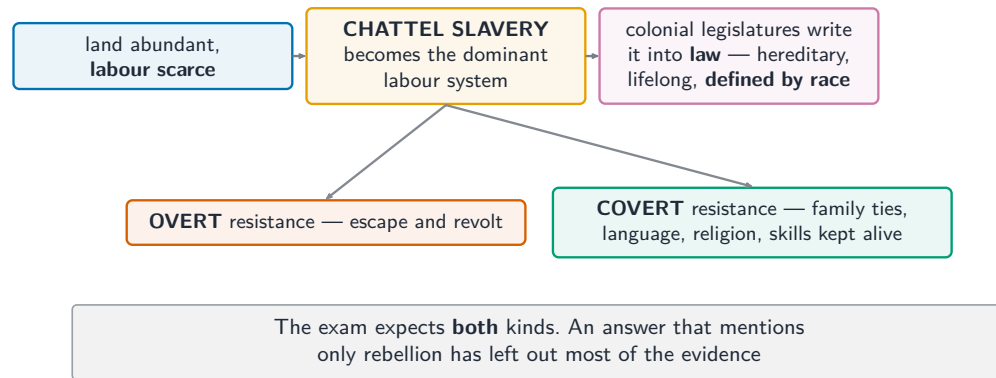
Slavery in the British Colonies

All the British colonies participated in the **Atlantic slave trade** to varying degrees, because land was abundant and labour scarce.

As **chattel slavery** became the dominant labour system in many southern colonies, colonial legislatures wrote new laws creating a **strict racial system**. Slavery became hereditary, lifelong, and defined by race - a legal structure, not merely a practice.

Enslaved Africans developed **overt and covert means of resistance**

: escape and revolt, and also the maintenance of family ties, languages, religious practices, and skills. The exam expects both kinds; an answer that mentions only rebellion misses most of the evidence.



Colonial Society and Culture

Two opposite processes ran at once.

Toward **diversity**: the presence of different European religious and ethnic groups produced a significant degree of **pluralism**, most visibly in the middle colonies.

Toward **similarity**: the colonies experienced a gradual **Anglicization**, adopting British goods, print culture, legal norms, and political ideas even as they developed autonomous political communities.

Transatlantic exchange also brought the **Enlightenment** and, in the 1730s and 1740s, the religious revivals of the **First Great Awakening**, which encouraged colonists to question established authority - religious first, political later.

The goals of European leaders and colonists increasingly **diverged**, and colonists'

resistance to imperial control drew on local experience of self-government and evolving ideas about rights.

Comparison in Period 2

The unit ends with **comparison**, the reasoning skill this period is built to teach: the regions differ enough that almost any claim about “the colonies” needs qualifying.

Worked example (a real AP exam question). The 2025 exam asked, as part A of a short-answer question, “*Briefly describe one political development in British North America from 1607 to 1753.*” A full-mark answer is one specific development, named and located in time: “*Colonial assemblies such as the Virginia House of Burgesses developed powers over taxation and spending, which gave colonists practical experience of representative self-government before 1754.*” Notice the shape: **Briefly describe** wants a specific development stated accurately - not a list, not an evaluation, and not an essay. Marks are lost here by writing too much about the wrong thing, or by staying vague (“colonies became more independent”).

Exam tips

- Answer the **why** behind regional difference: geography set the crop, the crop set the labour system, and the labour system set the society.
- Never treat “the colonies” as one place. A comparison question wants New England *against* the Chesapeake, with evidence from each.
- **Mercantilism** is the theory, the **Navigation Acts** are the policy, and **salutary neglect** is the lax enforcement that made later enforcement feel like tyranny.
- For slavery, give **both** overt and covert resistance; and note that slave codes made slavery *racial and hereditary*, which is the change being tested.
- The **Pueblo Revolt** is the go-to example of successful native resistance; British-Indian conflict is the go-to contrast with French trade alliances.
- Match your answer to the task verb. **Briefly describe** takes one or two accurate sentences, while **Evaluate the extent** needs a thesis that takes a position.

Period 3: 1754-1800

AP United States History

The Seven Years' War and Its Consequences

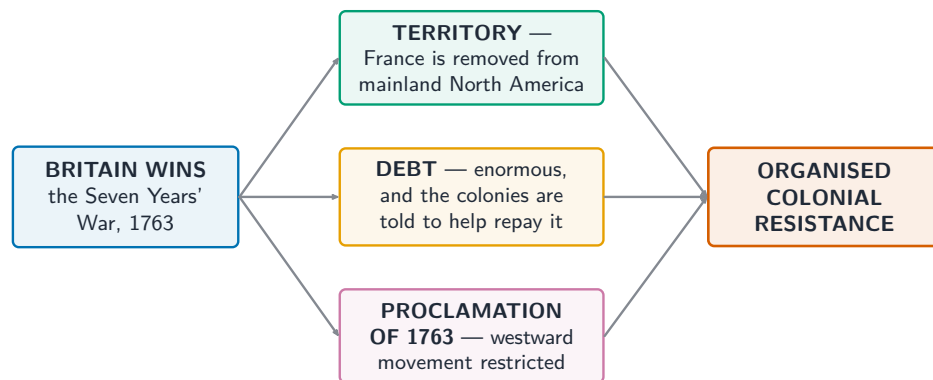
Period 3 runs from **1754** to **1800** - from the outbreak of the Seven Years' War to the end of John Adams's presidency. It contains the Revolution, but the exam treats the Revolution as an *effect*, so start with its cause.

Colonial rivalry between Britain and France intensified in the mid-eighteenth century as a growing colonial population pressed westward. The **Seven Years' War**, known in North America as the **French and Indian War**, settled that rivalry.

Britain won, and three consequences follow directly:

- A **major expansion of territory** - France was removed from mainland North America.
- An **enormous war debt**, which Britain decided the colonies should help repay.
- **Restrictions on westward movement**, notably the **Proclamation of 1763**, intended to prevent costly conflict with American Indians but resented by colonists who wanted the land they had just helped win.

That is the chain the exam wants: victory produced debt and new territory, and managing both required tighter control of the colonies.



All three converge. An essay that argues only from **taxation** has used one of the three routes the victory opened

Taxation Without Representation

New British efforts to **collect taxes** without the consent of colonial assemblies, and to assert imperial authority, provoked organised resistance.

Colonial leaders based their arguments on **the rights of British subjects**, on the **ideals of the Enlightenment**, and on their own long experience of self-government - the assemblies built up during Period 2.

Resistance was not only argument. Facing shortages and, in some regions, British **military occupation**, **men and women** both took part: boycotts of British goods, home manufacture, crowd action, and committees of correspondence. Leaders such as **Benjamin Franklin** energised the movement, and the slogan of the period is "**no taxation without representation**".

The Ideas Behind the Revolution

Enlightenment ideas led American political thinkers to emphasise **individual talent over hereditary privilege**, and to assert the **natural rights** of the people and the **sovereignty of the people**.

Two ideas do most of the work in essays:

- **Republicanism** - government rests on the consent of the governed, and citizens must show virtue by placing the public good above private interest.
- **Natural rights** - rights that exist before government, which government is created to protect, and whose violation justifies resistance.

