THE UNITED STATES

The following is an abbreviated chronology of the history of the United States (U.S.). Each section is followed by a list of significant people, places and events, but it is important to note that you cannot stop here. Study all presidents, presidential elections and critical politicians and Supreme Court justices. Research people by decade or era to unearth other important authors, philosophers, poets, artists, musicians, entertainers, athletes, scientists, criminals, state admissions, Constitutional Amendments and more that are not included specifically in these lists. History is a broad subject, and at the higher rungs of this contest, knowledge of trivia, pop culture and geography can enable contestants to answer questions at an early stage. Find your areas of interest and "rabbit" through the Internet and books, exploring what piques your interest. Please note that there will be questions on terms not included in this study guide and, conversely, some terms mentioned here may not be used in tests. Use this list as a starting point and work from there.

EARLY AMERICA

In prehistoric times, people from Asia migrated across a land bridge that crossed the Bering Strait to the northwest corner of North America to Asia. These original immigrants, now known as Native Americans, moved down through the North American continent to Mexico and South America. By the 11th century, Vikings had arrived in the Western Hemisphere, and in the late 15th century European explorers began trips to the New World. Slowly, Native American groups were decimated by disease and armed conflict or displaced. Many were pushed westward from their homelands.

Early America*

Anasazi & Pueblo
Leif Eriksson
Christopher Columbus
Columbian Exchange
John Cabot
Northwest Passage
Ponce de León
Fountain of Youth
St. Augustine
Jacques Cartier
Hernando de Soto
Seven Cities of Cíbola
Francisco Vázquez de Coronado
Walter Raleigh
Juan de Oñate

* For research purposes. No terms in this study guide are guaranteed to be on any official test.
COLONIAL TIMES

The British began to explore and settle the New World. Roanoke, one of their first settlements, mysteriously vanished. Jamestown was the first successful British colony. As other European countries scrambled to gain a toehold in the New World, new colonies were begun. Many of these new settlers were fleeing religious persecution. Over time, relations between colonies and their European "mother" countries were strained. This ultimately led to the French and Indian War and, later, to the Revolutionary War. At the onset of this conflict, the colonies banded together to form a Continental Congress and drafted a Declaration of Independence in 1776. They adopted the Articles of Confederation and later replaced these with the U.S. Constitution, combining the original 13 colonies into the United States.

EXPANSION WESTWARD

Settlers moved westward and, through the Louisiana Purchase, the U.S. acquired a huge amount of territory from France in 1803. The British opposed American expansion in the Northwest and Florida, culminating in the War of 1812. After this conflict, Florida was purchased from Spain. Slavery, a part of life in the New World almost from the beginning, became an issue that divided the agricultural Southerners and the increasingly industry oriented Northerners. This continued to be problematic as the country expanded and added new territories. Westward migration populated territories all the way to the Pacific Coast, and railroads were constructed. Contention with Native American tribes continued as they were pushed from their homelands and, ultimately, forcibly moved to reservations.
Conflict between the industrialized North and agricultural South led to the Civil War. Slavery was a critical issue during the election of 1860. Abraham Lincoln was elected, giving control of the government to Republicans of the North. Many Southern states chose to secede from the Union and form the Confederate States of America. This conflict between the Union forces of the North and the Confederate forces of the South resulted in a Civil War that lasted from 1861 to 1865. The Emancipation Proclamation was issued by Lincoln in 1863, and the 13th Amendment later officially abolished slavery in the U.S. Slaves, now freedmen, became tenant farmers or relocated, struggling to find their position in the political climate. The Confederacy surrendered and the Reconstruction period followed. During this time, the North dictated how the South could operate. Much of the South was left impoverished, and Carpetbaggers and Scalawags preyed on Southerners. The 14th Amendment extended equal protection to all people born or naturalized in the U.S., and the 15th Amendment enfranchised all male citizens, but not women. Enforcement of these amendments was gradual. Native American men who had not yet been given citizenship continued to be excluded from voting.

