

AP United States History (APUSH)

Summer Assignment 2026

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Dear Students,

Welcome to AP U.S. History! Together we will engage in the historical process to not just understand the history of the United States, but also its impact on the world. This course is a challenge, but it is also incredibly rewarding as we work together to read, write, argue, and think about the past and present.

To that end, it is time to jump in and prepare yourself to take this on. This assignment is designed to bring you **peace of mind**, not stress.

The activities in this packet are designed to help you build the basic background knowledge that most U.S.-based American high school students would already have when entering APUSH. Hopefully, you like history and find it interesting and will study this content, not because you have to, but because it will be enjoyable -- or because it will be reassuring for you to enter the course knowing you've built some of the background knowledge you need to be successful.

So, why should you do *anything* in this packet?

The reality is as an international student, you may not have the same general knowledge exposure as American students who have been living in the culture whose history will be tested. During the school year, you will have to learn a lot of information at a very fast pace via reading assignments. It will benefit you to come in with a deeper starting knowledge of American History. With that in mind, these assignments are designed to help you enter APUSH with more knowledge of American Geography and History - via relatively painless activities.

Assignments Overview: *During the first week of school you will need to submit notes or some other sort of proof that you completed these tasks. Keep this in mind as you complete them.*

1. **Geography Practice:** Look over the [maps](#) at the end of this file. Use this Annenberg-Learner [interactive website](#) to quiz yourself. It's essential that you're familiar with the names and general locations of the places we will be studying so you can put the history in context.
2. **Major Events:** Look over the list of important [Events](#) and make sure that you can put them in chronological order. Reading the descriptions of the significance of each event will make this easier as you will be able to identify cause and effect.
3. **Big Concept Summaries** for all periods. Skim through summaries of the nine periods in which the course is divided. As you read *A Little History of the United States*, try to identify into which period the events covered in the book fall.
4. **Required Reading/Listening:** Read [A Little History of the United States](#) by James West Davidson OR another survey text covering the full history of the United States.

Assignment Expectations

Geography Practice -- Be able to locate/label the following on a map:

States – know at least 30/50 (the East Coast is the more useful side to focus on)

Settlements - Jamestown, Virginia; Boston and Salem, Massachusetts; New York (City), New York; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Cities – Washington D.C.; Baltimore, Maryland; Atlanta, Georgia; Chicago, Illinois; New Orleans, Louisiana; Detroit, Michigan; St. Louis, Missouri

Civil War - Union states during the Civil War (North) and Confederate states during the Civil War (South), Border States (Slave states that did not secede)

Mountains -- the Appalachians, the Rocky Mountains, the Sierra Nevada, the Cascade Mountains

Rivers - St. Lawrence (in Canada), Mississippi, Missouri, Ohio, Potomac, Hudson, Rio Grande, Colorado, and Columbia Rivers.

Geographic Expansion - Original 13 English Colonies, Louisiana Purchase, Republic of Texas, Oregon Country, territory acquired in the Mexican Cession of 1848.

Major Events -- Be familiar with the Supreme Court cases and [events](#) below, in chronological order. Reading the descriptions of the significance of each event will make this easier as you will be able to identify cause and effect.

[Supreme Court Cases](#) - Use this resource to familiarize yourself with the circumstances and significance of each of these cases

Marbury v. Madison, 1803 - Clarified checks and balances, affirmed the Supreme Court's power to review the constitutionality of Congressional acts.

Dred Scott v. Sandford, 1857 - Said Blacks could not be citizens - and that the Constitution did not apply to slaves or people of African descent.

Plessy v. Ferguson, 1896 - Decided that segregation was legal, as long as there were "separate, but equal" facilities.

Brown v. Board of Education, 1954 - Said segregation in education is unconstitutional - "Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal."

Roe v. Wade, 1973 - Abortion rights are protected under the Due Process Clause of the 14th Amendment, affirming a woman's right to privacy.

Assignment Expectations (Continued)

Big Concept Summaries – Read through the summary of all nine periods covered in the course. As you read *A Little History of the United States*, try to identify into which period the events covered in the book fall.

COMPLETELY OPTIONAL (I promise this is not a trick!) Study Strategy: If using a physical book, consider annotating the pages when you find a connection to one of the periods. E-Books also usually have an annotation feature. If using an audiobook or if it works better for you, consider keeping a journal as you read where you can write down any connections or questions that come to mind.

Required Reading/Listening – Read or listen to [*A Little History of the United States*](#) by James West Davidson.

This book is a narrative overview of American History - a more pleasant way of seeing the basics, as compared to slogging through a textbook.