	REPUBLICANISM	NATURAL RIGHTS
WHERE POWER COMES FROM	the consent of the governed	rights exist before any government does
WHAT IT ASKS OF A CITIZEN	virtue — the public good above private interest	nothing; the duty falls on the government
WHAT IT DOES IN AN ESSAY	explains the kind of government they built justifies the decision to resist	

They are not synonyms. **Natural rights** licenses the break; **republicanism** explains what was built afterwards

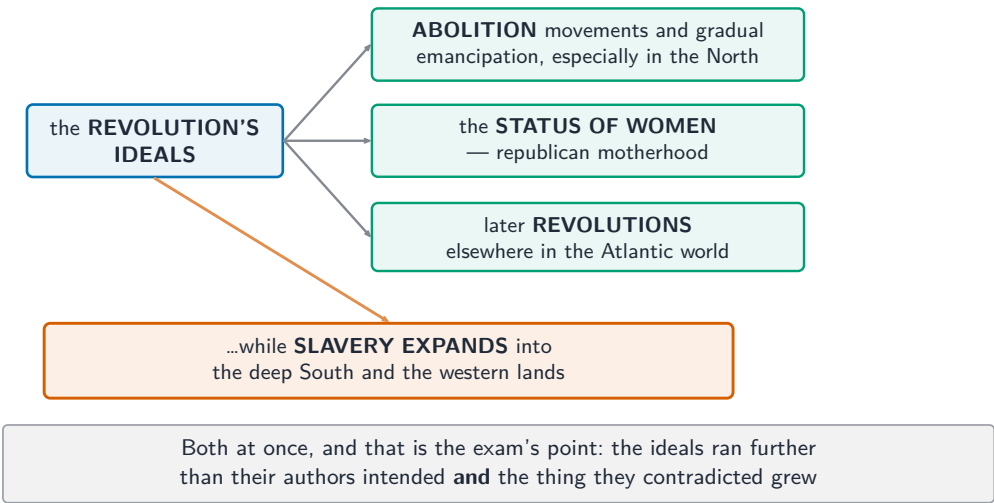
The War and Its Wider Effects

The war for independence succeeded through a combination of colonial resolve, difficult terrain, and crucially **foreign assistance**, above all from France.

The Revolution’s ideals then spread further than its leaders intended:

- They inspired **movements to abolish slavery**, especially in the North, and gradual emancipation laws.
- They raised questions about the **status of women**, expressed in the idea of **republican motherhood** - that women shaped the republic by raising virtuous citizens.
- They influenced later revolutions elsewhere in the Atlantic world.

At the same time the **expansion of slavery** into the deep South and adjacent western lands continued, alongside rising **antislavery** sentiment - a contradiction the course returns to repeatedly.



From Confederation to Constitution

	Articles of Confederation	The Constitution	Why it mattered
Taxation	no power to tax; could only request funds	Congress may lay and collect taxes	war debts went unpaid
Commerce	no power to regulate trade between states	Congress regulates interstate and foreign trade	states taxed each other
Executive	no president	a single executive with defined powers	no one could enforce law
Judiciary	no national courts	a federal judiciary	no way to settle disputes
Amendment	unanimous consent of all states	three-quarters of states	reform was impossible

The Constitution was written to fix specific, named weaknesses - each row is one of them

After declaring independence, leaders wrote new **constitutions and declarations of rights** that reflected republican ideals, generally limiting executive power.

The **Articles of Confederation** created a deliberately weak central government: no power to tax, no power to regulate commerce, no executive, and no national judiciary. It succeeded in organising western settlement through the **North-west Ordinance**, but could not manage debt, trade disputes, or unrest.

The **Constitutional Convention** of 1787 produced a stronger national government built on **compromise**, including the **Great Compromise** over representation and compromises over slavery and commerce.

Ratification was contested. **Federalists** argued the new government was strong enough to govern yet checked enough to be safe; **Anti-Federalists** feared centralised power and demanded protection for individual liberties, which produced the **Bill of Rights**.

The New Republic

Under **George Washington** and **John Adams**, political leaders disagreed sharply over the **relationship between the national and state governments**, economic policy, and foreign policy. Those disagreements hardened into the **first party system**.

War between France and Britain after the **French Revolution** forced hard choices, and the government pursued diplomatic initiatives to deal with the continued British and Spanish presence in North America. **Washington's Farewell Address** urged national unity and warned against political factions and permanent foreign alliances.

Meanwhile a distinctive **national culture** developed - in art, literature, and architecture - alongside continued regional variation.

Movement and Conflict in the Early Republic

American Indian groups repeatedly **evaluated and adjusted their alliances** with European powers and the new United States as circumstances changed.

Growing numbers of migrants moved west, intensifying competition over **resources, boundaries, and trade**. The relationship between the federal government and American Indian tribes remained **ambiguous**, contributing to recurring conflict. In the Southwest, the Spanish expanded their **mission system**, supported by the bonded labour of local American Indians.

Continuity and Change in Period 3

The period's reasoning skill is **continuity and change**. The strongest answers hold both: political institutions changed radically, while slavery, westward expansion, and conflict with American Indians continued and intensified.

Worked example (a real AP exam question). The 2025 exam asked, as part B of a short-answer question, *“Briefly describe one effect of the Seven Years’ War from 1754 to 1765.”* A full-mark answer names one effect and shows it is an effect: *“Britain emerged from the war with a large debt, which led Parliament to impose new taxes such as the Stamp Act on the colonies to help pay for imperial defence.”* Notice the shape: **describe one effect** needs the causal link stated, not just a fact from the period. “Britain won the war” is a result, not an effect on what followed; “the colonies were angry” is too vague to credit.

Exam tips

- Learn the causal chain: **war → debt and new territory → taxes and the Proclamation of 1763 → colonial resistance → independence**.
- **Republicanism** and **natural rights** are the two ideas to name; do not just write “Enlightenment ideas”.
- For the Constitution, argue from the **specific weakness** it fixed - no power to tax, no power to regulate commerce, no executive.
- Keep **Federalist** and **Anti-Federalist** positions straight, and remember the **Bill of Rights** was the price of ratification.
- The Revolution's effects on **slavery and women** are examinable, and both are partial: ideals spread further than rights did.
- On continuity-and-change prompts, give one of each. An answer that only lists changes has answered half the question.

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.

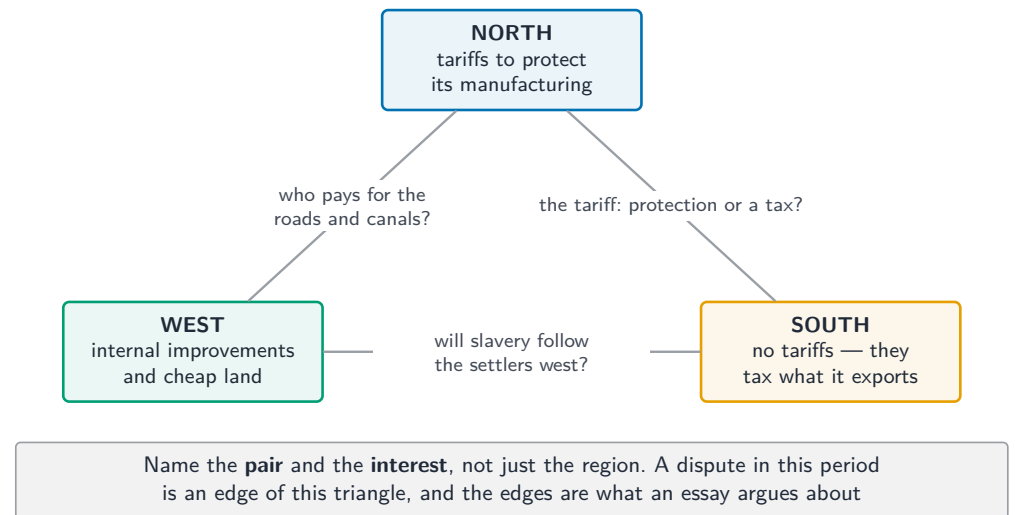
The Supreme Court settled part of that argument. Its decisions established the **primacy of the judiciary** in determining the meaning of the Constitution - the principle of **judicial review** - and generally strengthened federal power over the states.

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

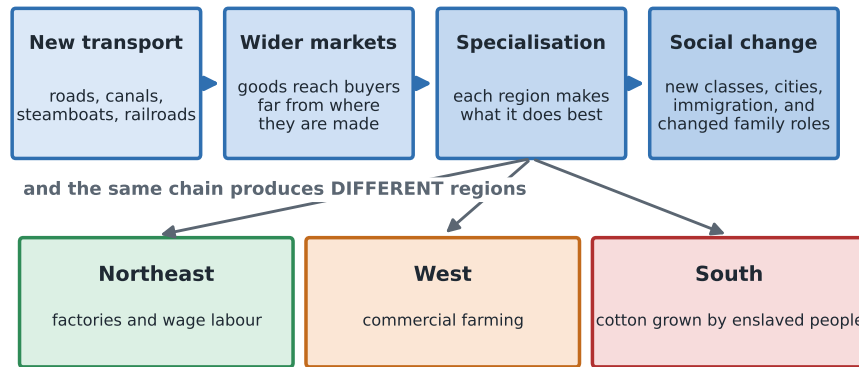
Politics, Regions, and the World Stage

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**, 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**.

