

College Guild
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Histories

Unit 1 of 5

*"This knowledge is priceless to many lost souls behind bars
and can be the difference between reintegration and recidivism."*

~ David ~

In this Course, the history of different subjects from the Post World War I era and Revolutions to the history of Jazz and Musicals will be explored. You'll read about writing, immigration, medicine, and many important names along the way.

This first Unit begins with an introduction to history.

INTRODUCTION

The study of History is such a broad topic it can be hard to know what we're even trying to learn. Are we simply reading information? Studying from the past? Looking to the future? The first and biggest question is: **What is history?** Here are some famous answers to this question:

"History is a fable agreed upon." -- Napoleon Bonaparte

History is *"little more than the register of the crimes, follies and misfortunes of mankind."* -- Edward Gibbon

History is a record of *"the progress of the human spirit."* -- Marquis de Condorcet

1. Pick two quotations and explain what they mean to you.

2. What do you think history is?

A second question to think about is: **Why do we study history?** Here are some famous answers to this question:

"Histories make men wise." -- Francis Bacon

History can *"teach us humility, skepticism and awareness of ourselves."* -- Margaret MacMillan

"The only thing we have to learn from history is that we never learn from history." -- Friedrich Hegel

3. If we do study history, can we truly discover what actually happened many years ago or even today? Explain.

4. Can we write about history fairly, without prejudice? If so, how do we go about it? If not, why not?

5. Pick an historical event in your own life, (you can make up a fictional character instead if you want). Why was this moment life-changing?

Let's consider a few people that have been talked about a lot in history. Reading about people of the past can be interesting and helpful.

Christopher Columbus (1451-1506)

Columbus was born in Genoa, Italy and became the first modern European explorer to colonize the Americas. Christopher worked on a merchant ship, and then went to Lisbon, Portugal to study math, astronomy, cartography, and navigation. Towards the end of the 1400s, Europeans were having difficulty reaching Asia by land because the routes were treacherous, so instead they opted to sail to the west of Africa and around the bottom of it, then swooping up towards Asia. Columbus wanted to sail straight West, without bothering to go around the huge continent of Africa. In 1491, he finally found someone who would support his plan: the Spanish monarchs Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabella of Castile. They, along with Columbus, had hopes of colonizing new lands and spreading Catholicism across the globe. 1492 marked the year of his first voyage. Setting off in hopes of finding Asia, Columbus and his three boats landed in the Bahamian islands instead. He left forty men to make a settlement on Hispaniola (present-day Haiti) and returned home. In 1493, he sailed back, and after visiting the Americas, found Hispaniola destroyed. So, he left his brothers Bartolomeo and Diego behind to rebuild the settlement. In 1498, Columbus sailed west across the Atlantic to the settlement once again only to find the colonists had staged a revolt because of the brutal treatment by Columbus's brothers. In 1502, Columbus took his last voyage across the Atlantic; he made it to Panama but had to turn back because of hostile natives.

6. How would you go about establishing peace with natives?

7. Write a ten-line dialogue between Columbus and the Hispaniola natives.

George Washington (1732-1799)

George grew up in Virginia and was home-schooled from the ages of seven to fifteen, while also learning the skill of growing tobacco, stock raising, and surveying. His father died when he was eleven, and his half-brother, Lawrence, then took over the task of raising George. When he was sixteen, George went with a surveying party to plot Virginia's western lands, and this piqued his interest in colonizing the west. When the French and Indian War began, George worked himself up the ladder of command and was in control of all Virginia troops by the age of twenty-three. Frustrated with the war and having some health problems, George settled down with Martha Danridge and her two children (both of whom died young), and took to farming, fishing, and horseback riding. He stayed involved in politics though, and in 1775 he was made Major General and Commander-in-Chief of the colonial forces against Great Britain. After many trials and victories, George resigned in 1783 after the Americans won their independence. He attempted to return to his quiet life of farming, but was chosen to lead the Constitutional Convention, held in Philadelphia, which was aimed at revising the Articles of Confederation. In 1789, after the new Constitution passed, George was elected the first President of the United States. (See Appendix 1 for the Bill of Rights.)

8. George was fairly well-off as a kid and as an adult. On the flipside, do you think coming from humble beginnings makes you work harder or settle for less? Explain.

9. How does running an army differ from running a country? What characteristics do you need for each?

Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929-1968)

Born under the name Michael King Jr., Martin Luther King Jr. grew up in Georgia with his two parents, older sister, and younger brother. His father followed in the footsteps of Martin's grandfather and became a pastor at the Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta. He changed his name to Martin Luther King, Sr. after the German Protestant religious leader, and

Michael soon changed his name as well. Martin's grandmother died when he was twelve, and he was so distraught about the event (partly because he was watching a parade he wasn't supposed to be at when she died), that he allegedly attempted suicide by jumping from a second story window at his house. Martin skipped several grades in high school and entered college when he was just fifteen. He struggled with religion at the time and went through phases of being rebellious against his father by drinking and becoming involved with a white girl. Eventually, his struggle led him to believe that religion might help with social change. In 1955, after Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat on a bus to a white person, Martin led a city-wide bus boycott. After some success in revitalizing the Civil Rights movement in Alabama, he helped found the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, which aimed to use non-violent protests to support equal treatment of African Americans. In 1963 after a peaceful march on Washington, D.C., Martin gave his famous "I Have A Dream" speech (See Appendix 2) in which he proclaimed his desire to have all men be brothers. Martin continued to lead marches, earning the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964, but was assassinated in 1968.