You do not need to write an essay or any kind of written response about the book. Just try to enjoy it and know that the purpose is to give you a framework of understanding and an overview of the United States and its history, not to memorize every single event that is mentioned. If you find an event or era particularly interesting or confusing, make a note of it for when we get to that part of the course.

You may also choose to read/listen to another book that gives an overview of U.S. History. If you choose this option, be sure to select a book that gives an overview of U.S. History rather than a book focused on one specific era or event.

Important Events Chronology - Be able to put these events in chronological order *and* explain the significance of each. [Event Significance](#) is also explained below.

Arrival of Christopher Columbus in the West Indies

Settlement of Jamestown

Creation of the Virginia House of Burgesses

Seven Years' War (also known as the French and Indian War)

Second Continental Congress and signing of the Declaration of Independence

Constitutional Convention

Bill of Rights

The Whiskey Rebellion

War of 1812

Monroe Doctrine

Indian Removal Act

Mexican-American War

Civil War

Emancipation Proclamation

Reconstruction

First Transcontinental Railroad completed

Spanish-American War

World War I

Women's Suffrage Movement

Great Depression

World War II

Cold War

Civil Rights Act of 1964

Vietnam War

9/11 Attacks

Event Significance - These descriptions should help you understand the significance of the events.

Columbus arrives in the West Indies - 1492 - Opens an eventual wave of colonization by European countries including Spain, England, France, and the Netherlands. These groups each had different economic and imperial goals that shaped the development of their colonies and their relationships with native populations. The 'sugar islands' of the Caribbean were especially desirable since plantation owners could exploit native labor, and then imported slave labor, to earn incredible profits.

Settlement of Jamestown - 1607 - This was the first permanent English settlement in mainland North America. There were many conflicts with native tribes as Jamestown settled into an agricultural economy, based on tobacco production. Areas south of Jamestown were often settled by single men looking for wealth through agriculture. Some of the next major settlements were in the Massachusetts Bay, including Boston and Plymouth. The more northerly New England colonies were often settled by Protestant Christian families seeking religious freedom. These settlers were more likely to be merchants and businessmen. We will see that these regional differences in ideology and economy become major factors underlying the Civil War.

Creation of the Virginia House of Burgesses - 1619 - Even though these were English colonies, the long distance and Britain's initially lax attention led the colonists to create self-governing institutions that were unusually democratic for the era. In the southern colonies, elite planters exercised local authority and also dominated representative assemblies like the House of Burgesses in Virginia.

Seven Years War 1754-1763 - Also known in the Americas as the French and Indian War, this conflict was a global battle among European powers. In the interior of North America, the British population kept expanding inland and disrupting French-Indian trade, and threatening the native American Indians' way of life. In this conflict, Britain fought against France, while different native American tribes allied with either side, repeatedly evaluating and adjusting their alliances, seeking to limit the migration of colonists and maintain control of tribal lands and natural resources. Britain was victorious and France gave up large claims of land in Canada and east of the Mississippi River. The military expenses incurred in the colonies left Britain deep in debt which led to increased tax collection in the colonies.

Second Continental Congress and the Signing of the Declaration of Independence - 1776 - Up until the end of the Seven Years' War, most colonists had been quite content to be part of Britain, which had mostly left them alone to do their own thing. However, due to its massive new war debt, Britain began to enforce the collection of taxes that it had previously not bothered to enforce. American merchants (and smugglers) disliked this sudden increase in British involvement in the colonies and became upset that colonists had so little voice in Parliament. Eventually discontent grew strong enough to lead to the Declaration of Independence and the Revolutionary War.

Constitutional Convention 1787 - After winning the American Revolution, the United States government tried to function under a document called the Articles of Confederation. This government failed to unify the various states, and it was generally agreed that the country needed a stronger rule of law. The greatest minds of the time gathered in Philadelphia for a period of months in order to create a governmental system that would be acceptable to states with so many differing interests. After many compromises, they finally came to an accord and ratified the Constitution of the United States.