SUFFRAGE EXTENDED — property requirements fall away; nearly all white men vote

SUFFRAGE WITHDRAWN — free Black men lose the vote in most states

REMOVAL — the Indian Removal Act of 1830; the Trail of Tears follows

1800 1820 1830 1848

All three overlap in the **same** decades. "The age of the common man" is a phrase to **qualify**, not to repeat

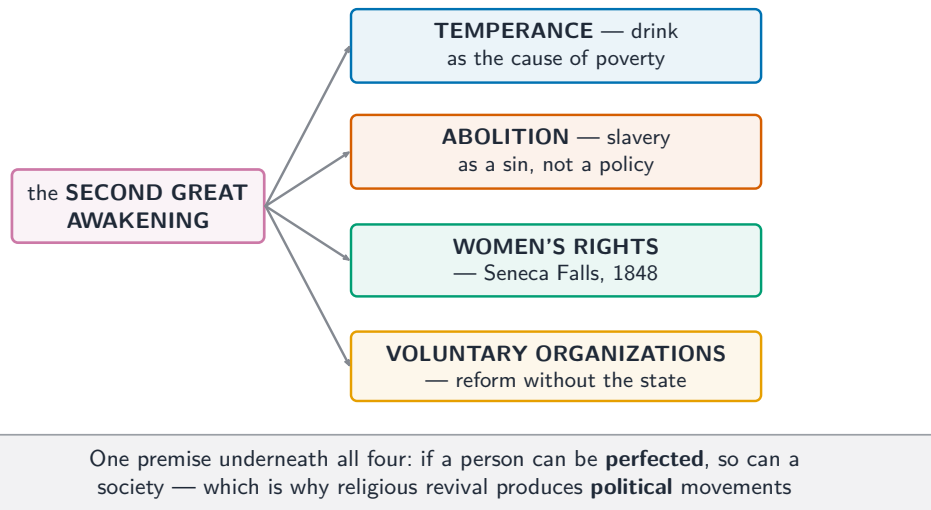
Religion, Reform, and American Culture

The rise of democratic and individualistic beliefs, a reaction against rationalism, and changes brought by the market revolution together produced the **Second Great Awakening**, a wave of religious revival emphasising personal salvation and human perfectibility.

That conviction fed reform. Americans formed **voluntary organizations** aimed at changing individual behaviour and institutions:

- **Temperance** and prison, asylum, and school reform.
- **Abolitionist and antislavery movements**, which gradually achieved emancipation in the North and grew louder nationally.
- A **women's rights movement**, which sought greater equality and opportunity and expressed its ideals at the **Seneca Falls Convention**

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.
- Connect the **Second Great Awakening** to reform: revival supplied the belief that people and society could be perfected.
- 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.

Period 5: 1844-1877

AP United States History

Manifest Destiny and Expansion

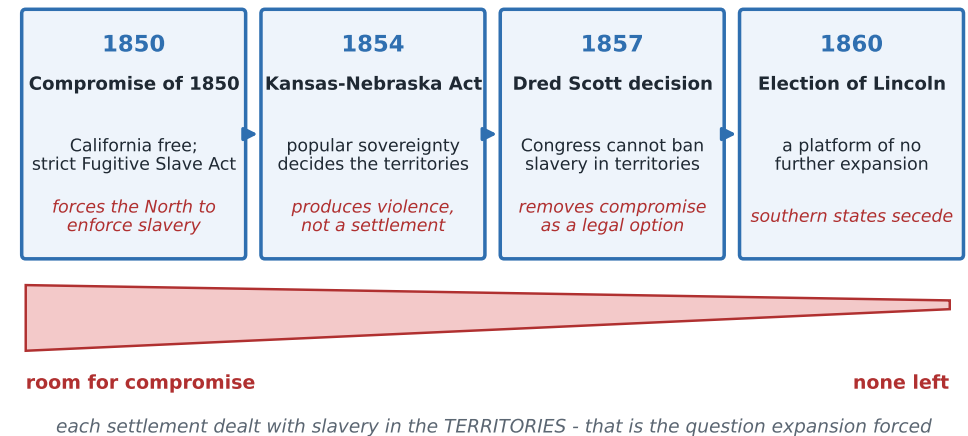
Period 5 runs from **1844** to **1877**. It is the period in which the argument over slavery stops being political and becomes military.

Expansion is the trigger. The desire for access to **natural and mineral resources**, and the hope of settlers for land, pushed Americans west. Advocates justified annexation through **Manifest Destiny** - the claim that the United States was destined, and superior enough, to spread across the continent.

The **Mexican-American War** added enormous territory in the West. Later, wartime legislation such as the **Homestead Act** boosted migration further, and interest in expanding trade produced economic and diplomatic initiatives abroad.

Expansion also meant conflict. The government's interaction with **Mexican Americans** and **American Indians** produced dispossession, resistance, and new legal disputes over land and citizenship.

Why Expansion Broke the Political System



Each compromise dealt with slavery in the territories, and each collapse left less room for the next one

Acquiring land forced a question that could not be avoided: **would slavery expand into the new territories?** Every attempt to answer it produced a temporary settlement that then failed.

- The **Compromise of 1850** 1850 admitted California as free and included a strict **Fugitive Slave Act**, which enraged the North by requiring its citizens to participate in enforcement.
- **Popular sovereignty** - letting territorial settlers decide - produced violence in Kansas rather than a settlement.
- The **Dred Scott decision** held that Congress could not ban slavery in the territories, removing compromise as a legal option.

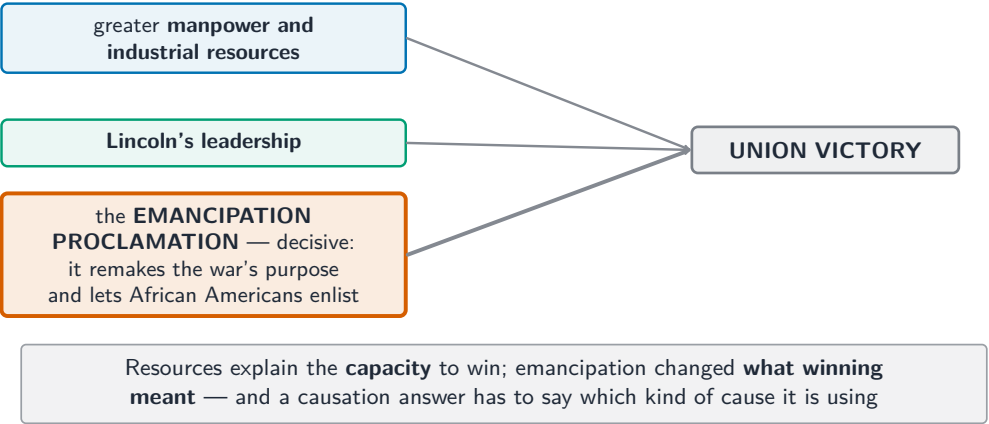
Ideological and economic differences produced **diverging responses** to slavery, from abolitionism to proslavery arguments defending it as a positive good. By the 1850s slavery dominated political discussion, destroying the existing party system and producing the new **Republican Party**.

Secession and the Civil War

The **election of 1860** 1860 brought **Abraham Lincoln** to power on a platform of preventing slavery’s expansion. Southern states responded by **seceding** , and the war followed.

The Union won because of **greater manpower and industrial resources** , Lincoln’s leadership, and, decisively, the **Emancipation Proclamation** , which turned the war into a war against slavery and enabled the enlistment of African American soldiers.

Government policy changed on both sides during the war: conscription, taxation, and an expanded federal role in the economy. African Americans’ service and the actions of enslaved people who freed themselves by reaching Union lines shaped the outcome as well.



Reconstruction

Reconstruction attempted to settle three questions: the status of the freedpeople, the terms of readmission for the southern states, and the balance of power between the states and the federal government.

The constitutional achievement is the **Reconstruction Amendments** :

- The **13th Amendment** abolished slavery.
- The **14th Amendment** granted citizenship and equal protection.
- The **15th Amendment** prohibited denial of the vote on grounds of race.