10. Do you think parents should have an influence over their adult children's religion? Why or why not?

11. Imagine that you have just heard Martin Luther King deliver the "I Have A Dream Speech". Write a letter to a family member with your reactions.



Christopher Columbus



George Washington



Martin Luther King, Jr.

IMMIGRATION

Now we will turn to immigration to the U.S. and how it has built our country. As one student of American history has put it, "The immigrants are American history" (Oscar Handlin). The process began gradually perhaps 20,000 years ago (no one knows the date for sure), when it is believed that the ancestors of Native American Indians migrated across to North America from what is now Russia. In modern times (that is, 500 years ago) it continued with waves of peoples from across the Atlantic, the forced immigration of West Africans into slavery, and then with more and more Europeans and Asians and Latin Americans, right up until today.

Over the years, both the new-comers and the people already settled here have had very different ideas about immigration and its role in our history. Some people, like Emma Lazarus, have wanted to welcome the new-comers:

*Give me your tired, your poor
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!*

(Lines at the base of the Statue of Liberty by Emma Lazarus)

12. Put this quotation into your own words.

13. Why do you think Lady Liberty is holding a torchlight?



Other people have raised searching, often emotional questions. Has immigration enriched our country culturally? Is it good for the country economically? Is it harmful? Should new-comers be absorbed into the way of life of the majority, or should they preserve their traditions and their languages? Below are some expressions of these ideas:

"Let them keep alive Italian and German music and literature, Balkan handicrafts, and the folk-lore dances of the Old World; -- not for the sake of the Old World, but as elements contributory to American culture." -- Horace J. Bridges

"Both the intelligence and the prosperity of our working people are endangered by the present immigration. Cheap labor, ignorant labor, takes our jobs and cuts our wages... Chinamen and others drive out the American." -- Samuel Gompers

"Here [in America] individuals of all nations are melted into a new race of men, whose labors and posterity will one day cause great changes in the world." -- Michel de Crevecoeur

14. Which quotation do you agree with the most? Why?

15. What should be the balance between immigrants adapting to American culture vs. keeping their own culture/traditions? Use (at least) two examples.



Ellis Island

As wave upon wave of new-comers have come flooding into what is now the United States, they have shaped our national character, the way we live and think, what we believe, the way we work and play. Native Americans were here when the Spanish arrived in Texas and New Mexico in the 16th Century and the English in Virginia and New England in the 17th Century. At first, they welcomed the English and taught them a lot about how to hunt and cultivate the land in what seemed to the immigrants to be a wilderness. Then, when the English began to take over their land and restrict their freedom, the Native Americans resisted vigorously with warfare that lasted late into the 19th Century in the West. Ultimately, their way of life rooted in their closeness to nature was severely curtailed if not destroyed as they were rounded up onto reservations. Many people, probably most people in this country, were brought up with a stereotyped image of Native Americans based on our perception of those years.



16. What has the Native American way of life meant to our country in the long run? What are some cultural contributions that were made?

17. Write a poem in the voice of a Native American seeing/experiencing the English settlers.

The next century saw more English immigrants increasingly mingled with Scottish, Irish, German, and Dutch people with Africans brought into slavery and some English prisoners brought here to work. But their numbers were small compared to the huge migration that was about to begin. From 1815, when the chaos of the Napoleonic wars ended, until the beginning of World War I, thirty-five million people from Europe and Asia came to this country. They came for various reasons. The Irish came to escape political oppression, poverty, and famine when the potato crops failed. Some Germans came to find religious freedom and land and opportunity. Some Slavs from eastern Europe came because they lost their small plots of land when large land-holders took them over. Many Asians came to work in mines and fields in conditions of servitude. That is, they had to work off contracted time with an employer before they could be free to find their own way.

18. Think of some examples of ways in which immigrant people have brought new culture to America.

Whatever the circumstances of their arrival here, many immigrants, especially from northern Europe, were at first welcomed. It was a time of optimism in the young United States. There was plenty of land, and there were plenty of jobs. People sang and wrote about their excitement and their opportunity. There was a popular song in Scotland called, "To the West, To the West, To the Land of the Free." Below is a stanza from the song.