- Bill of Rights 1791 - When the Constitution was written, many people were concerned that it lacked protections for people's individual rights. The Constitution was ratified based on a promise to amend it to add this Bill of Rights as promptly as possible. The Bill includes the first ten amendments to the Constitution and guarantees such rights as the freedoms of speech, assembly, and worship.
- The Whiskey Rebellion - In the first major test of the new U.S. Constitution, farmers in western Pennsylvania rebelled against an excise tax imposed by the federal government on whiskey. The tax was created to pay down the national debt left over from the Revolutionary War. It wasn't just about the whiskey, though. For many of these farmers, distilling corn crops into alcohol was the main way to preserve their crops to get them to port and other major centers of trade such as Philadelphia. In some cases, whiskey was even used as a form of currency! After attacks on tax collectors and refusal to pay the tax began to escalate, President Washington ordered a militia force of nearly 13,000 men into western Pennsylvania to put down the rebellion. The response to the Whiskey Rebellion set the precedent for the federal government enforcing its laws, even through the use of force.
- War of 1812 (1812-1815) - The quarrel with Britain was not over yet! The U.S. went to war against Great Britain due to three issues: their economic blockade of France, the unwilling induction of thousands of neutral American seamen into the British navy, and the British support of hostile native American tribes in the Great Lakes frontier. The war effectively ended in a stalemate, but is remembered as a time when Native American Indians began to lose hope that they could stop colonists' westward movement and maintain their autonomy.
- Monroe Doctrine - 1823 - Keep European governments out of the Americas! To put an end to European efforts to establish power in the Americas, President James Monroe issued this policy which stated that intervention by external powers in the politics of the Americas could be considered a hostile act against the United States. This came about after the Louisiana Purchase, when the United States held influence over North America and the Western Hemisphere through a variety of means, including exploration, military actions, American Indian removal, and diplomatic efforts like the Monroe Doctrine.
- Indian Removal Act - 1830 - America was spreading to the west, and wanted more farmlands. Under the administration of President Andrew Jackson, the country began to pursue a policy of removing native tribes from their fertile lands located east of the Mississippi River, and relocating them west of the river. When tribes in the Southeast refused to sign over their lands in trade, they were forcefully removed from their lands and marched west in the "Trail of Tears."
- Mexican-American War - 1845-1848 - As American farming depleted agricultural lands in the east, and as migration and population increased, Americans pushed farther and farther west. With the Annexation of Texas and the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo after the Mexican-American war, the country stretched from coast to coast. There was continued displacement of native populations, and increased tensions surrounding whether or not to allow the creation of additional slave states.
- Civil War - 1861-1865 - Throughout the 1800s, abolitionist sentiments grew stronger in the northern United States and throughout Europe. Chattel slavery played a crucial role in the South's agricultural economy but was not as necessary in the industrialized North. When northern states elected President Abraham Lincoln, a man who was against the spread of slavery, the southern states feared economic ruin if slavery were abolished. Consequently, many states decided to break away (secede) from the United States of America and form the Confederate States of America. The northern 'Union' states fought to keep the United States together, and, although some historians might deny its significance as a cause, the Civil War was fought rooted in the issue of slavery.

Emancipation Proclamation - 1863 - In the midst of the Civil War, President Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation. Many people mistakenly cite this event as the action that abolished slavery in America. In fact, the Emancipation Proclamation only freed slaves in the southern Confederate states that had seceded. This was a strategic action designed to encourage slave-holding border states to stay in the union in order to not lose their slaves. It is also commonly understood that Lincoln did this in order to prevent European countries from siding with and supporting the South in their struggle to separate from the North. European countries were seen as sympathetic to the Confederate struggle for independence, but since slavery was already abolished in those European countries, they would not ethically be able to come to the aid of the South. Slavery was actually abolished by the 13th Amendment in 1865.

Reconstruction 1865-1877 - The time period following the Civil War in which the United States focused on reintegrating Confederate states into the Union and enforcing newly protected rights for African-Americans, including voting rights that came through the 13th, 14th, and 15 Amendments to the Constitution. This era also led to the rise of groups like the Ku Klux Klan that challenged the new social order in the South. The end of Reconstruction led to many of these rights and freedoms being taken away from African-Americans as well as increased violence towards African-Americans who tried to exercise these rights.

First Transcontinental Railroad completed - 1869 - Westward migration was boosted during and after the Civil War by the passage of new legislation promoting western transportation and economic development. This railroad linked the east coast to the west coast and signaled the beginning of a period known as the Second Industrial Revolution. During this time, much 'progress' was made, bringing better communication and more widespread use of petroleum products, electricity, and steel throughout the country. This project is often held up as an example of how the industrialized north was progressing faster than the agrarian south.

Spanish American War - 1898 - America begins its overseas empire! In Cuba, the population was violently rebelling against Spain. The United States sent a battleship to Havana Harbor to protect US citizens and property. Then the *USS Maine* exploded and sunk unexpectedly, and Spain was suspected. The US declared that Cuba had the right to independence, which prompted Spain to declare war, even though their navy was woefully unprepared. The United States was victorious in this conflict. Spain relinquished control of Cuba, while the US gained control of Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines. Rather suddenly, the United States had new overseas possessions.