The **women’s rights movement** was both **emboldened and divided** by the 14th and 15th Amendments, because they extended rights on the basis of race while introducing the word “male” into the Constitution.

Radical and moderate Republicans worked to change the balance of power between Congress and the presidency and to reshape southern society, through the Freedmen’s Bureau, military occupation, and new state constitutions.

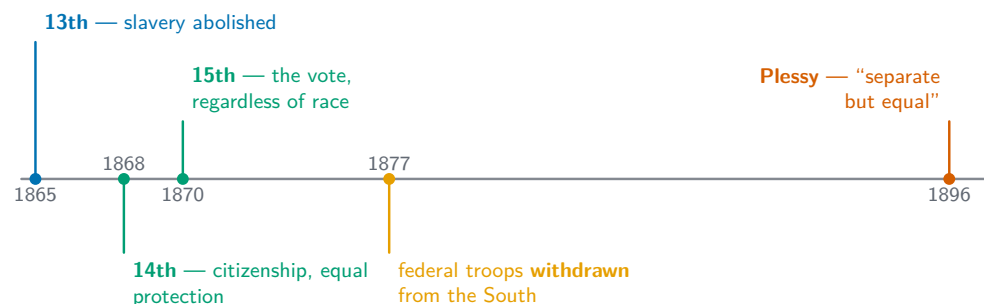
AMENDMENT	WHAT IT GUARANTEED	HOW IT STOPPED WORKING
13th 1865	slavery abolished	convict labour and debt peonage rebuild forced labour
14th 1868	citizenship and equal protection of the laws	read narrowly by the courts; “separate but equal” in 1896
15th 1870	the vote, regardless of race	poll taxes, literacy tests and violence, none of them written as racial
None of the three was repealed . Reconstruction failed through enforcement , which is why the essay question is about power, not about the text of the amendments		

The Failure of Reconstruction

Reconstruction's gains were reversed, and the exam expects the mechanisms, not just the outcome.

Southern plantation owners **continued to own most of the region's land** even after emancipation, so formerly enslaved people entered arrangements such as **sharecropping** that produced dependence and debt rather than economic independence.

Then **segregation**, **violence**, unfavourable **Supreme Court decisions**, and local political tactics progressively **stripped away** the rights African Americans had gained. The result was a legal and social system that persisted into the twentieth century.



Five years of **guarantees**, thirty of **dismantling**. The failure is the long half of this line, and that is where the marks are

Comparison in Period 5

The period's reasoning skill is **comparison**. Useful comparisons: the North and South before the war; the aims of Reconstruction against its outcomes; and the status of African Americans in 1865 against 1877.

Worked example (a real AP exam question). The 2023 exam set the long essay *“Evaluate the extent to which the definitions of United States citizenship changed from 1865 to 1920.”* A strong thesis takes a position and acknowledges the reversal: *“Definitions of citizenship changed substantially between 1865 and 1920, as the 14th and 15th Amendments established birthright citizenship and prohibited racial barriers to voting; however, segregation, violence and Supreme Court decisions made those definitions far less meaningful in practice for African Americans by 1900.”* Notice

the shape: for a period that both expanded and reversed rights, a thesis must hold the **legal change** and the **practical reversal** together. Writing only about the amendments describes half the period.

Exam tips

- Expansion is the **cause** of the sectional crisis. Every compromise from 1850 onwards is an attempt to answer whether slavery could expand.
- Name the mechanism, not the mood. “Tensions rose” earns nothing; the **Fugitive Slave Act**, **Dred Scott**, and **Bleeding Kansas** do.
- Give the **Emancipation Proclamation** its strategic role: it redefined the war's purpose and enabled Black enlistment.
- Learn the three **Reconstruction Amendments** by what each one does; questions often turn on the difference between them.
- For Reconstruction's failure, name **sharecropping**, **segregation**, **violence**, and **Court decisions** - the four mechanisms.
- On comparison prompts, develop **both** sides. An answer that treats one side in a clause has answered half the question.

Period 6: 1865-1898

AP United States History

Westward Expansion after the Civil War

Period 6 runs from **1865** to **1898** - the **Gilded Age**. Industry, migration, and the West transform the country, and every transformation produces a political argument about who benefits.

Improvements in **mechanization** raised agricultural production substantially, while railroads carried crops to national and world markets. But the same forces squeezed farmers: **consolidation in agricultural markets** left them facing high freight rates, expensive credit, and falling crop prices.

Westward settlement also meant the final dispossession of American Indians. Federal policy moved from treaties to **reservations** and then to **assimilation** through the **Dawes Act**, which divided communal land into individual plots and transferred the surplus to settlers.

The Rise of Industrial Capitalism

Large-scale industrial production, accompanied by massive technological change, produced enormous output and enormous firms.

- New **corporate structures** - trusts and holding companies - allowed **consolidation** and, in some industries, near-monopoly.
- New **transportation and communication** networks, above all the railroad, created a genuinely national market.
- Business leaders defended their position with **laissez-faire** arguments: competition promoted growth, and government should stay out.

The same period produced **rising inequality** and recurring financial panics, which is why the economy itself became the central political question.

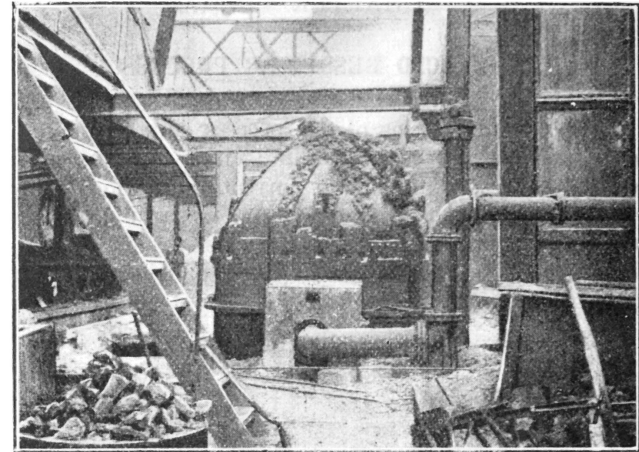
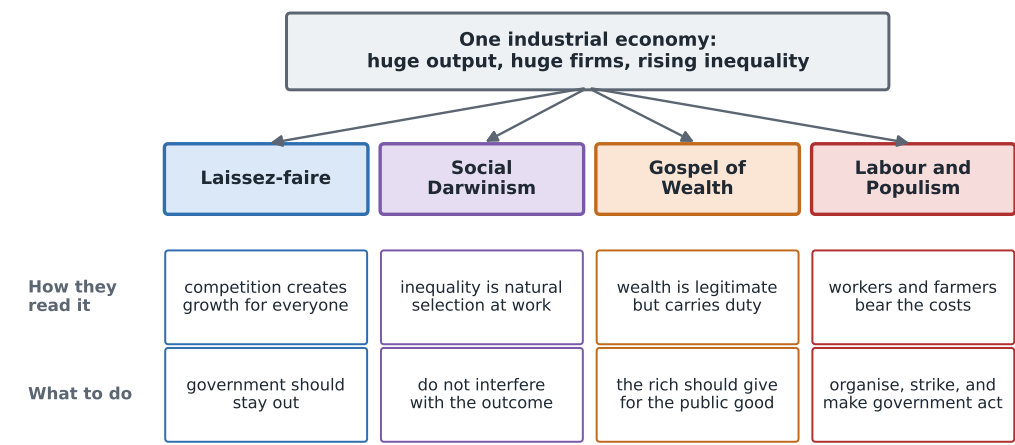


Fig. 30.—Bessemer Converter while Blowing.

Labour in the Gilded Age



One economy, four responses: each group diagnosed a different problem and proposed a different remedy

A variety of perspectives on the economy and labour developed. Workers faced long hours, dangerous conditions, and wages that fell during downturns.

They organised. Unions such as the **Knights of Labor** and the **American Federation of Labor** differed over who to admit and what to demand - the AFL concentrating on skilled workers and practical gains in wages and hours. **Strikes** were frequent, often large, and frequently broken by state or federal force, which itself became an argument about the role of government.

