

A People's History of the United States Study Guide

**A People's History of the United States by Howard
Zinn**

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Contents

[A People's History of the United States Study Guide.....1](#)

[Contents.....2](#)

[Plot Summary.....3](#)

[Chapters 1-5.....5](#)

[chapters 6-10.....13](#)

[chapters 11-15.....17](#)

[chapters 16-20.....19](#)

[chapters 21-25.....21](#)

[Characters.....23](#)

[Objects/Places.....26](#)

[Themes.....29](#)

[Style.....31](#)

[Quotes.....34](#)

[Topics for Discussion.....36](#)



Plot Summary

"A People's History of the United States" by Howard Zinn is a work of non-fiction. The book is often recognized as one of the most accurate and valuable historical references in American history. The book begins with the world before Columbus came to the Americas and moves forward in chronological order until the year 2000. All major historical events are referenced in between those two times.

The book begins with Christopher Columbus' arrival in the Bahamas:

"Arawak men and women, naked, tawny, and full of wonder, emerged from their villages onto the island's beaches and swam out to get a closer look at the strange big boat. When Columbus and his sailors came ashore, carrying swords, speaking oddly, the Arawaks ran to greet them, brought them food, water, gifts" (Chap. 1, p. 1).

Columbus details his meeting with the Arawak in his ship's log, describing them as a people that would make fine slaves due to their ignorance. Columbus took some of the natives by force because he wanted to know where to find gold. Gold and spices were the two main things sought by Columbus as they were riches promised to the King and Queen of Spain. In return, Columbus would receive 10% of the profits from the sale of these goods.

Columbus never made it to Asia.

There is a great deal of emphasis on Columbus and other explorers in the beginning to show the existence of America before it was "discovered." Zinn discusses the brutality of those explorers and how they were determined to dominate and claim the goods of the land, e.g., gold, for their own and for their investors.

The history of enslavement continues with Cortes and Greenville. The story enters the United States at this point. The history of the Puritans and their battles with the natives begins. The Puritans began to spread out and to interfere with the lives and villages of the Pequot, Massachusetts, Narragansett, and other tribes. The relationships were relatively peaceful until the Puritans began to infringe on the natives, pushing them out of their native lands. The natives were not entirely innocent.

Zinn includes details that are often overlooked in the history books.

"Statistics tell the story. We find these in Michael Rogin's *Fathers and Children*: In 1790, there were 3,900,000 Americans, and most of them lived within 50 miles of the Atlantic Ocean. By 1830, there were 13 million Americans, and by 1840, 4,500,000 had crossed the Appalachian Mountains into the Mississippi Valley-that huge expanse of land crisscrossed by rivers flowing into the Mississippi from east and west. In 1820, 120,000 Indians lived east of the Mississippi. By 1844, fewer than 30,000 were left. Most of them had been forced to migrate westward. But the word "force" cannot convey what happened" (Chap. 7, p. 125).

The American Revolution is recounted.

Slavery is detailed in its many forms. This leads to the Civil War.

From the Civil War, Zinn moves forward very rapidly, covering the World Wars, Vietnam and up to the present. The War on Terror is briefly examined. Zinn asks readers to investigate American history further, to learn as much of the unbiased truth as possible.



Chapters 1-5

Chapters 1-5 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 1 begins with Christopher Columbus' arrival in the Bahamas:

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Columbus never made it to Asia as he had miscalculated the size of the world. Experts say Columbus would have been lost at sea. Columbus had landed on the Canary Islands before making his way to the Bahamas in October 1492.

After Columbus took the natives as hostages, he sailed to Cuba before sailing to Hispaniola. The Santa Maria had run aground in Hispaniola and Columbus used the ruined ship to build a fort which he named Navidad. This fort is considered to be the first military base located in the Western Hemisphere. Columbus left 39 of his men at the fort with orders to find more gold. Things turned bloody when some of the natives would not sell Columbus the number of bows and arrows he had demanded.

Columbus took the two remaining ships and set out for Spain. Upon his return he insisted that he had reached Asia and an island off of China, which were, in fact Cuba and Hispaniola. With more funding Columbus insisted that he could bring back gold and slaves. Columbus' second expedition was well funded.

Columbus returned to Navidad, which was actually located in Haiti, to find his sailors had been killed by natives. The sailors had raped and pillaged and in return were killed.

Columbus found little to no gold so he filled the ship with 500 Arawak slaves. Only 300 made it to Spain alive.

The Arawaks tried to fight. Spaniards killed many by hanging or burning them to death. The Arawak, knowing they could not survive, took matters into their own hands.

"Among the Arawaks, mass suicides began, with cassava poison. Infants were killed to save them from the Spaniards. In two years, through murder, mutilation, or suicide, half of the 250,000 Indians on Haiti were dead." (Chapter 1, p. 4).



By 1650 it was reported that there were no original Arawaks or descendants left alive.

It is said that the only source of information on the islands was written by a young priest named Bartolome de las Casas. The priest, who was involved in the conquest of Cuba, was also a slave owner but eventually had a change of heart and became a staunch and harsh critic of the Spaniards. Bartolome de las Casas eventually wrote a history of the Indies. That history became the first of many reports and histories to arrive regarding the European invasion of the Americas. Some historians find the reports hard to believe but Las Casas said as much in the reports, saying that the sheer numbers of those dead were so astounding that he had a hard time believing and may not if he had not seen it with his own eyes.

Knowing the true history of Columbus makes some people wonder how American history books can so thoroughly misrepresent Columbus and his voyages to the Americas.

Zinn comments on how many historians may not outright lie about Columbus but rather gloss over the facts. However, it is clear that Columbus is responsible for the genocide of the Arawak people.

Zinn says: "My point is not that we must, in telling history, accuse, judge, condemn Columbus in absentia. It is too late for that; it would be a useless scholarly exercise in morality." (Chapter 1, p. 9).

Zinn goes on to say that the horrors of society are often masked under an avalanche of other facts and that to dwell on those facts would be pointless, as they are in the past.

"My point is not to grieve for the victims and denounce the executioners. Those tears, that anger, cast into the past, deplete our moral energy for the present. And the lines are not always clear. In the long run, the oppressor is also a victim. In the short run (and so far, human history has consisted only of short runs), the victims, themselves desperate and tainted with the culture that oppresses them, turn on other victims." (Chapter 1, p. 10).

Zinn states that he will continue to be skeptical of governments and the attempts of those governments to ensnare ordinary people under the guise of common interest. Additionally, Zinn will not overlook cruelties inflicted on others.

