

Geography and the Environment (GEO)

This theme focuses on the role of geography and both the natural and human-made environments on social and political developments in what would become the United States.

GEO–1.0: Explain how geographic and environmental factors shaped the development of various communities, and analyze how competition for and debates over natural resources have affected both interactions among different groups and the development of government policies.

Period 1 (1491-1607)

Key Concept 1.1: As native populations migrated and settled across the vast expanse of North America over time, they developed distinct and increasingly complex societies by adapting to and transforming their diverse environments.

- I. Different native societies adapted to and transformed their environments through innovations in agriculture, resource use, and social structure.
 - A) The spread of maize cultivation from present-day Mexico northward into the present-day American Southwest and beyond supported economic development, settlement, advanced irrigation, and social diversification among societies.
 - B) Societies responded to the aridity of the Great Basin and the grasslands of the western Great Plains by developing largely mobile lifestyles.
 - C) In the Northeast, the Mississippi River Valley, and along the Atlantic seaboard some societies developed mixed agricultural and hunter-gatherer economies that favored the development of permanent villages.
 - D) Societies in the Northwest and present-day California supported themselves by hunting and gathering, and in some areas developed settled communities supported by the vast resources of the ocean.

Key Concept 1.2: Contact among Europeans, Native Americans, and Africans resulted in the Columbian Exchange and significant social, cultural, and political changes on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean.

- II. The Columbian Exchange and development of the Spanish Empire in the Western Hemisphere resulted in extensive demographic, economic, and social changes.
 - A) Spanish exploration and conquest of the Americas were accompanied and furthered by widespread deadly epidemics that devastated native populations and by the introduction of crops and animals not found in the Americas.
 - B) In the *encomienda* system, Spanish colonial economies marshaled Native American labor to support plantation-based agriculture and extract precious metals and other resources.

- C) European traders partnered with some West African groups who practiced slavery to forcibly extract slave labor for the Americas. The Spanish imported enslaved Africans to labor in plantation agriculture and mining.
- D) The Spanish developed a caste system that incorporated, and carefully defined the status of, the diverse population of Europeans, Africans, and Native Americans in their empire.

Period 2 (1607-1754)

Key Concept 2.1: Europeans developed a variety of colonization and migration patterns, influenced by different imperial goals, cultures, and the varied North American environments where they settled, and they competed with each other and American Indians for resources.

- II. In the 17th century, early British colonies developed along the Atlantic coast, with regional differences that reflected various environmental, economic, cultural, and demographic factors.
 - A) The Chesapeake and North Carolina colonies grew prosperous exporting tobacco — a labor-intensive product initially cultivated by white, mostly male indentured servants and later by enslaved Africans.
 - B) The New England colonies, initially settled by Puritans, developed around small towns with family farms and achieved a thriving mixed economy of agriculture and commerce.
 - C) The middle colonies supported a flourishing export economy based on cereal crops and attracted a broad range of European migrants, leading to societies with greater cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity and tolerance.
 - D) The colonies of the southernmost Atlantic coast and the British West Indies used long growing seasons to develop plantation economies based on exporting staple crops. They depended on the labor of enslaved Africans, who often constituted the majority of the population in these areas and developed their own forms of cultural and religious autonomy.
 - E) Distance and Britain's initially lax attention led to the colonies creating self-governing institutions that were unusually democratic for the era. The New England colonies based power in participatory town meetings, which in turn elected members to their colonial legislatures; in the Southern colonies, elite planters exercised local authority and also dominated the elected assemblies.

Period 3 (1754-1800)

Key Concept 3.3: Migration within North America and competition over resources, boundaries, and trade intensified conflicts among peoples and nations.

- I. In the decades after American independence, interactions among different groups resulted in competition for resources, shifting alliances, and cultural blending.
 - A) Various American Indian groups repeatedly evaluated and adjusted their alliances with Europeans, other tribes, and the U.S., seeking to limit migration of white settlers and maintain control of tribal lands and natural resources. British alliances with American Indians contributed to tensions between the U.S. and Britain.

- B) As increasing numbers of migrants from North America and other parts of the world continued to move westward, frontier cultures that had emerged in the colonial period continued to grow, fueling social, political, and ethnic tensions.
- C) As settlers moved westward during the 1780s, Congress enacted the Northwest Ordinance for admitting new states; the ordinance promoted public education, the protection of private property, and a ban on slavery in the Northwest Territory.
- D) An ambiguous relationship between the federal government and American Indian tribes contributed to problems regarding treaties and American Indian legal claims relating to the seizure of their lands.
- E) The Spanish, supported by the bonded labor of the local American Indians, expanded their mission settlements into California; these provided opportunities for social mobility among soldiers and led to new cultural blending.

Period 4 (1800-1848)

Key Concept 4.3: The U.S. interest in increasing foreign trade and expanding its national borders shaped the nation's foreign policy and spurred government and private initiatives.

- II. The United States's acquisition of lands in the West gave rise to contests over the extension of slavery into new territories.
 - A) As overcultivation depleted arable land in the Southeast, slaveholders began relocating their plantations to more fertile lands west of the Appalachians, where the institution of slavery continued to grow.
 - B) Antislavery efforts increased in the North, while in the South, although the majority of Southerners owned no slaves, most leaders argued that slavery was part of the Southern way of life.
 - C) Congressional attempts at political compromise, such as the Missouri Compromise, only temporarily stemmed growing tensions between opponents and defenders of slavery.