Above: East and West shaking hands at the laying of the last rail of Union Pacific Railroad, May 10, 1869. Source: Yale University Libraries (public domain).
INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION & PROGRESSIVE ERA*

More European immigrants flooded into the new country due to their depressed economy. The U.S. entered a prosperous period around 1900, and movement from an agricultural to an industrial and service oriented nation continued. The Industrial Revolution began in Britain and later spilled into the U.S. American Industry expanded rapidly due to advances in technology, such as production lines, cotton gins, automobiles, airplanes and other innovations. Expansion continued in the West, and Native American uprisings were forcibly put down. Due to the growth of railroads and automobiles, people were no longer restricted to living near their work place. This brought increased mobility and the growth of suburban communities. Government continued growing during the Progressive Era, and the government and big businesses clashed. The Sherman Antitrust Act gave the government power to regulate big business in order to prevent large monopolies. Both Prohibition and the Women's Suffrage Movement began during this era. Segregation was approved by Plessy v. Ferguson, a Supreme Court case. The Monroe Doctrine had protected the continent from European expansion, and in the early 1900s, Roosevelt expanded this protection to the entire Western Hemisphere with the Roosevelt Corollary. This led to the U.S. support of Panamanian independence from Colombia, and enabled the construction of the Panama Canal.

"Whether you think you can or you think you can't -- you're right." Henry Ford

WORLD WAR I (WWI)*

This war began in Europe and pitted the Allies, which included Britain, France and Russia, against the Central Powers, or Austria-Hungary, Germany and the Ottoman Empire. The sinking of the RMS Lusitania infuriated U.S. citizens and the government, and the U.S. was finally drawn into the conflict by the interception of the Zimmermann Telegram. At the conclusion of the war, the Spanish flu was spread by movement of troops, and the pandemic infected 20% of the global population. The Treaty of Versailles set the terms for the end of the war and established the League of Nations, which the U.S. failed to join in spite of President Woodrow Wilson and his Fourteen Point Plan. The terms of this treaty were contentious and left the world open to enter a second war two decades later.

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THE ROARING TWENTIES

Just before 1920, the 18th Amendment was passed and Prohibition began. Bootlegging and secret, illegal alcohol stills flourished, and private clubs, or speakeasies, sold alcohol, which was against the law. Prohibition was unsuccessful and repealed by the 21st Amendment. In 1920, the women’s suffrage movement culminated in the passage of the 19th Amendment which gave women the right to vote. Economic prosperity enabled the growth of leisure activities, including sporting events and innovation in literature and music in the form of jazz and blues. The period’s booming economic growth proved unsustainable and the decade ended on the eve of the Great Depression.

Above: Louis Armstrong, 1953. Source: Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division

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THE GREAT DEPRESSION

The Stock Market Crash of 1929, or Black Tuesday, marked the beginning of the Great Depression. When fear hit the populace, people began pulling their assets from banks, which in turn caused bank failures. This period saw massive unemployment in cities and was compounded by the Dust Bowl in the Midwest and Southwest that crippled agriculture. Franklin D. Roosevelt (FDR) was elected president in 1932 and worked to pull the country from the Depression. He combatted economic instability by enacting the New Deal and creating jobs that improved public works, like the Tennessee Valley Authority and the Hoover Dam. Many federal acts were instituted that aided farmers and paid subsidies to protect farmers in bad times.

Left: Amelia Earhart; Second from left: Hindenburg disaster

Hollywood
flappers
George Washington Carver
Black Sox Scandal
Teapot Dome Scandal
Lost Generation
Scopes Trial
F. Scott Fitzgerald
Ernest Hemingway
Louis Armstrong
Duke Ellington
Irving Berlin
Charlie Chaplin
Albert Einstein
George & Ira Gershwin
Harry Houdini
Harlem Renaissance
Charles Lindbergh
Will Rogers
Babe Ruth
The Jazz Singer
Walt Disney
WORLD WAR II (WWII)*

This war originated in Europe and pitted the Axis against the Allies. The Axis was centered in Germany and led by the Nazis and theirführer, Adolf Hitler. It also included Japan under Emperor Shōwa, or Hirohito, and Italy under Benito Mussolini. The Allies included the British Commonwealth, France, Poland and later the U.S. German blitzkrieg warfare was initially successful. Germany perpetrated a large-scale genocide of Jews and minorities called the Holocaust. The Japanese bombed the U.S. fleet in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. As a result, President Roosevelt asked Congress to declare war on Japan in a speech proclaiming December 7, 1941, "a date which will live in infamy." Unlike the previous world war, much of the fighting was between airplanes with ace pilots. The beginning of the end of the war in Europe was a massive amphibious invasion on the beaches of Normandy in France called Operation Overlord and referred to as D-Day. Shortly after, Italy surrendered. The Germans surrendered in 1945. Later in the year, the U.S. dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan, and this ended the war in the Pacific.