Zinn asserts that Columbus's actions toward the Arawaks were repeated by Cortes Pizarro, and the English settlers of Massachusetts and Virginia.

Zinn discusses the history of the Aztecs which were born from the Zapotec, Mayan, and Toltec cultures. The Aztecs are known for their stellar construction abilities, development of a writing system and the priesthood. The Aztecs are also known to have sacrificed thousands of people to their gods. However, the Aztecs were also somewhat naïve. When Hernando Cortes arrived from Spain, the Aztecs believed Cortes to be a legendary man-god who had died 300 years previous and had returned with Quetzalcoatl. Therefore, Cortes was welcomed with open arms. Montezuma, King of the



Aztecs, probably had some reservations about Cortes. While Montezuma sent Cortes enormous amounts of treasure, he also asked Cortes to return to Spain.

Cortes was much like Columbus in that he sought gold.

Cortes began a march of death. He and his men went from town to town, deceiving the people, turning the Aztecs against one another. When Cortes and his men were confronted on the leaders of the Cholula to the square in Cholulu, the leaders had no idea they were about to be massacred. When Cortes returned to Mexico City, Montezuma was dead, the Aztec nation was ruined and the land had been claimed by the Spaniards.

A Spanish conquistador named Pizarro went to Peru and used the same tactics as Columbus and Cortes and all for the same reasons - gold.

The pattern continues in American when Richard Grenville arrived in 1585 with seven ships. Greenville found the Indians to be agreeable until one stole a silver cup. Greenville had the entire village sacked and burned.

In 1610, the settlers in Jamestown turned to the Indian chief Powhatan when food became scarce and people began to die of starvation and illness. Powhatan had been cordial and did not object when people settled on his lands and he also took in those that wished to join his settlements because of the promise of being fed while others were starving. However, after the "starving time" ended in the spring, the colony's governor demanded that Powhatan return the runaways. When Powhatan refused, soldiers killed many members of the Indian settlement including Powhatan's wife and children. Twelve years later total war ensued. The settlers decided that they could not live with them and so the Indians were massacred. In three years the Indian population under Powhatan's rule was destroyed.

The Pilgrims arrived to inhabited land in New England. John Winthrop, governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, decided that it was acceptable to take Indian land because while they had a "natural" right to it, it was not a "civil right."

The Puritans used biblical passages to defend their actions. For a time the Puritans and Pequot lived under relative peace. When a white trader was killed after committing a crime, the Puritans used it as an excuse to attack the Pequot and take Connecticut and Rhode Island.

The Narraganset Indians lumped together with the Pequot, were also attacked.

A bloody war began between the Indians and English settlers.

Francis Jennings wrote:

"The terror was very real among the Indians, but in time they came to meditate upon its foundations. They drew three lessons from the Pequot War: (1) that the Englishmen's most solemn pledge would be broken whenever obligation conflicted with advantage;



(2) that the English way of war had no limit of scruple or mercy; and (3) that weapons of Indian making were almost useless against weapons of European manufacture. These lessons the Indians took to heart." (Chapter. 1, p. 15).

Forty years after the end of the war, another began. The upper echelon of the Puritans wanted the war; the common English man did not. After a long fight, the English won the war but with dire consequences. However, the Indian raids did not end.

The Indian population, which had once numbered more than ten million, was decreased to less than a million. In addition to war, massive numbers of Indians died from diseases introduced by white men, including small pox.

Zinn claims that some people might see these actions as acceptable or even necessary to the advancement of civilization. Zinn questions how one can truly understand these actions unless the benefits and losses are weighed.

"If there are necessary sacrifices to be made for human progress, is it not essential to hold to the principle that those to be sacrificed must make the decision themselves? We can all decide to give up something of ours, but do we have the right to throw into the pyre the children of others, or even our own children, for a progress which is not nearly as clear or present as sickness or health, life or death?" (Chapter 1, p. 17).

Zinn asks how we can be certain that what was destroyed was indeed inferior.

Zinn also explains the reluctance to use the term "Indian" although there is some basis for the term as can be seen in physical proof of the migration of the people. Zinn reflects on the probable movements of the Indians leading back to the time of Julius Caesar and Christ.

The most powerful tribes in the northeast are discussed, including the League of the Iroquois and associated tribes, which included the Oneidas, Mohawks, Onondagas, Cayugas, and Senecas. Unlike traditional English families, the Indian culture is matrilineal.

Zinn wonders if the Europeans came to a culture in which people were peaceful, neither rich no poor, and thriving, was it necessary for annihilation?

In Chapter 2, J. Saunders Redding writes about a ship that arrived in North America 1619. The ship was mysterious in nature yet the cargo was obvious. The ship, headed for Jamestown, carried twenty slaves.

Zinn asserts that racism and slavery have affected the U.S. more than any other country. Zinn quotes W.E.B. Du Bois who wondered how it started, how it might end, and if black and white can live together without hatred.

The history of slavery is traced to Virginia where many historians believe that blacks were servants, not slaves. However, these servants were treated much differently than white servants. These behaviors and prejudices quickly evolved into slavery.



Unlike Columbus, the English settlers in Virginia could not make slaves of the Indians, as they were outnumbered. There was a shortage of white indentured servants. Many settlers, particularly those that were men of leisure in England, had little desire to do hard labor. By 1619, a million blacks had already been transported from Africa to the Caribbean and South America, to work as slaves. The people, brutally uprooted from their homes, were relatively helpless. Militarily speaking, the blacks were inferior to the English settlers but in no other way were they lesser people. Zinn compares the African and European cultures.

There was slavery present in Africa as well but it was markedly different than slavery in Europe and America. Zinn details the transport to America and how the face of slavery changed.

"By 1800, 10 to 15 million blacks had been transported as slaves to the Americas, representing perhaps one-third of those originally seized in Africa. It is roughly estimated that Africa lost 50 million human beings to death and slavery in those centuries we call the beginnings of modern Western civilization, at the hands of slave traders and plantation owners in Western Europe and America, the countries deemed the most advanced in the world." (Chapter 2, p. 29).

Zinn talks about natural antipathy and wonders if such a thing exists. After all, there is no history to suggest that blacks and whites have lived together under favorable conditions with no subordination, exploitation or enslavement.