	KNIGHTS OF LABOR	AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR
WHO IT ORGANISED	almost everyone who worked, skilled or not	skilled workers only, by craft
WHAT IT WANTED	a reformed society — an alternative to wage labour itself	better wages, hours and conditions inside the system
WHAT FOLLOWED	collapsed after being blamed for the violence at Haymarket	survived, and became the model for American unions

The narrower aim is the one that **survived**. “Workers organised” is not an answer on its own — the exam wants which kind of organising, and why it lasted

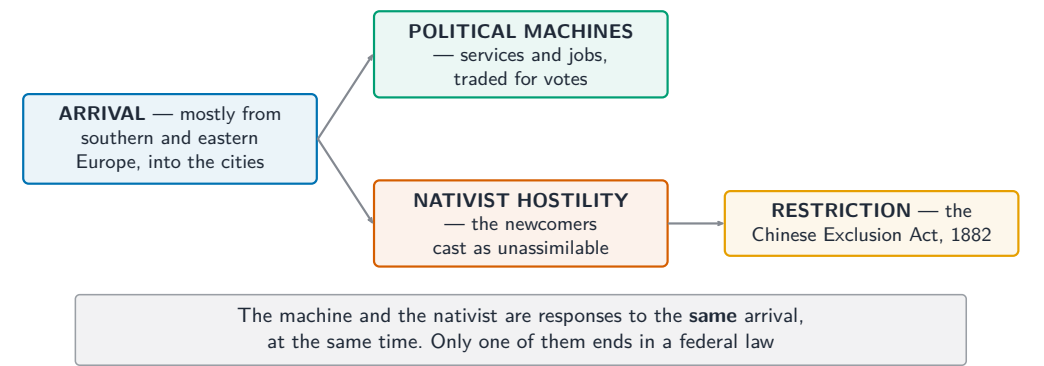
Migration and the Cities

International and internal migration increased urban populations and fostered the growth of **cities** .

New arrivals came increasingly from **southern and eastern Europe** , alongside Chinese migration to the West - which met the **Chinese Exclusion Act** , the first significant federal restriction on immigration by nationality.

In cities where access to power was unequally distributed, **political machines** provided jobs, housing help, and services in exchange for votes - corrupt by later standards, and for many migrants the only functioning source of support.

Migration also produced organised hostility. **Nativist** movements argued that new arrivals threatened wages, culture, or self-government.



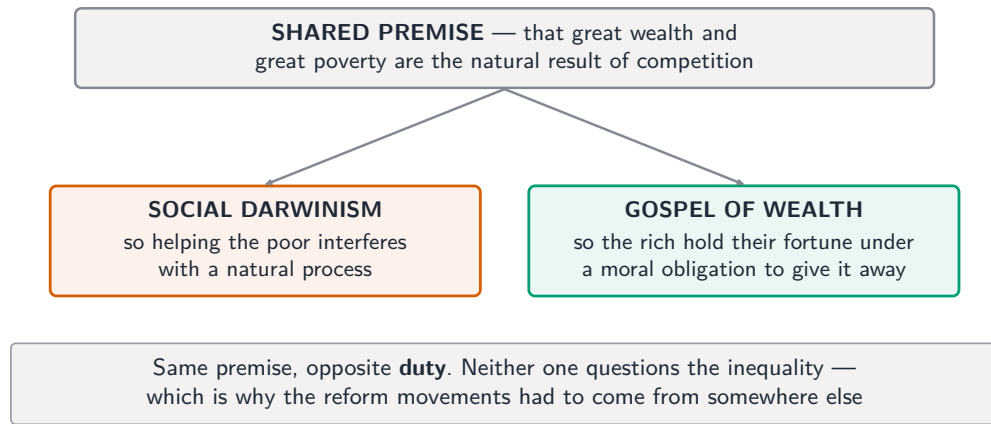
The New Middle Class and Reform

Corporations’ need for **managers** and for male and female **clerical workers** expanded a new **middle class** , with new patterns of consumption and leisure.

Cultural and intellectual movements both **buttressed and challenged** the social order:

- **Social Darwinism** used evolutionary language to justify inequality as natural.
- The **Gospel of Wealth** argued that the wealthy had a **moral obligation** to use their fortunes for the public good.
- Agrarians, utopians, socialists, and artists criticised industrial society from the other direction.

- Many women sought greater equality, often through **voluntary organizations** - temperance, settlement houses, and suffrage work.



Politics and the Populist Challenge

The major parties appealed to lingering divisions from the Civil War and competed over **patronage** more than policy, producing close elections and limited legislation.

Economic instability drove agrarian activists to build the **People's (Populist) Party**, demanding government action: regulation of railroads, currency reform, and a graduated income tax. Populism failed as a party but placed on the agenda the idea that government should intervene in the economy - the argument Period 7 takes up.

Debates over **citizenship**, **race**, and the role of government ran through all of this, as the rights promised during Reconstruction continued to be narrowed.

Continuity and Change in Period 6

The period's reasoning skill is **continuity and change**. Industrialisation changed where people lived and what they did, while inequality, sectional political loyalties, and racial exclusion persisted.

Worked example (a real AP exam question). The 2025 exam set the long essay *"Evaluate the extent to which economic changes influenced United States society between 1865"* and the end of the century. A strong thesis names the changes and the groups they affected differently: *"Economic change reshaped American society to a great extent after 1865, creating an urban industrial working class and a salaried*

middle class, but its benefits were distributed so unevenly that farmers and industrial workers organised politically against it." Notice the shape: naming **who** was affected differently is what allows an essay to argue about extent rather than just describe growth.

Exam tips

- Explain farmers' anger with mechanisms: **freight rates**, **credit**, and **falling crop prices** - not "farmers struggled".
- Keep the four Gilded Age responses distinct: **laissez-faire**, **Social Darwinism**, the **Gospel of Wealth**, and organised **labour and Populism**.
- For immigration, name the shift to **southern and eastern Europe** and the **Chinese Exclusion Act** as the first nationality-based federal restriction.
- Political machines** are examinable as both corruption and social provision. Saying both is what earns the complexity.
- Populism** matters less for winning than for putting government intervention on the agenda.
- On continuity-and-change prompts, name a specific continuity. Racial exclusion and unequal wealth are the safest here.

Period 7: 1890-1945

AP United States History

Imperialism and the Spanish-American War

Period 7 runs from **1890** to **1945** - the longest and densest period. Three storylines run through it: the growth of federal power in the economy, the rise of mass culture and the arguments it provoked, and the country's move to global power.

New **territorial ambitions** grew from a search for markets, naval strategy, and beliefs about national mission. Victory in the **Spanish-American War** gave the United States overseas possessions and forced a genuine argument.

The **imperialism debate** is the examinable point: supporters argued for markets, strategic bases, and a civilising mission; opponents argued that ruling people without their consent contradicted the country's founding principles, and some argued on racial or economic grounds. Both positions must appear in a strong answer.

FOR EXPANSION

markets and coaling stations for a trading power
a naval strategy that needs bases
a claimed civilising mission

AGAINST IT

ruling people without their consent contradicts the republic's own founding
the cost of holding territory
racial objections to incorporating new populations

Both sides argue from **American principles** — which is why this is a debate about what the country is, and why it did not end in 1898

The Progressive Era

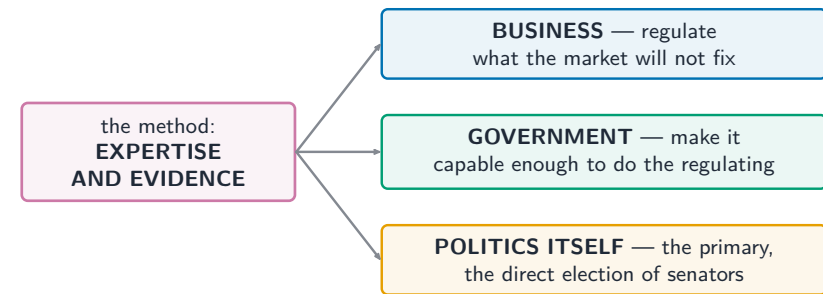
The United States continued its transition from a rural, agricultural economy to an **urban, industrial** one, and **Progressives** responded to the problems that came with it.

Progressivism was a broad reform impulse, not a single programme, but its methods are consistent:

- Use **expertise and evidence** to diagnose social problems - the work of muckraking journalists and social surveys.
- Use **government** to fix them: regulation of food, drugs, working conditions, and monopolies.