*To the west, to the west, to the land of the free
Where mighty Missouri rolls down to the sea;
Where a man is a man if he's willing to toil,
And the humblest may gather the fruits of the soil.*

Americans, too, rejoiced in the explosion of new life in the U.S. The poet Walt Whitman wrote about it. An excerpt from the poem is below.

*I hear America singing, the varied carols I hear,
Those of mechanics, each one singing his as it should be blithe and strong,
The carpenter singing as he measures his plank or beam,
The mason singing his as he makes ready for work, or leaves off work,
The boatman singing what belongs to him in his boat, the deckhand singing on the steamboat deck,
The shoemaker singing as he sits on his bench, the hatter singing as he stands,
The woodcutter's song, the ploughboy's on his way in the morning, or at noon intermission or at sundown,
The delicious singing of the mother, or of the young wife at work, or of the girl sewing or washing,
Each singing what belongs to him or her and to none else...*

19. Write another line to this poem about another person singing his or her own particular song.

20. Write a story about your trip and first few days to America as an immigrant.

After about 1890, the immigration pattern changed to include people from the Mediterranean area and many more Slavs from Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and the Ukraine. At the same time, attitudes in the U.S. began to change. The upheaval of the Civil War had left great scars on the American psyche. There was a mounting change from welcoming immigrants and from hopes of true equality for the now freed African Americans (at least among some U.S. citizens) to fear and suspicion of immigrants and minorities. Americans were afraid that jobs would be lost to immigrants and to minorities, and they increasingly felt hostile toward immigrants who wanted to preserve their languages and their traditions instead of quickly adopting the "American" language and way of life. The result was at first prejudice expressed, for example, in want ads prefaced by "NO IRISH NEED APPLY," and then in legislation that restricted immigration. There was also Jim Crow legislation depriving African Americans of civil rights.



21. All of us have experienced prejudice because of who we are, whether it be race, ethnicity, gender, sexual preference, education, or anything else. What are (at least) three reasons that a person has prejudice against someone else?

Nowadays, thanks to leaders like Martin Luther King Jr., much of the most oppressive legislation is gone and there are many genuine efforts being made to eradicate prejudice and to make us one nation of equal people. One of these is the idea of affirmative action, the initiative that seeks to help those who have been denied human rights in the past by offering help in the present, especially in educational and employment opportunities.

22. Should individuals who have been discriminated against in the past be given special opportunities in education and employment, or should all men and women be treated equally according to merit?

23. What group in this country do you think faces the most intolerance?

24. Do you think life for minorities has improved since the Civil Rights Movement?

25. Is there hope for tolerance between races in this country?

BONUS: Draw a scene of what you found most interesting in this Unit.

Remember: First names only & please let us know if your address changes

Appendices

Histories: Unit 1 of 5

Appendix 1

Bill of Rights

Amendment 1: Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.

Amendment 2: A well-regulated militia, being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to keep and bear arms, shall not be infringed.

Amendment 3: No soldier shall, in time of peace be quartered in any house, without the consent of the owner, nor in time of war, but in a manner to be prescribed by law.

Amendment 4: The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized.

Amendment 5: No person shall be held to answer for a capital, or otherwise infamous crime, unless on a presentment or indictment of a grand jury, except in cases arising in the land or naval forces, or in the militia, when in actual service in time of war or public danger; nor shall any person be subject for the same offense to be twice put in jeopardy of life or limb; nor shall be compelled in any criminal case to be a witness against himself, nor be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor shall private property be taken for public use, without just compensation.

Amendment 6: In all criminal prosecutions, the accused shall enjoy the right to a speedy and public trial, by an impartial jury of the state and district wherein the crime shall have been committed, which district shall have been previously ascertained by law, and to be informed of the nature and cause of the accusation; to be confronted with the witnesses against him; to have compulsory process for obtaining witnesses in his favor, and to have assistance of counsel for his defense.

Amendment 7: In suits at common law, where the value in controversy shall exceed twenty dollars, the right of trial by jury shall be preserved, and no fact tried by a jury, shall be otherwise reexamined in any court of the United States, than according to the rules of the common law.

Amendment 8: Excessive bail shall not be required, nor excessive fines imposed, nor cruel and unusual punishments inflicted.

Amendment 9: The enumeration in the Constitution, of certain rights, shall not be construed to deny or disparage others retained by the people.

Amendment 10: The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the states, are reserved to the states respectively, or to the people.

Appendix 2

Excerpt from *I Have A Dream* -- Martin Luther King, Jr. (1963)

I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal."

I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia, the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood.

I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a state sweltering with the heat of injustice, sweltering with the heat of oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice.

I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.

I have a *dream* today!

I have a dream that one day, down in Alabama, with its vicious racists, with its governor having his lips dripping with the words of "interposition" and "nullification" -- one day right there in Alabama little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls as sisters and brothers.

I have a *dream* today!

I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, and every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places will be made plain, and the crooked places will be made straight, "and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together...."

Free at last! Free at last!

*Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!*³

Citations

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