In Chapter 3, Zinn writes about Bacon's Rebellion. In 1676, England decided to send 1,000 soldiers to Virginia with the hopes of maintaining order amongst the colonists. The Jamestown Settlement had been burned after the settlers faced a rebellion of white frontiersmen, slaves, and servants. The uprising was known as Bacon's Rebellion after its leader, Nathaniel Bacon. Eventually those that caused the uprising would be defeated and Bacon would be dead.

Bacon's Rebellion started due to a conflict over how the settlers should deal with the Indians, some of which were nearby and others that were on the western frontier but posing a constant threat. The uprising had been borne out of disagreements of how the Indians should be treated yet it was by far not the first conflict the settlers had with the Indians. After a series of raids, the House of Burgesses declared war on the Indians save for those that agreed to cooperate. The frontiers people were angry because although many wanted war, they did not want to pay for it.

Zinn discusses the "six of seven" in Jamestown and the development of a class system. It is believed that Bacon was among the upper class. It is assumed that Bacon was more interested in killing Indians than he was interested in righting the wrongs against the poor. Bacon died at age 29 and the death of the uprising was soon to follow.

Virginia possessed a complex chain of oppression. The Indians were attacked by white frontiersmen, who in turn were taxed and controlled by the elite members of the Jamestown settlement. The entire colony was exploited by England.



Poor people, often considered to be rogues and vagabonds, were sent to America in droves. Some went willingly, some did not. Some were indentured servants and were contracted to work for their masters for 5-7 years. In 1619 the first representative assembly was introduced in the form of the Virginia House of Burgesses. The assembly recorded and enforced the contracts between masters and their servants. Zinn describes the lives of the slaves and their almost non-existent liberties. Laws were made to protect slaves but were rarely enforced; statutes were created that allowed for abusive treatment.

Zinn also details the development of the class system in the colonies.

In Chapter 4, sometime around 1776, people in the upper echelon of the colonies' government decided that they should create a nation known as the United States. This action would free the colonies from the British Empire and permit them to create a new, privileged empire of their own. In theory, this work was brilliant, brave, and wise when it came to keeping profits of sales in the colonies, eliminating British taxes, and preventing uprisings that seemed to be occurring with frightening frequency.

"When we look at the American Revolution this way, it was a work of genius, and the Founding Fathers deserve the awed tribute they have received over the centuries. They created the most effective system of national control devised in modern times, and showed future generations of leaders the advantages of combining paternalism with command." (Chapter 4, p. 59).

Bacon's Rebellion seemed to start the worst of the uprisings. By 1760, there had been eighteen uprisings designed to create a coup to overthrow various branches of the colonial governments. Additionally, there had been six black rebellions, from New York to South Carolina, and forty riots of various origins.

Another aspect of the upcoming Revolutionary War was the concept that the Americans would stop fighting if they had a common enemy - Britain.

When Britain won the Seven Years' War against the French, the Americans no longer had to worry about the French inhabiting the colonies. The only enemies left to fight were the English and the Indians. The British had sided with the Indians and granted land to them in the Proclamation of 1763. While this idea did not form until other events were underway, it became clear to Colonial leaders that a new strategy could be developed.

The British had suffered financially from the Seven Years' War and turned to the colonies to replenish its coffers. Trade in the colonies had become wildly successful to the British. In 1700 colonial trade equaled £500,000; by 1770 it totaled £2,800,000.

Zinn details the tax situation of the time and how it was not difficult to cause bitter feelings toward the British. The Stamp Act of 1765 was the final straw.

In 1772, the Boston Committee of Correspondence was formed to organize anti-British activities. The biggest action was the Boston Tea Party of 1773.



Several leaders stepped forward in support of forming a bond against England. Patrick Henry and Thomas Paine are two of the most well-known supporters.

Thomas Paine's "Common Sense" sold hundreds of thousands of copies. It is assumed that almost every literate colonist read it or was informed about its contents. At this time pamphleteering was the chief theater of debate concerning the colonies' relationship with England.

Individual towns and colonies were asked to present their thoughts on a potential war with Britain. Many asserted that it was time to stop the infighting and band together against the Tyrannical King George. Thus, this statement was written:

"When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands...they should declare the causes..." (Chapter 4, p. 71).

This statement was so powerful that it became opening statement of the Declaration of Independence. The second paragraph outlined the colonies' philosophical statement:

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, that whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government..." (Chapter 4, p. 71).

The document also listed grievances against Britain's king and the absolute tyranny committed against the colonies.

In Chapter 5, a supreme difficulty had to be overcome regarding the Revolution. The leadership did not trust the mobs or poor people. Overall, the Revolution had no appeal to Indians and slaves. The white population would have to be wooed. Considering that nearly every white man owned a gun and could shoot, this persuasion was vital.

Slavery was an issue in the South since the slave uprising in Stono in 1739. South Carolina would have to be exempt from the war because its militia had to be utilized to keep slaves under control. Therefore the people included in the militia were white and excluded Negroes, Indians, white servants, and white men without a stable residence. Eventually, desperation would lead to the inclusion of those less than desirable whites.

As was predicted, the war took precedence over everything else and made the formerly threatening internal situations more stable, at least for the time being.

The Americans were far from successful in the opening battles of the war. The battles of Bunker Hill, Brooklyn Heights, Harlem Heights and the Deep South were marked losses. The Americans did win the battles of Trenton and Princeton before achieving a major success at Saratoga. It was a bleak situation until the French, eager for revenge



on England, stepped into help the Americans. The aid resulted in the final victory at Yorktown, Virginia, in 1781.

The Constitution was bound to follow as the Americans needed governance.

"The Constitution became even more acceptable to the public at large after the first Congress, responding to criticism, passed a series of amendments known as the Bill of Rights. These amendments seemed to make the new government a guardian of people's liberties: to speak, to publish, to worship, to petition, to assemble, to be tried fairly, to be secure at home against official intrusion. It was, therefore, perfectly designed to build popular backing for the new government. What was not made clear-it was a time when the language of freedom was new and its reality untested-was the shakiness of anyone's liberty when entrusted to a government of the rich and powerful." (Chapter 5, p. 99).



chapters 6-10

chapters 6-10 Summary and Analysis

In Chapter 6, the history of this period and before tends to overlook half of the population due to its gender. The merchants, landholders, political figures, military and explorers were all men often making women invisible. In some cases women were treated no better than slaves when it came to invisibility. Therefore black female slaves suffered the worst of oppression. It is true that women were the child bearers and that should have made them more important but it did not. Women were more often than not seen as sex partners, companions, servants, and warden/teacher of the children.