Period 5 (1844-1877)

Key Concept 5.1: The United States became more connected with the world, pursued an expansionist foreign policy in the Western Hemisphere, and emerged as the destination for many migrants from other countries.

- I. Popular enthusiasm for U.S. expansion, bolstered by economic and security interests, resulted in the acquisition of new territories, substantial migration westward, and new overseas initiatives.
 - A) The desire for access to natural and mineral resources and the hope of many settlers for economic opportunities or religious refuge led to an increased migration to and settlement in the West.
 - B) Advocates of annexing western lands argued that Manifest Destiny and the superiority of American institutions compelled the United States to expand its borders westward to the Pacific Ocean.
 - C) The U.S. added large territories in the West through victory in the Mexican-American War and diplomatic negotiations, raising questions about the status of slavery, American Indians, and Mexicans in the newly acquired lands.

- D) Westward migration was boosted during and after the Civil War by the passage of new legislation promoting Western transportation and economic development.
- E) U.S. interest in expanding trade led to economic, diplomatic, and cultural initiatives to create more ties with Asia.

Period 6 (1865-1898)

Key Concept 6.2: The migrations that accompanied industrialization transformed both urban and rural areas of the United States and caused dramatic social and cultural change.

- II. Larger numbers of migrants moved to the West in search of land and economic opportunity, frequently provoking competition and violent conflict.
 - A) The building of transcontinental railroads, the discovery of mineral resources, and government policies promoted economic growth and created new communities and centers of commercial activity.
 - B) In hopes of achieving ideals of self-sufficiency and independence, migrants moved to both rural and boomtown areas of the West for opportunities, such as building the railroads, mining, farming, and ranching.
 - C) As migrant populations increased in number and the American bison population was decimated, competition for land and resources in the West among white settlers, American Indians, and Mexican Americans led to an increase in violent conflict.
 - D) The U.S. government violated treaties with American Indians and responded to resistance with military force, eventually confining American Indians to reservations and denying tribal sovereignty.
 - E) Many American Indians preserved their cultures and tribal identities despite government policies promoting assimilation, and they attempted to develop self-sustaining economic practices.

Period 7 (1890-1945)

Key Concept 7.1: Growth expanded opportunity, while economic instability led to new efforts to reform U.S. society and its economic system.

- II. In the Progressive Era of the early 20th century, Progressives responded to political corruption, economic instability, and social concerns by calling for greater government action and other political and social measures.
 - A) Some Progressive Era journalists attacked what they saw as political corruption, social injustice, and economic inequality, while reformers, often from the middle and upper classes and including many women, worked to effect social changes in cities and among immigrant populations.
 - B) On the national level, Progressives sought federal legislation that they believed would effectively regulate the economy, expand democracy, and generate moral reform. Progressive amendments to the Constitution dealt with issues such as prohibition and woman suffrage.
 - C) Preservationists and conservationists both supported the establishment of national parks while advocating different government responses to the overuse of natural resources.

- D) The Progressives were divided over many issues. Some Progressives supported Southern segregation, while others ignored its presence. Some Progressives advocated expanding popular participation in government, while others called for greater reliance on professional and technical experts to make government more efficient. Progressives also disagreed about immigration restriction.

Period 8 (1945-1980)

Key Concept 8.1: The United States responded to an uncertain and unstable postwar world by asserting and working to maintain a position of global leadership, with far-reaching domestic and international consequences.

- II. Cold War policies led to public debates over the power of the federal government and acceptable means for pursuing international and domestic goals while protecting civil liberties.
 - A) Americans debated policies and methods designed to expose suspected communists within the United States even as both parties supported the broader strategy of containing communism.
 - B) Although anticommunist foreign policy faced little domestic opposition in previous years, the Vietnam War inspired sizable and passionate antiwar protests that became more numerous as the war escalated, and sometimes led to violence.
 - C) Americans debated the merits of a large nuclear arsenal, the military-industrial complex, and the appropriate power of the executive branch in conducting foreign and military policy.
 - D) Ideological, military, and economic concerns shaped U.S. involvement in the Middle East, with several oil crises in the region eventually sparking attempts at creating a national energy policy.

Key Concept 8.2: New movements for civil rights and liberal efforts to expand the role of government generated a range of political and cultural responses.

- II. Responding to social conditions and the African American civil rights movement, a variety of movements emerged that focused on issues of identity, social justice, and the environment.
 - A) Feminist and gay and lesbian activists mobilized behind claims for legal, economic, and social equality.
 - B) Latino, American Indian, and Asian American movements continued to demand social and economic equality and a redress of past injustices.
 - C) Despite an overall affluence in postwar America, advocates raised concerns about the prevalence and persistence of poverty as a national problem.
 - D) Environmental problems and accidents led to a growing environmental movement that aimed to use legislative and public efforts to combat pollution and protect natural resources. The federal government established new environmental programs and regulations

Period 9 (1980 to the Present)

Key Concept 9.3: The end of the Cold War and new challenges to U.S. leadership forced the nation to redefine its foreign policy and role in the world.

- II. Following the attacks of September 11, 2001, U.S. foreign policy efforts focused on fighting terrorism around the world.
- A) In the wake of attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, the United States launched military efforts against terrorism and lengthy, controversial conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq.
 - B) The war on terrorism sought to improve security within the United States but also raised questions about the protection of civil liberties and human rights.
 - C) Conflicts in the Middle East and concerns about climate change led to debates over U.S. dependence on fossil fuels and the impact of economic consumption on the environment.
 - D) Despite economic and foreign policy challenges, the United States continued as the world's leading superpower in the 21st century.