- Reform **politics itself** through the direct primary, the initiative and referendum, and direct election of senators.

Its limits are examinable too. Progressive reform largely excluded African Americans, and some Progressives supported segregation and immigration restriction.



A Progressive answer names the **method**, not a list of laws — that is also the axis on which the New Deal comparison turns

World War I and Its Aftermath

Entry into the **First World War** mobilised the economy and expanded federal power, but it also **intensified debates about the nation's role in the world** and about civil liberties at home, where dissent was prosecuted.

The war triggered the **Great Migration**, as African Americans moved north for wartime industrial jobs, reshaping northern cities and politics.

Afterwards the United States pursued a **unilateral foreign policy** - rejecting the League of Nations while remaining economically engaged abroad.

The 1920s: Mass Culture and Backlash

Innovations in communication and technology - radio, film, mass-circulation magazines, and the automobile - contributed to the growth of **mass culture**, which increasingly set national tastes.

The same decade produced **sharp divisions** over what the country should be:

- **Immigration restriction** through national-origins quotas.
- Conflict over **religion and science**, and over **prohibition**.
- A revived **Ku Klux Klan** K and organised nativism.

- The **Harlem Renaissance** and the “New Woman” as assertions of new cultural identities.

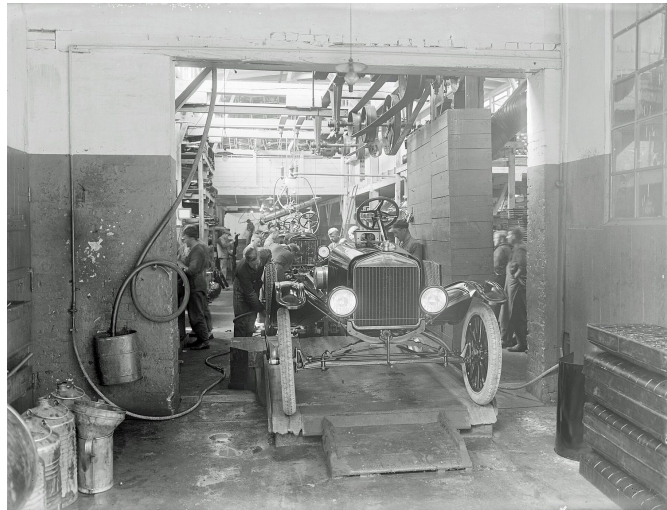
A NATIONAL MASS CULTURE

radio, film and the car
new roles and freedoms for women
the **Harlem Renaissance**

AND THE REACTION TO IT

immigration restriction
religion against science; **prohibition**
the revived **Ku Klux Klan**

One decade, not two halves. The **sharp divisions** are the answer to a 1920s prompt — naming only the jazz or only the Klan answers half of it



Depression and the New Deal

RELIEF

help people now

- Civilian Conservation Corps - jobs for young men
- Works Progress Administration - public works jobs
- Federal Emergency Relief - direct aid to states

RECOVERY

restart the economy

- Agricultural Adjustment Act - raise farm prices
- National Industrial Recovery Act - codes for industry
- Tennessee Valley Authority - power and development

REFORM

stop it happening again

- Social Security Act - pensions and unemployment
- Wagner Act - the right to organise a union
- FDIC and SEC - bank deposits and stock markets

The New Deal did NOT end the Depression - but it left a permanent legacy of reform

radical, union and populist pressure is what pushed Roosevelt toward the wider measures

Sorting New Deal programmes by purpose - relief, recovery, reform - is what turns a list into an argument

The **Great Depression** brought mass unemployment and social dislocation, and policymakers responded by expanding the federal role in the economy.

Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal attempted to end the Depression through **relief**, **recovery**, and **reform**. **Radical, union, and populist movements** pushed Roosevelt toward more extensive measures - which is why the “Second New Deal” is more ambitious than the first.

The verdict the CED states plainly: the New Deal **did not end the Depression**, but it left a lasting legacy of reform - Social Security, federal deposit insurance, labour rights, and the expectation that government is responsible for economic security.



The Second World War

Americans viewed the war as a fight for the **survival of freedom and democracy** against fascist aggression.

Mass mobilization helped end the Great Depression, and it changed society:

- Mobilisation and **military service** provided opportunities for **women and minorities** to improve their status, though within continued segregation and discrimination.
- Migration from **Mexico** and elsewhere in the Western Hemisphere increased to meet labour demand.
- Japanese Americans were forcibly **interned**, the period's clearest case of wartime rights denied.

Victory came through **Allied cooperation**, industrial capacity, and technological advantage, ending with the use of atomic weapons against Japan.

Postwar Diplomacy

The war-ravaged condition of Asia and Europe, and the dominant U.S. role in the Allied victory and in the occupations that followed, left the United States as the strongest power in the world - and set up the confrontation with the Soviet Union that Period 8 begins with.

Comparison in Period 7

The period's reasoning skill is **comparison**. The most useful pairing is **Progressive-era reform against the New Deal**: both expanded federal power, but the New Deal did so on a far larger scale and in response to collapse rather than to growth.

Worked example (a real AP exam question). The 2024 exam set the long essay *“Evaluate the extent to which beliefs about threats to the United States shaped society from 1917 to 1945.”* A strong thesis names the beliefs and what they produced: *“Beliefs about internal and external threats shaped American society to a great extent between 1917 and 1945, producing wartime restrictions on dissent, immigration quotas in the 1920s, and the internment of Japanese Americans, even as the same fears mobilised broad support for federal power.”* Notice the shape: the prompt is about **beliefs**, so the evidence must be things beliefs *caused* - policies and social changes - not simply a narrative of the wars.

Exam tips

- Give **both sides** of the imperialism debate; a one-sided answer misses the point of the question.
- Progressivism is a **method** - expertise, then government action, then political reform. Its exclusion of African Americans is examinable.
- Sort New Deal programmes by **relief, recovery, reform**. That structure converts a list into an argument.
- State the CED's verdict directly: the New Deal did **not** end the Depression but left a permanent legacy.
- Wartime opportunity for **women and minorities** was real *and* limited. Saying both is what earns complexity.
- For 1917-1945 prompts about fear or threat, use **civil liberties, immigration quotas, and internment** as your evidence.

Period 8: 1945-1980

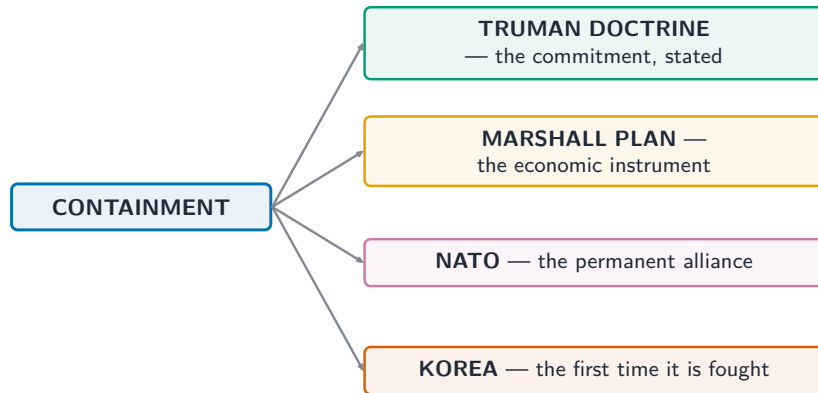
AP United States History

The Cold War, 1945 to 1980

Period 8 runs from **1945** to **1980**. Two arguments dominate it: how far the United States should go to contain communism abroad, and how far the federal government should go to guarantee rights and welfare at home. They are connected, because both are arguments about the reach of national power.

The **Cold War** began as wartime cooperation collapsed into rivalry with the Soviet Union. American policy settled on **containment** - preventing the spread of communism rather than attempting to remove it - expressed through the **Truman Doctrine**, the **Marshall Plan**, and **NATO**.

Containment then produced commitments the country had not anticipated: the **Korean War**, a permanent peacetime military establishment, an **arms race**, and the **space race**.



One policy, four **kinds** of instrument — stated, economic, military, fought. Naming the kind is what turns a list into an explanation

The Red Scare at Home

Fear of communism reshaped domestic politics. **Loyalty programmes**, congressional investigations, and **McCarthyism** targeted suspected communists in government, universities, unions, and the entertainment industry.