Zinn discusses in detail the treatment in other societies. The Indians are matriarchal in nature. When a South western Indian woman marries her husband comes to live with her family, something that was not done in other cultures. The Plains Indian tribe in the Midwest revered women as healers, herbalists and some times, holy people to whom members of the tribe would go to seek advice. The Sioux showed its opinion of its women in a puberty ceremony designed to ignite pride in its maidens:

"Walk the good road, my daughter, and the buffalo herds wide and dark as cloud shadows moving over the prairie will follow you... Be dutiful, respectful, gentle and modest, my daughter. And proud walking. If the pride and the virtue of the women are lost, the spring will come but the buffalo trails will turn to grass. Be strong, with the warm, strong heart of the earth. No people goes down until their women are weak and dishonored." (Chapter 6, p. 104).

It is clear that women were not treated as equals but they were treated with some level of respect.

In Chapter 7, while women were the most subordinate in the colonial society, it is clear that the Indians were the most foreign, the most exterior. Where women were handled with patronization, the Indians were handled with force. This attitude and behavior led to the "Indian Removal," a disenfranchisement of the Indians to land between the Appalachians and the Mississippi River, with the intention of having that land cleared for white occupancy. The same can be said of areas in the South where cotton would be planted, and in the North where the land was needed to grow grain.

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"Statistics tell the story. We find these in Michael Rogin's *Fathers and Children*: In 1790, there were 3,900,000 Americans, and most of them lived within 50 miles of the Atlantic Ocean. By 1830, there were 13 million Americans, and by 1840, 4,500,000 had crossed the Appalachian Mountains into the Mississippi Valley-that huge expanse of land crisscrossed by rivers flowing into the Mississippi from east and west. In 1820, 120,000 Indians lived east of the Mississippi. By 1844, fewer than 30,000 were left. Most of them



had been forced to migrate westward. But the word "force" cannot convey what happened." (Chap. 7, p. 125).

States began to create laws that would allow them to rule over Indians and dictate their actions as well as their whereabouts. The Indians were eventually given a choice. They could remain in their present regions but they would be forced to abide by state laws which would destroy tribal and personal rights. Additionally, it was all but guaranteed that they would be constantly harassed and invaded by white settlers. If the Indians would agree to go west they would be paid a stipend and granted lands on the other side of the Mississippi.

Treaties were created and broken to such a degree that tribes were lost or ruined.

In Chapter 8, the Louisiana Purchase had increased the size of the country two-fold. James Polk, a newly elected Democratic president had his eye on the next acquisition - the land now known as California. California was still part of Mexico at this time. Mexico had achieved its independence from Spain in 1821 and owned a great deal of the southwest, including what is now known as California, Texas, Utah, New Mexico, Nevada, Arizona, and part of Colorado. Eventually, Texas would secede from Mexico and declare itself to be the "Lone Star Republic." It became a part of the United States in 1845.

There was a controversy over the border between the U.S. and Mexico. It was often thought to be the Rio Grande which was not the southern boundary of Texas as was assumed by many. The Rio Grande was marked as the border because it was the site named by Mexican General Santa Anna after he was taken prisoner. Santa Anna had been forced to make this statement. The true border was the Nueces River, approximately 150 miles north. Polk wanted to encourage annexation of Texas and promised that if they cooperated in a war against Mexico that he would uphold their claims to the Rio Grande.

Not everyone was in favor of the Mexican war. In fact, many religious congregations such as the Quakers and Unitarians, were vehemently opposed to it. Perhaps one of the most famous members of the opposition is author Henry David Thoreau. Thoreau, who lived in Concord, Massachusetts, had been so opposed to the war that he refused to pay his Massachusetts poll tax. Thoreau was jailed for one night. He was released when his friends paid his tax without consent. Two years later "Civil Disobedience" was published as an essay.

"It is not desirable to cultivate a respect for the law, so much as for the right... Law never made men a whit more just; and, by means of their respect for it, even the well-disposed are daily made the agents of injustice. A common and natural result of an undue respect for law is, that you may see a file of soldiers...marching in admirable order over hill and dale to the wars, against their wills, ay, against their common sense and consciences, which makes it very steep marching indeed, and produces a palpitation of the heart." (Chapter 8, p. 156).



After a long and brutal fight, Mexico surrendered. Some wanted to take all of Mexico. In the end the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo of 1848, took half. The official Texas boundary was set at the Rio Grande; California and New Mexico were ceded.

Chapter 9: Slavery Without Submission, Emancipation Without Freedom

The rise in number of slaves between 1790 and 1860 was astronomical. In 1790 there were 500,000 slaves; by 1860 there were 4 million. The main reason for this was the cotton trade. In 1790 1000 tons of cotton was being produced; by 1860 it was a million tons. The government saw slavery as a means to an end. It became clear that it would take a full scale rebellion to end this trend, particularly since all laws, particularly in the southern states, were in favor of slave owners with no regard to the slaves themselves.

Zinn discusses the plantation system and its structure as well as the general description and treatment of the slaves.

The government attempted to create treaties and pass laws, not so much to protect and free the slaves but to appease those with power and to protect the marketplace. The violence against slaves was horrific. Zinn includes a very small sample of the reported incidents:

"The violence mounted through the late 1860s and early 1870s as the Ku Klux Klan organized raids, lynchings, beatings, burnings. For Kentucky alone, between 1867 and 1871, the National Archives lists 116 acts of violence. A sampling:

1. A mob visited Harrodsburg in Mercer County to take from jail a man name Robertson Nov. 14, 1867.
5. Sam Davis hung by a mob in Harrodsburg, May 28, 1868.
6. Wm. Pierce hung by a mob in Christian July 12, 1868.
7. Geo. Roger hung by a mob in Bradsfordville Martin County July 11, 1868.
10. Silas Woodford age sixty badly beaten by disguised mob.
109. Negro killed by Ku Klux Klan in Hay county January 14, 1871."

(Chapter 9, p. 204).

The fight for racial equality would not be an easy one nor would it be swift. Some wanted all out confrontation while others, like Booker T. Washington advocated caution and moderation. After hearing Washington's Cotton Exposition speech, John Hope, a young black man from Georgia, spoke to students at a Negro college in Nashville:

"If we are not striving for equality, in heaven's name for what are we living? I regard it as cowardly and dishonest for any of our colored men to tell white people or colored people that we are not struggling for equality... Yes, my friends, I want equality. Nothing less..."



