

The United States : An Overview

1- About the United States of America (USA):

The United States is a country **located** in North America, **bordering** the Atlantic Ocean and Pacific Ocean. **Neighboring** countries are Canada and Mexico. The **geography** of the United States is varied, with mountains in the west, a broad central plain, and low mountain in the east. The **government** system is a constitution-based federal republic with a strong democratic tradition; the president is the chief of state and head of government. The United States has an advanced mixed **economy** in which there is a variety of private freedom combined with centralized economic planning and government regulation.



2- History:

For centuries native peoples lived across the vast expanse that would become the United States. Starting in the 16th century, settlers moved from Europe to the New World, established colonies, and displaced these native peoples. Explorers arrived from Spain in 1565 at St. Augustine, Florida, and the British landed in 1587 to establish a colony in Roanoke, in present-day Virginia. In 1606 another British colony was established in what would become Jamestown, Virginia. From there, the French founded Quebec in 1608, then the Dutch started a colony in 1609 in present-day New York. Europeans continued to settle in the New World in ever-increasing numbers throughout the next couple of centuries.

Conflict with the Native Americans:

While Native Americans resisted European efforts to gain land and power, they were often outnumbered and didn't have as powerful of weapons. The settlers also brought diseases that the native peoples had not faced before, and these illnesses sometimes had horrible effects. A 1616 epidemic killed an estimated 75 percent of the Native Americans in the New England region of North America.

During this time, fights between the settlers and Native Americans erupted often, particularly as more people claimed land where the Native Americans lived. The U.S. government signed nearly 400 peace treaties between the mid-18th century and the mid-19th century to try to show they wanted peace with the Indigenous tribes. But the government did not honor most of these treaties, and even sent military units to forcibly remove Native Americans from their lands.

For example, in 1830, President Andrew Jackson signed the Indian Removal Act, which granted land west of the Mississippi River to Native American tribes who agreed to give up their lands. But this broke with other treaties he had signed with Native American tribes in the Southeast. The removal was supposed to be voluntary, but Jackson used legal and military action to remove several tribes from their homelands and ended nearly 70 treaties during his presidency.

By the mid-19th century, most Native American tribes had been wiped out or moved to live on much smaller portions of land in the Midwest.

Declaring Independence:

In 1776, colonists living in the New England area of the New World drafted the Declaration of Independence, a document that stated that the American colonies were tired of being ruled by Great Britain (now called the United Kingdom). The settlers fought for—and won—their independence and formed a union of states based on a new constitution. But despite stating that “all men are created equal” in the Declaration of Independence, the new country was home to millions of enslaved people.

3- Ethnic Culture:

Throughout its history, the United States has been a nation of immigrants. The population is diverse with people from all over the world seeking refuge and a better way of life. In terms of ethnic culture, initial US settlement was largely composed of British arrivals, who shared North America with indigenous Native-American communities and other Europeans, such as the French and the Spanish. Until 1776, over half of the population came from the British Isles. These people gradually assimilated other European settlers into a white, mainly Anglo-American, Protestant dominant culture. They were responsible for promoting many of the new nation’s political, social, constitutional, and religious institutions, which produced a mainstream American identity and set of values whose impact is still felt. Their political principles were based on democracy, grass-roots sovereignty (independence of people) and skepticism about the government. Their social values were conditioned by a belief in individualism, a Protestant work ethic (working hard in this life to be rewarded here and in the next) and the rule of law (respect for and acceptance of legal rules applicable to all individuals irrespective of status or wealth).

4- Religious Culture:

Religion is the second major American culture and has its roots in the many faiths that colonists, slaves, and immigrants have brought to the USA over the centuries. Some early settlers escaped the religious persecution in their homelands and hoped to establish communities based on what were often non-conformist beliefs. Others brought established native denominations with them. The religious motivations of many initial arrivals were clear and provided an institutional and moral bedrock for the new nation. Many later immigrants also often strongly identified with their home faiths and preserved them in the new country. However, not all settlers or immigrants were religiously inspired. Some traveled for adventure, new experiences, escape from Europeans habits, material gain, and the acquisition of land. Although religion is a private matter and constitutionally separate from the state, it forms aspects of social, economic and political life beyond the purely denominational.

5- Political-legal Culture:

The third major American culture consists of political-legal elements. Its nature has been largely shaped by:

- The central place of law and the Constitution in American life.
- The restriction that the Constitution places upon politics,
- The fact that Americans believe in minimal government, especially at all federal level.
- The perceived need to produce consensual (widely agreed) national policies.

Citizens over the age of 18 years old vote to elect the President and Vice President of United States every four years. The president lives in the White House in the capital city of Washington, D.C. In addition, **there are two houses of Congress: The Senate and the House of Representatives.** There are **100 senators**, two from each of the 50 states and each serves a six-year term. There are 435 representatives who must be elected every two years. **The Supreme Court** is made up of nine justices who are picked by the president and must be approved by Congress.

5- Geography:

Figure 1. The Map of the USA

The United States of America is **the world's third largest country in size and nearly the third largest in terms of population**. Located in North America, the country is **bordered on** the west by the Pacific Ocean and to the east by the Atlantic Ocean. Along the northern border is Canada and the southern border is Mexico. There are **50 states and the District of Columbia**.



Assignment 1: (Compulsory)

It is commonly said that "Columbus discovered America." It would be more accurate, perhaps, to say that he introduced the Americas to Western Europe during his four voyages to the region between 1492 and 1502. In a well-detailed paragraph, summarize the details of the discovery of America. (6pts)

References:

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