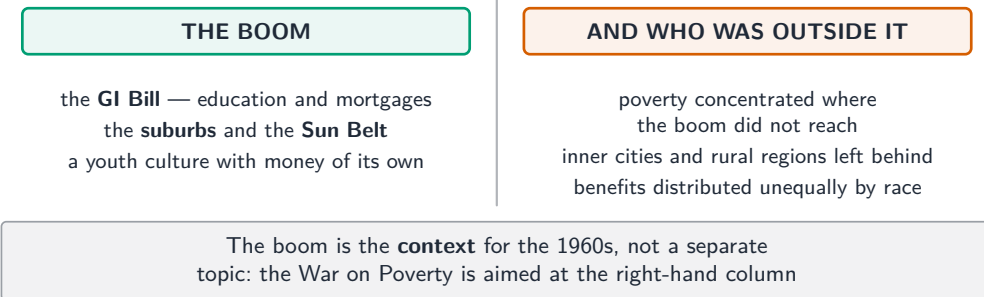
The examinable point is the **cost to civil liberties**: accusation often functioned as proof, and the fear narrowed the range of acceptable political debate for a decade.

Prosperity and Its Discontents

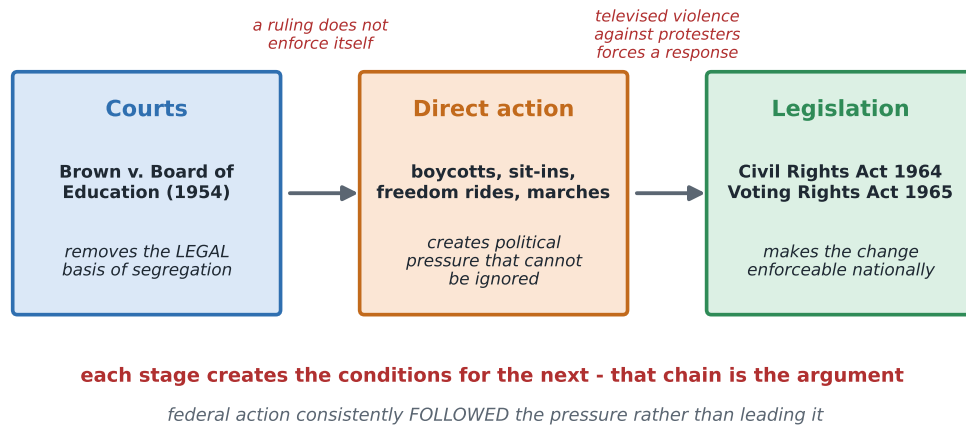
The postwar economy grew strongly. Federal spending on defence, highways, and the **GI Bill** supported home ownership and higher education, and the population moved to the **suburbs** and to the **Sun Belt**.

Culture changed with it: mass consumption, television, and a distinct **youth culture** with its own music and markets.

Prosperity was uneven. Suburban growth was frequently closed to African Americans by law and practice, cities lost tax base and jobs, and **poverty** persisted in ways the decade's self-image obscured - which is what later reform movements responded to.



The Civil Rights Movement



Litigation, direct action and legislation were not alternatives: each one created the conditions for the next

Early steps in the 1940s and 1950s worked mainly through the **courts**. Legal strategy produced **Brown v. Board of Education**, which held segregated schooling unconstitutional and stripped away the legal basis of segregation.

Court victories did not enforce themselves, so the movement turned to **direct action**: the Montgomery bus boycott, sit-ins, freedom rides, and mass marches, organised through churches and student groups and grounded in **nonviolent protest**.

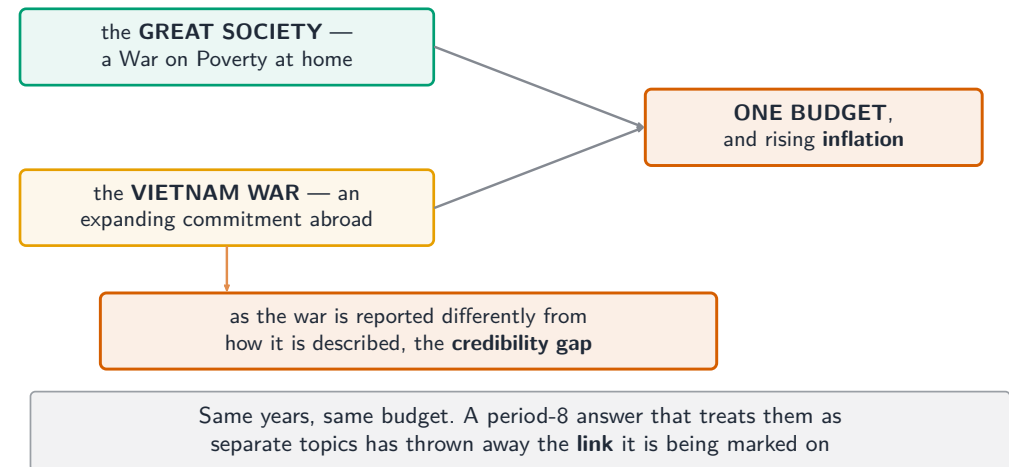
Sustained pressure and televised violence against protesters produced **legislation**: the **Civil Rights Act of 1964** and the **Voting Rights Act of 1965**.

The movement then **expanded**: later activists raised questions of economic inequality, housing, and policing, and some rejected nonviolence and integration in favour of **Black Power**. Its example also shaped movements by women, Latinos, American Indians, and others.

The Great Society and the Vietnam War

The **Great Society** extended federal responsibility furthest since the New Deal: Medicare and Medicaid, federal aid to education, and the **War on Poverty**.

The **Vietnam War** grew out of containment and consumed the same presidency. Escalation without decisive results produced a large **antiwar movement**, deep political division, and a **credibility gap** between government statements and reported reality. Defeat abroad and disillusion at home weakened confidence in federal power just as its domestic role peaked.



Society in Transition

The later part of the period is defined by movements and by limits.

- The **women's movement** pressed for legal equality and workplace access; the **Equal Rights Amendment** failed ratification.
- **Environmental** concern grew into federal action on air, water, and endangered species between 1968 and 1980.
- **Immigration** law was reformed in 1965, changing the origins of new arrivals.
- **Conservatism** organised in response to all of it, on taxes, social change, and the size of government - the movement Period 9 opens with.

Economic trouble sharpened everything: **inflation**, oil shocks, and industrial decline ended the postwar boom.

Continuity and Change in Period 8

The period's reasoning skill is **continuity and change**. Rights expanded enormously in law; economic inequality and residential segregation persisted, and both statements belong in a strong answer.

Worked example (a real AP exam question). The 2023 exam set the long essay “Evaluate the extent to which the growth of civil rights activism contributed to changes in government action” in the twentieth century. A strong thesis makes activism the **cause** and names the government changes: “Civil rights activism contributed to a great extent to changes in government action, as litigation produced *Brown v. Board of Education* and sustained direct action created the political pressure behind the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, although federal action consistently followed rather than led that pressure.” Notice the shape: the prompt asks about a **contribution**, so the essay must trace the link from activism to policy, not describe the movement on its own.

Exam tips

- Define **containment** precisely - preventing spread, not rollback - and use it to explain Korea and Vietnam as consequences.
- For the Red Scare, the mark is in the **cost to civil liberties**, not in a narrative of accusations.
- Present civil rights as **courts → direct action → legislation**, each stage creating the next.
- Say what the **Great Society** actually did (Medicare, Medicaid, education aid) rather than calling it “reforms”.
- Vietnam's domestic effect - **division and the credibility gap** - matters as much as the military outcome.
- On continuity-and-change prompts, pair legal gains with persistent **economic and residential inequality**.