Now catch your breath, for I am going to use an adjective: I am going to say we demand social equality... I am no wild beast, nor am I an unclean thing." (Chapter 10, p. 210).

Chapter 10: The Other Civil War

Zinn addressed the Anti-Renter Movement of the Hudson Valley. There was an economic crisis in 1837 which created a wave of unemployment. The Erie Canal was finished as was the first wave of building the railroad. The movement was eventually crushed by existing law, forcing tenants to pay rent. About the same time as the Anti-Renter Movement, Dorr's Rebellion emerged. It was a movement that called for electoral reform, prompted by the law that stated only landowners could vote. The Rebellion led to the formation of the Rhode Island Suffrage Association. The organization drafted a new constitution that allowed people to vote even if they did not own property. The rebellion eventually disintegrated and martial law declared. There was some compromise in the form of a new constitution.

Zinn covered the Flour Rebellion of 1837 and many of the economic crises and uprisings of which there is no complete record.

Issues with wages for women spawned the creation of the Lowell Girls and the Molly Maguires.

Corporations and government wielded too much power. Labor unions became a hot topic.



chapters 11-15

chapters 11-15 Summary and Analysis

In Chapter 11, by 1877 it became clear that the governments were focused on becoming a dynamic and unstoppable economic power despite all costs. Strikes would not be tolerated. Blacks, whites, and immigrants would be put to work and would be rewarded by their status - gender, race, national origin, and social class. This movement would create new and separate levels of oppression and also create a stable pyramid of wealth.

In the year 1877, the signals were given for the rest of the century: the blacks would be put back; the strikes of white workers would not be tolerated; the industrial and political elites of North and South would take hold of the country and organize the greatest march of economic growth in human history. They would do it with the aid of, and at the expense of, black labor, white labor, Chinese labor, European immigrant labor, female labor, rewarding them differently by race, sex, national origin, and social class, in such a way as to create separate levels of oppression-a skillful terracing to stabilize the pyramid of wealth.

The Industrial Revolution changed everything, speeding up processes to increase production, reducing the need for human labor, and spawning an era of mechanical and electrical inventions.

Zinn addressed the movements that tried to fight this oppression and corruption, including the Knights of Labor, the Socialist Labor Party, the Homestead Strikers, the Haymarket Martyrs, Emma Goldman, Eugene V. Debs, the Farmers' Alliance, the American Railway Union, and the Populist Party.

Chapter 12 moves into the Twentieth century, It begins with Theodore Roosevelt, who in 1897 wrote: "In strict confidence . . . I should welcome almost any war, for I think this country needs one." (Chapter 12, p. 297).

In 1890 the Bureau of the Census declared that the internal frontier was officially closed. The nation's profit system began to look overseas. The depression of 1893 created an underconsumption in goods that might be relived by tapping into overseas markets. Thus began the period of American imperialism. Just like the Revolutionary War, focusing on regions overseas would "deflect some of the rebellious energy that went into strikes and protest movements." chap, 12, p. 297

Zinn states that the concept may not have been a conscious plan at the time but it would unite the people with their government. Zinn discusses the Spanish-American War, Philippine-American War, as well as the Teller Amendment. The wars are portrayed by Zinn as being imperialist and events that were opposed by large numbers of U.S. citizens.



In Chapter 13, class separation and anger were not suppressed as the government had hoped. Socialists began to speak out about the capitalist society. Some of those most important literary figures of the time were determined to be heard. They included Mark Twain, Jack London, Theodore Dreiser, Frank Norris, and Upton Sinclair. More and more works were published nation wide, expressing the opinions of "muckrakers." By 1900, nothing seemed to disguise the discontent of the people or the troubles of the government.

"The process of business concentration had gone forward; the control by bankers had become more clear. As technology developed and corporations became larger, they needed more capital, and it was the bankers who had this capital." (Chapter 13, p. 323).

Developments against the capitalist nature are revealed in various conflicts, movements and organizations such as Mother Jones, the Progressive Movement, American Federation of Labor, the Industrial Workers of the World, and the Socialist Labor Party.

In Chapter 14, during the height of World War I, Randolph Bourne, a radical writer, said, "War is the health of the state." (Chapter 14, p. 359).

Bourne was correct in that during war, governments flourish, patriotism heightens and internal struggle quiets. However, in the U.S. which was not yet part of the war, there was concern. Class conflict was high, Socialism was expanding, and military presence was more frequently required.

Zinn covers several aspects of the war, including the change in the country's economy.

In Chapter 15, the war had barely ended. In the beginning of 1919, the leadership of the IWW was in jail. This did not deter a five-day strike in Seattle where 100,000 working people went on strike and brought the city to its knees. The laborers were permitted to elect three officials to the General Strike Committee. Meanwhile, a Labor War Veteran's Guard was created to keep peace.

Zinn discussed the advent of the Great Depression and the continued oppression of the poor as well as the attempts of the Communist Party to help the people.



chapters 16-20

chapters 16-20 Summary and Analysis

In Chapter 16, in 1941, Germany invaded Soviet Russia. The American Communist party referred to the war as a "people's war" against Fascism which was a marked difference from its previous claims that the war was an imperialist war. Most of the population, despite class or political affiliation, agreed.

Zinn wonders: "It was a war against an enemy of unspeakable evil. Hitler's Germany was extending totalitarianism, racism, militarism, and overt aggressive warfare beyond what an already cynical world had experienced. And yet, did the governments conducting this war-England, the United States, the Soviet Union-represent something significantly different, so that their victory would be a blow to imperialism, racism, totalitarianism, militarism, in the world?"

Zinn discusses various aspects of the people's war. Also included are the Cold War, Korean War and the Marshall Plan.

In Chapter 17, Zinn covers the black revolt and the birth of the Civil Rights Movement. The events in Montgomery, Alabama are covered as are the main conflicts and activists in the movement. Lynchings, segregation, and the KKK are discussed. Also covered is the involvement of Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, the Communist Party, the Congress of Racial Equality, the Freedom Riders, and the Black Panther Party.

In Chapter 18, Zinn wrote about the Vietnam War. Included is the country's history. During that time, the U.S. was the most powerful nation in history. It chose to use its military superiority to fight in a civil war in a peasant laden country. The U.S. underestimated the people of Vietnam, however, and the people outlasted and overtook the military technology prized by the Americans. The anti-war movement in the U.S. also played a major part in the United States' decision to end the war.