POST-WORLD WAR II*

Negotiations at the end of the war redrew many European borders and broke Germany into two parts. Berlin was split into East Berlin, controlled by the Soviet Union (USSR), and West Berlin, controlled by Britain and the U.S. These two were split by the Berlin Wall until 1990. After WWII the Cold War, a period of tension between communist and democratic governments, ensued. Wartime industrialization had helped pull the U.S. from the Depression. Women had taken on jobs originally held by men and were displaced as men returned from the war. This displacement would prove to be a factor contributing to the ignition of the Women’s Rights Movement. African American rights also came to the forefront of political issues, and Plessy v. Ferguson was overturned by the decision in the Brown v. Board of Education, which declared segregation illegal. Civil unrest followed as the government began to enforce the integration of public schools and buildings. The USSR put missiles in Cuba aimed at the U.S. in 1962. Under President John F. Kennedy (JFK), the U.S. blockaded Cuba and threatened invasion. This Cuban Missile Crisis was finally defused when the U.S. agreed to remove missiles from Turkey and the Soviets agreed to remove their Cuban missiles. The Vietnam War lingered from 1965 to 1973 in Southeast Asia between the communists in North Vietnam and the democratic government of South Vietnam. The Soviets backed the North and the U.S. fought for the South in what was to become a very unpopular war. The U.S. eventually withdrew, and the North Vietnamese overtook the peninsula. The Space Race began during this period, and the Apollo 11 mission put the first men on the moon.
CURRENT PERIOD*

The computer industry advanced rapidly during this period, aptly dubbed the 'Computer Age.' Before this time, computers were primarily used only by large corporations and the military. The addition of user-friendly features caused the demand for computers to rise until computers finally became common household items. The IBM Corporation grew enormously in large business installations and later entered the personal laptop area. In 1976, Apple Inc. began developing small computers for individuals, growing to a range of products based on computer technology that now includes phones, watches, tablets, and more. This technology has pushed society to become increasingly global and enabled the U.S. to take on the role of an international mediator. During this era, the U.S. has been very involved in Middle Eastern affairs. This includes Operation Desert Shield, Operation Desert Storm, and the Persian Gulf War. Later, a terrorist group called Al-Qaeda hijacked and crashed planes into both World Trade Center towers and the Pentagon. As a result of this, President George W. Bush declared a War on Terror. A part of this movement was the Iraq War of 2003 in which the U.S. invaded Iraq and deposed Hussein. This current period is less "history" and more "current events" for today's students. The timbre of the times primarily addresses social issues, relations with other countries, environmental issues, technology, and other large areas.

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HISTORY IN A 'NUTSHELL' - GET MORE TERMS IN A TIMELINE!

The History Essentials book presents a plethora of historical milestones and names in a thoughtfully arranged timeline format. Jam-packed with events and people who have changed the course of history, The History Essentials 'fills in the gaps' with facts that may have escaped your studies or memory—until now. While reading, take time for many, fun, 'rabbit trail' adventures by researching unfamiliar terms along the way. Look up words in bold or entire periods or cultures, and concentrate on topics that pique your interest. Then, delve deeper and keep going as your fascination with history expands. In doing so, you will begin to round out your knowledge of history without losing your place, because you can always return to the timeline and pick up where you left off.

History Essentials can help shape, plan, and organize study goals for history contests, including the National History Bee. Involvement in the National History Bee on any level is a fantastic achievement, and Hexco Academic is proud to support this contest.*

*Disclaimer: The contest content of the History Bee or any other contest is not limited to the events in this book or the Official Study Guide. There is no guarantee that this material will appear in the National History Bee or other competitions. A portion of the proceeds from the sale of this book go to the National History Bee.