Period 9: 1980-Present

AP United States History

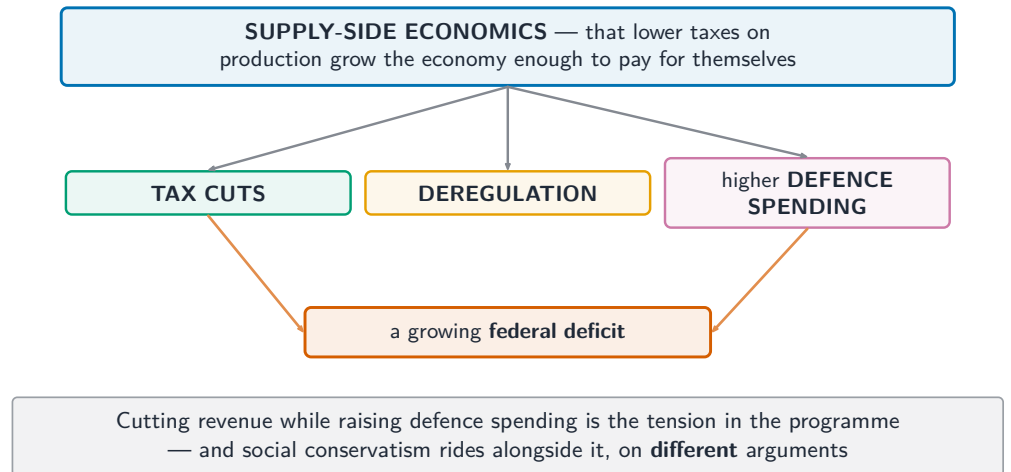
Reagan and the Conservative Turn

Period 9 runs from **1980** to the present. It is short in topics but wide in scope, and the exam treats it as the culmination of arguments running through the whole course: the size of government, the country's global role, and who counts as a full member of the nation.

The **conservative movement** that organised in the 1960s and 1970s came to power with **Ronald Reagan**. Its programme had three strands:

- **Tax cuts and deregulation**, on the argument that reducing the burden on business would raise growth - often called **supply-side economics**
- Reduced federal spending on domestic programmes, though **defence spending** rose sharply and deficits grew.
- Appeals to **social conservatism**, on religion, family, and law and order.

The result was a lasting shift in the terms of debate: after 1980 both parties argued within narrower limits about the federal government's economic role than at any time since the New Deal.



The End of the Cold War

Renewed military build-up, negotiation, and above all internal weakness in the Soviet Union brought the **Cold War** to an end. The Soviet system collapsed between 1989 and 1991.

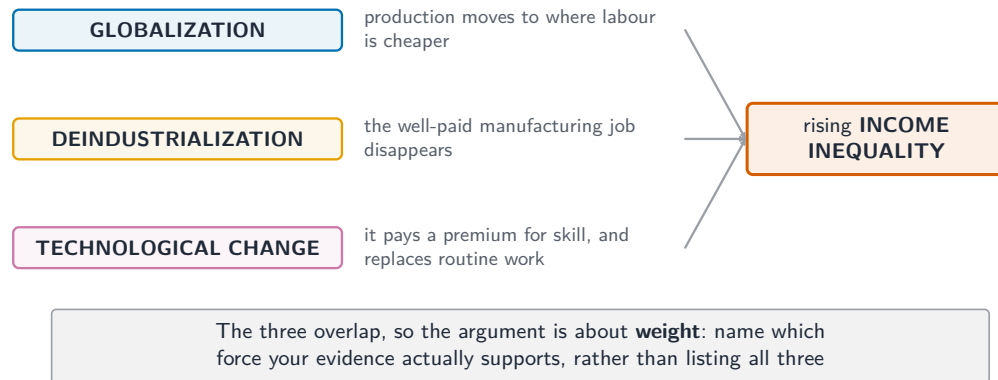
The consequences framed the decades that followed: the United States became the sole superpower, with unresolved questions about **when and where to intervene**, and about what commitments made sense once containment no longer organised policy.

A Changing Economy

The economy after 1980 was reshaped by three forces:

- **Globalization** - trade agreements, integrated supply chains, and competition that moved manufacturing abroad.
- **Deindustrialization** - the loss of manufacturing employment in older industrial regions and the growth of service work.
- **Technological change** - computing and then the internet, which transformed productivity, work, and communication.

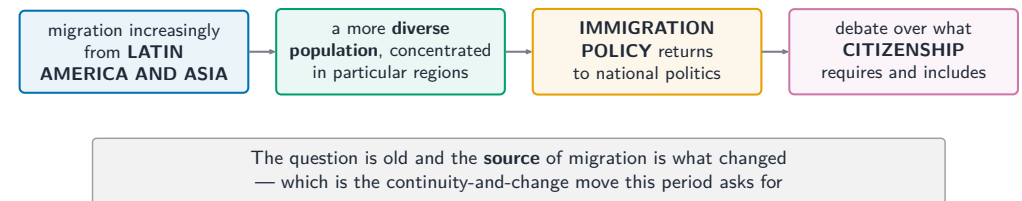
Together these raised aggregate wealth while widening **income inequality** and reducing security for workers whose industries declined - the economic argument that has dominated politics since.



Migration and a Changing Population

Migration and immigration in the 1990s and 2000s continued to reshape the population, with growth in arrivals from **Latin America and Asia** following the 1965 reform of immigration law.

The consequences are the examinable part: population growth in the South and West, the growth of multi-ethnic cities, ongoing debate over **immigration policy** and border enforcement, and continuing arguments about **citizenship** and national identity - the same argument the course has traced since Reconstruction.

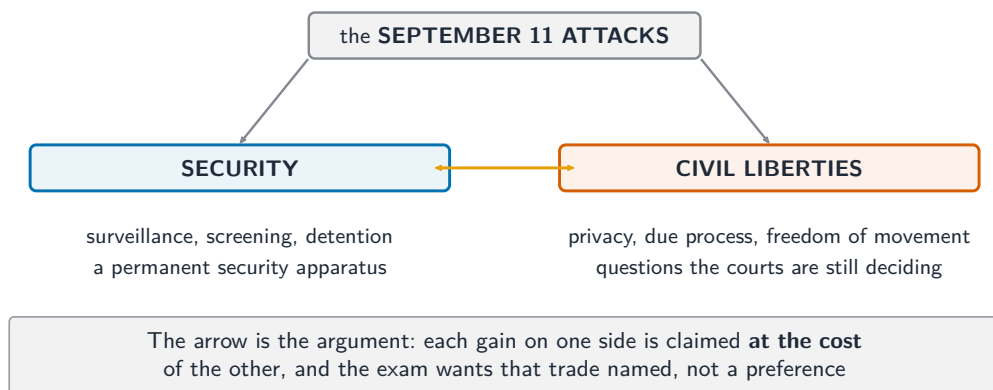


Challenges of the Twenty-First Century

The period's later topics group around a small number of developments:

- The **September 11 attacks** and the response - military intervention abroad, a new security apparatus, and renewed debate over the balance between **security and civil liberties**.

- Economic crisis in 2008 and the argument over government's role in stabilising the economy.
- **Political polarisation** , amplified by changes in media and communication.
- Debate over **climate and energy** policy.



- The Cold War's end matters for what it **opened**: sole-superpower status and unresolved questions about intervention.
- Keep **globalization**, **deindustrialization**, and **technological change** as three distinct causes, not one blur.
- For immigration after 1965, name the **shift in origins** and the political argument it produced.
- After 2001, the examinable tension is **security against civil liberties** - the same tension as the Red Scare and the First World War.
- Long-span prompts reward **connecting periods**. Link a recent development to an earlier one and say what continued.

Causation in Period 9

The period's reasoning skill is **causation**, and the most useful move is to link a recent development back to an earlier one: deindustrialisation to the market revolution's regional specialisation, immigration debates to the nativism of the 1850s and 1920s, and arguments over federal power to the New Deal.

Worked example (a real AP exam question). The 2026 exam set the long essay "Evaluate the extent to which women's participation in public life in the United States changed" over the twentieth century. A strong thesis distinguishes **kinds** of change and their timing: "Women's participation in public life changed substantially across the twentieth century, as suffrage, wartime employment and the women's movement opened political and professional roles, although occupational segregation and unequal pay meant participation expanded faster in law than in economic power." Notice the shape: for a long-span prompt, the thesis must say *what kind* of change and *where it stalled*, since that is what allows evidence from several periods to be used rather than narrated.

Exam tips

- Define **supply-side economics** as an argument (cut taxes to raise growth), and note the deficits that followed - both belong in an evaluation.