In Chapter 19, Zinn wrote about the quest for equality for women. Women were still considered to be lesser citizens. As early as the 1930s women were expected to take on larger roles in society with no more recognition than they had received before. World War II cried out for women to work in factories while the men went off to war. Still, as late as the 1960s, women were not equal even though they had the right to vote. Feminists from all over the country began to speak out and to bring notice to the lack of respect and rights given to women. Books such as Betty Friedan's "The Feminine Mystique" began to raise awareness. Women began to take action.

In Chapter 20, the early 1970s showed that people had very little trust in their government: "As early as 1970, according to the University of Michigan's Survey Research Center, "trust in government" was low in every section of the population. And there was a significant difference by class. Of professional people, 40 percent had "low"

political trust in the government; of unskilled blue-collar workers, 66 percent had "low" trust." (Chapter 20, p. 541).

There was a great deal of corruption during the decade as well as the continuance of protests. Zinn covered the disclosure of crimes committed by the CIA, the Watergate scandal, the Honeywell Corporation protests, Project MKULTRA, and the Pike Committee. He also covered the inauguration of Gerald Ford and the Bicentennial.



chapters 21-25

chapters 21-25 Summary and Analysis

In Chapter 21, Zinn discusses the disillusionment of the population. Some refused to vote or did so with a feeling of uselessness. The distance between the people and politicians grew by leaps and bounds. The people began to turn its attention to other things, perhaps ones they could control.

Zinn covers the "fairness doctrine" of the Federal Communications Commission as well as people that attempted to act out in the shadow of the 1960s and 1970s but accomplishing little. Also covered are various presidential administrations and their foreign policies.

In Chapter 22, Zinn discusses "the existence of 'a permanent adversarial culture' in the United States." Chap. 22, p. 601

Although Democrats and Republicans seems to agree on American reform and the preservation of capitalism and military strength, the power and wealth continued to be held by a few. The actions of the government and of these people created that adversarial culture.

Zinn also discusses the movements of various political and social activism groups.

In Chapter 23, in 1996, President Bill Clinton was reelected, albeit with a distinct lack of enthusiasm from the voters. Approximately half of the voters avoided the polls. During his inauguration speech, Clinton talked about a country on the edge of a new millennium. He invoked Martin Luther King's call for equality and asserted that the U.S. needed to maintain a military presence around the world to ensure freedom.

Many issues that took place during Clinton's two term presidency are discussed including war, terrorism, and more.

In Chapter 24, Zinn discussed that the subject of the book is far beyond the scope of what one person can deliver. Zinn claims that the information given and the information not discussed creates a type of bias. Zinn discussed the nation's predilection to choose between saviors and how it will affect the country's future.

"All those histories of this country centered on the Founding Fathers and the Presidents weigh oppressively on the capacity of the ordinary citizen to act. They suggest that in times of crisis we must look to someone to save us: in the Revolutionary crisis, the Founding Fathers; in the slavery crisis, Lincoln; in the Depression, Roosevelt; in the Vietnam-Watergate crisis, Carter. And that between occasional crises everything is all right, and it is sufficient for us to be restored to that normal state. They teach us that the supreme act of citizenship is to choose among saviors, by going into a voting booth



every four years to choose between two white and well-off Anglo-Saxon males of inoffensive personality and orthodox opinions." (Chapter 24, p. 631).

In Chapter 25, Zinn focused mainly on the choice between presidential candidates and the Florida scandal. He also discussed is the Patriot Act, Saudi Arabia, and Israel.



Characters

Christopher Columbus

Christopher Columbus (1451-1506) was a merchant, part-time weaver, and accomplished sailor from Genoa, Italy. Columbus is credited with discovering America. In actuality, Columbus had been assigned to travel to Asia to find gold and spices. Columbus worked hard to get financing for the trip and finally succeeded after striking a deal with the King and Queen of Spain. In return for funding the trip Columbus would bring back spices and gold and receive a 10% profit on goods sold.

Columbus landed first in the Canary Islands before going to the Bahamas and then on to Cuba and Hispaniola. Columbus built the first European military base in Cuba where he left men to search for gold. Columbus took natives as slaves from several locations with the intention of forcing them to give up their gold. Columbus felt quite superior to the natives who were naïve, trusting, and uneducated.

Columbus convinced the Spaniards to fund future voyages without much return. The expeditions to the Bahamas started a trend amongst the Arawak people who were brutalized, murdered or committed suicide. By 1650 the Arawak people had vanished.

Columbus made four voyages in total.

Columbus was eventually appointed as governor of the Indies, a title which was later rescinded and Columbus was arrested.

Hernando Cortes

Hernando Cortes (1485-1547) was a well-known Spanish Conquistador that was credited with turning Mexico over to the Spaniards. Cortes was put in charge of the third voyage from Hispaniola to Mexico where he deceived and massacred the whole of the Aztec civilization in a quest for gold.

When Hernando Cortes arrived from Spain, the Aztecs believed Cortes to be a legendary man-god who had died 300 years previous and had returned with Quetzalcoatl. Therefore, Cortes was welcomed with open arms. Montezuma, King of the Aztecs, probably had some reservations about Cortes. While Montezuma sent Cortes enormous amounts of treasure, he also asked Cortes to return to Spain.

Cortes was much like Columbus in that he sought gold.

Cortes began a march of death. He and his men went from town to town, deceiving the people, turning the Aztecs against one another. When Cortes and his men were confronted on the leaders of the Cholula to the square in Cholulu, the leaders had no idea they were about to be massacred. When Cortes returned to Mexico City,



Montezuma was dead, the Aztec nation was ruined and the land had been claimed by the Spaniards.

Nathaniel Bacon

Nathaniel Bacon was a man in charge of the Bacon Rebellion, an attack of white frontiersmen, slaves and servants against the settlers in Jamestown for their actions against the Indians. Bacon was a young man that was probably fairly affluent and more interested in killing Indians than righting wrongs against the poor. Bacon died of illness at the age of 29.

King George III

King George III of England was the main adversary of the American colonists. King George imposed taxes and levies against American products which in part caused the revolt that led to the Revolutionary War and the formation of the United States.

U.S. Presidents

Many U.S. Presidents are discussed in this book from George Washington through to Bill Clinton and George H.W. Bush. Zinn recounts the parts of each president in the formation and change of the U.S.

Colonists

Zinn discussed the colonists at length, from the arrival in the U.S. and beyond. Zinn also discussed the policies and actions of the colonists and how they conflicted with those of the Native Americans.

Founding Fathers

The Founding Fathers of the United States including George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, and John Adams are discussed. The history includes the views of each on various topics including the Declaration of Independence, Revolutionary War and the Constitution.

Indians

The Indians mentioned in the book mainly refer to the Native American tribes that existed in North and South America during the times of Columbus and beyond. Zinn asserted that the name "Indian," often seen as racist or inappropriate, may have some small bit of truth due to the migration of the tribes from Asia.

Howard Zinn

Howard Zinn (1922-2010) is the author of "A People's History of the United States." Zinn was a historian, academic, author, social activist, playwright and professor of political science. Zinn, author of more than 20 books, wrote about many topics including the history of labor unions in the U.S., the Civil Rights Movement, and anti-war protests.

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Howard Zinn died of a heart attack in January 2010.

Labor Union Workers

Labor unions played a large part in the formation of the United States as it now stands. Workers were no longer willing to be treated as slaves and demanded equal pay and treatment. As such, labor unions had to be formed to protect the rights of the people.



Objects/Places

Revolutionary War

Sometime around 1776, people in the upper echelon of the colonies' government decided that they should create a nation known as the United States. This action would free the colonies from the British Empire and permit them to create a new, privileged empire of their own. In theory, this work was brilliant, brave, and wise when it came to keeping profits of sales in the colonies, eliminating British taxes, and preventing uprisings that seemed to be occurring with frightening frequency.

"When we look at the American Revolution this way, it was a work of genius, and the Founding Fathers deserve the awed tribute they have received over the centuries. They created the most effective system of national control devised in modern times, and showed future generations of leaders the advantages of combining paternalism with command." (Chapter 4, p. 59).

Bacon's Rebellion seemed to start the worst of the uprisings. By 1760, there had been eighteen uprisings designed to create a coup to overthrow various branches of the colonial governments. Additionally, there had been six black rebellions, from New York to South Carolina, and forty riots of various origins.

Another aspect of the upcoming Revolutionary War was the concept that the Americans would stop fighting if they had a common enemy - Britain.

When Britain won the Seven Years' War against the French, the Americans no longer had to worry about the French inhabiting the colonies. The only enemies left to fight were the English and the Indians. The British had sided with the Indians and granted land to them in the Proclamation of 1763. While this idea did not form until other events were underway, it became clear to Colonial leaders that a new strategy could be developed.

The British had suffered financially from the Seven Years' War and turned to the colonies to replenish its coffers. Trade in the colonies had become wildly successful to the British. In 1700 colonial trade equaled £500,000; by 1770 it totaled £2,800,000.

Zinn details the tax situation of the time and how it was not difficult to cause bitter feelings toward the British. The Stamp Act of 1765 was the final straw.

United States

The United States are the basis for Zinn's entire work. While there is a great deal of history written about the Americas before the institution of the colonies, the main story begins when the colonists decided to separate from Britain and King George III.



Although America was an infant compared to its parent, England, many believed that the fledgling country could and would succeed on its own. In fact, if America remained as a part of England, chances are that its commerce would suffer and its people would not receive the sort of liberty for which they chose to fight.

Through a combination of unity, intelligence and sheer determination, America defeated the British and became its own entity. The style of the newly formed government caused a much bigger uproar than the Revolution itself and countries around the world began to redress their own forms of government in comparison to America's democracy. The publication of the American Constitution further allowed other countries to review and attempt to adopt their own set of doctrines based upon the same principles.

Zinn takes the reader from the development of the United States through its brightest and darkest times, paving a path from past to present. The reader learns the overview of the main events that took place in the history of the country and how each affects present day government and society.

Jamestown

Jamestown is the site of the main Virginia settlement inhabited by the Puritans.

Mexico

Mexico is the United States' neighbor to the south. It was an opponent in the war to dominate California, New Mexico, Nevada, Utah, Texas, and part of Colorado.

Indian Reform

Indian Reform was the concept that Indians would be permitted to remain in their residences if they agreed to give up personal and tribal rights and also pay taxes. Otherwise, they could relocate to new land and be paid a stipend.

Civil War

The Civil War was the war between the North and South that was based mainly on the issue of slavery.

Labor Unions

Labor Unions became popular in the 1920s and 1930s as workers began to realize that they would no longer tolerate ill treatment and low wages. Unions were formed to go up against government and to protect its workers.



England

England was the controlling government over America before the Revolutionary War. America, with the aid of France, fought against the British and won independence.

Colonies

When the Puritans came to America they settled into colonies throughout New England and along the eastern seaboard. Eventually the colonies would put aside internal arguments and turn their focus on fighting to win independence from Britain.

Taxation

Taxation has long since been an issue with the American people since before the Revolutionary War. Taxes levied by Britain were one of the main causes of the Revolutionary War. Since that time, there has been a fight to equalize taxes among the classes.



Themes

Government

In the majority of the work, government is the key focus. It begins with the governments of Europe and beyond and their ambition and quest for gold in the new world.

Eventually it turns to the government of the United States before, during and after its formation. One of the foremost authors during colonial times was Thomas Paine, who was fond of visiting, defining and redefining the governments of other countries and pointing out their flaws and absurdities. Paine believed that many people live with their governments simply because it was the way of the ancients and the country as a whole did not object. It was as if silence equaled acceptance.

One of the main targets of Paine's work is the English government. Paine has very strong views on the antiquity and foolishness of maintaining a monarchy, an institution that is inappropriate and oppressive to its people. Paine also argues that the English Constitution is not a constitution at all since its aim is to control the people rather than allow the people to control the nation.

Paine's political beliefs were strong and long lasting. Unlike many other politicians, Paine did what was necessary to prove a point and stood behind his words like no other.

There is a great deal written about the days prior the Revolutionary War and how the governments were founded. Even during those times, there was elitism and corruption. Zinn shows how the government evolved for better or for worse through to the year 2000.

American Revolution

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Style

Point of View

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Setting

Tone is used in the non-fiction style:

The tone used in "A People's History of the United States" by Howard Zinn is almost completely objective. Zinn chose to write the history of the United States in third person omniscient rather than in first person. While the use of this point of view may take away the majority of Zinn's opinions on the events that led up to the settlement and formation of the United States, it allows the author to relay the events as pure fact, untainted by his own perspective.

In the few parts where Zinn did allow his own views and opinions to come through, the reader is able to see Zinn's devotion to telling the truth of the events rather than relying on the stories as written by the victors. Zinn makes it clear that no person could ever truly write a complete history of the United States as the information stored is often edited to protect certain people or it is written by the victors or no longer exists. Some events were never recorded while others may be recorded only briefly, particularly during times of great strife in which many events occurred in rapid succession.



Despite those facts, Zinn manages to give a thorough overview of the United States and encourages readers to examine more closely the information presented in the book.

Language and Meaning

This is not included in non-fiction style.

Structure

"A People's History of the United States" by Howard Zinn is a work of non-fiction. The book is often recognized as one of the most accurate and valuable historical references in American history. The book begins with the world before Columbus came to the Americas and moves forward in chronological order until the year 2000. All major historical events are referenced in between those two times. "A People's History of the United States" is comprised of 683 pages, broken down into 25 chapters plus an Afterword and Bibliography.

The chapter structure is as follows:

- 1: Columbus, The Indians, and Human Progress
- 2: Drawing the Color Line
- 3: Persons of Mean and Vile Condition
- 4: Tyranny is Tyranny
- 5: A Kind of Revolution
- 6: The Intimately Oppressed
- 7: As Long As Grass Grows Or Water Runs
- 8: We Take Nothing by Conquest, Thank God
- 9: Slavery Without Submission, Emancipation Without Freedom
- 10: The Other Civil War
- 11: Robber Barons And Rebels
- 12: The Empire and the People
- 13: The Socialist Challenge
- 14: War Is the Health of the State



15: Self-help in Hard Times

16: A People's War?

17: "Or Does It Explode?"

18: The Impossible Victory: Vietnam

19: Surprises

20: The Seventies: Under Control?

21: Carter-Reagan-Bush: The Bipartisan Consensus

22: The Unreported Resistance

23: The Clinton Presidency and the Crisis of Democracy

24: The Coming Revolt of the Guards

25: The 2000 Election and the "War on Terrorism"

Quotes

"Arawak men and women, naked, tawny, and full of wonder, emerged from their villages onto the island's beaches and swam out to get a closer look at the strange big boat. When Columbus and his sailors came ashore, carrying swords, speaking oddly, the Arawaks ran to greet them, brought them food, water, gifts." (Chapter 1, p. 1).

"Among the Arawaks, mass suicides began, with cassava poison. Infants were killed to save them from the Spaniards. In two years, through murder, mutilation, or suicide, half of the 250,000 Indians on Haiti were dead." (Chapter 1, p. 4).

"The terror was very real among the Indians, but in time they came to meditate upon its foundations. They drew three lessons from the Pequot War: (1) that the Englishmen's most solemn pledge would be broken whenever obligation conflicted with advantage; (2) that the English way of war had no limit of scruple or mercy; and (3) that weapons of Indian making were almost useless against weapons of European manufacture. These lessons the Indians took to heart." (Chapter 1, p. 15).

"By 1800, 10 to 15 million blacks had been transported as slaves to the Americas, representing perhaps one-third of those originally seized in Africa. It is roughly estimated that Africa lost 50 million human beings to death and slavery in those centuries we call the beginnings of modern Western civilization, at the hands of slave traders and plantation owners in Western Europe and America, the countries deemed the most advanced in the world." (Chapter 2, p. 29).

"When we look at the American Revolution this way, it was a work of genius, and the Founding Fathers deserve the awed tribute they have received over the centuries. They created the most effective system of national control devised in modern times, and showed future generations of leaders the advantages of combining paternalism with command." (Chapter 4, p. 59).

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, that whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government..." (Chapter 4, p. 71).

"The Constitution became even more acceptable to the public at large after the first Congress, responding to criticism, passed a series of amendments known as the Bill of Rights. These amendments seemed to make the new government a guardian of people's liberties: to speak, to publish, to worship, to petition, to assemble, to be tried fairly, to be secure at home against official intrusion. It was, therefore, perfectly designed to build popular backing for the new government. What was not made clear-it was a time when the language of freedom was new and its reality untested-was the



shakiness of anyone's liberty when entrusted to a government of the rich and powerful." (Chapter 5, p. 99).

"Walk the good road, my daughter, and the buffalo herds wide and dark as cloud shadows moving over the prairie will follow you... Be dutiful, respectful, gentle and modest, my daughter. And proud walking. If the pride and the virtue of the women are lost, the spring will come but the buffalo trails will turn to grass. Be strong, with the warm, strong heart of the earth. No people goes down until their women are weak and dishonored." (Chapter 6, p. 104).

"Statistics tell the story. We find these in Michael Rogin's *Fathers and Children*: In 1790, there were 3,900,000 Americans, and most of them lived within 50 miles of the Atlantic Ocean. By 1830, there were 13 million Americans, and by 1840, 4,500,000 had crossed the Appalachian Mountains into the Mississippi Valley-that huge expanse of land crisscrossed by rivers flowing into the Mississippi from east and west. In 1820, 120,000 Indians lived east of the Mississippi. By 1844, fewer than 30,000 were left. Most of them had been forced to migrate westward. But the word "force" cannot convey what happened." (Chapter 7, p. 125).

"If we are not striving for equality, in heaven's name for what are we living? I regard it as cowardly and dishonest for any of our colored men to tell white people or colored people that we are not struggling for equality... Yes, my friends, I want equality. Nothing less... Now catch your breath, for I am going to use an adjective: I am going to say we demand social equality... I am no wild beast, nor am I an unclean thing." (Chapter 10, p. 210).

"In strict confidence...I should welcome almost any war, for I think this country needs one." (Chap, 12, p. 297).

"The process of business concentration had gone forward; the control by bankers had become more clear. As technology developed and corporations became larger, they needed more capital, and it was the bankers who had this capital." (Chapter 13, p. 323).



Topics for Discussion

Which fact about the history of the United States have you learned that was previously unknown to you? Why do you feel it is important? What is the second most important fact? Explain.

Discuss your feelings about Columbus discovering America. Why does the U.S. still celebrate the landing if in fact America had already been discovered? Who truly discovered America? When? Why is that person or group not recognized?

Examine the root causes of the Revolutionary War. What were they? Were the causes just? Would the war have occurred if taxes had not been an issue?

Teddy Roosevelt claimed that the country could use a war. Do you agree or disagree that war keeps internal issues stable? What other reasons are there for war?

Discuss the 2000 election and the scandal surrounding the voting in Florida.

Examine the disillusionment of the voters in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. What was the cause of the disillusionment? Was it justified? What happened at the polls? How did it affect elections?

The book ends discussing the "war on terror" as it was in 2000. Discuss the current war on terror and how things have changed.