World War I. 1914(7)-1918 - Much of Europe was drawn into war in 1914, and this war was drawn out due to new technologies like U-boats and machine guns. The United States was largely in favor of staying out of the war to avoid the 'entangling alliances' that George Washington had warned against but did eventually enter the war in 1917. Although many cite Germany's 1915 sinking of the *Lusitania* (a ship carrying many American civilians) as the cause of American entrance into World War I, that is an oversimplification. Although the United States was upset about unrestricted warfare at sea, it is likely that President Wilson finally engaged in the conflict due to the unacceptable financial losses suffered when American trading ships could not reach their destinations.

Women's Suffrage Movement - 1920 - Women finally gained the right to vote shortly after the end of World War I. This movement for equality had been growing throughout the 1800s, often in conjunction with abolitionism. In the late 1860s, following the Civil War, many suffragists were in favor of adding women's equality to the 14th and 15th amendments, but it was decided that it was more feasible to get those amendments ratified if only the issue of race was addressed. The 14th Amendment declared that all persons born or

naturalized in the United States are American citizens, including African Americans. The 15th Amendment guaranteed the right to vote regardless of race, color, or past servitude. The wait for gender equality in voting lasted another 50 years.

Great Depression 1929-entire 1930s - During the twenties, people began to play the stock market. There were few regulations of banks and markets, and people were borrowing lots of money with which to buy stocks - which were selling at inflated prices. When stock prices crashed in 1929, people and businesses were left deeply in debt, and banks failed because they had made too many loans and didn't have enough cash when people flocked to banks to withdraw their money. During the Roaring 20s, businesses had increased production, but people needed to be much more thrifty after the crash and bought fewer manufactured goods. This hurt businesses, who then had to lay off workers. Then people had even less money to spend, companies couldn't sell their products, and many businesses failed - leading to even more unemployment and hunger. This depression spread worldwide. Local governments tried to take care of all the needy people, but it wasn't until The New Deal with its far-reaching government aid programs that people began to feel relief. Ultimately, it was massive World War II manufacturing that truly made the American economy recover and thrive.

World War II. 1939(41)-1945 - Hitler, Mussolini, and Tojo were aggressive dictators from Germany, Italy, and Japan, respectively. Germany's blitzkrieg tactics had caught mainland Europe off guard and only Great Britain remained unoccupied. Once again, the United States wished to remain somewhat neutral but sent aid and munitions to countries they supported. The United States had ramped up its war industry early on but didn't send troops until it was drawn into war by the Japanese attack on its Pacific navy fleet in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. The United States helped retake Europe from Hitler and then used nuclear bombs to force a Japanese surrender.

Cold War (1945-1991) - After World War II, European countries were weakened, leaving space for the United States and the Soviet Union (USSR) to become superpowers. A nuclear arms race and vastly different political and economic ideologies fueled this conflict. The US favored Democracy and Capitalism over Autocracy and Communism. The US' desire to stop the spread of Communism led to their Cold War intervention in many places all over the world, like Korea, Vietnam, and Latin America.

Civil Rights Act of 1964 - The Civil Rights Movement had roots in World War II. Black soldiers returned from fighting racism overseas in their segregated units and saw an opportunity to fight against racism at home. Twenty years after the end of World War II, and ten years after the *Brown* decision, the Civil Rights Act marked the first major legislative victory in the Civil Rights Movement. It banned employment discrimination and segregation in public places. It was followed by the 24th Amendment which eliminated a poll tax, and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 which guarantees a citizen's right to vote, regardless of race or literacy level.

Vietnam War 1965-1973 - This was a Cold War proxy war. The Vietnamese initially began fighting to seek independence from Japanese and French rule after World War II. When the French withdrew, the United States feared Communism's spread from North Vietnam to South Vietnam and eventually sent in troops. After a decade of involvement, and with public sentiment largely against the war, the United States eventually withdrew from the stalemate. Vietnam then united under communism.

9/11 Attacks 2001 - In response to ongoing Western involvement in Middle Eastern affairs, Islamic extremists attacked the United States by flying airplanes into the Twin Towers skyscrapers in New York City and the Pentagon in Virginia. Thousands were killed and this led to U.S. invasions of Afghanistan and eventually Iraq. It also led to the targeting and stereotyping of American Muslims.

Big Concept Summaries *(It might help to skim these for review before or after reading/listening to **A Little History of the United States**)*

The content for the AP U.S. History exam is organized into nine periods. It isn't strictly chronological, as you'll notice some of the time periods overlap. Instead, the periodization has both chronological and thematic organization. Read on for an overview of the APUSH periods.

Period 1: 1491-1607

This period is basically everything that happened prior to the arrival of the English. The start of the period, 1491 (the year before Christopher Columbus "sailed the ocean blue"), is really shorthand for "before the Europeans showed up." The end of the period is 1607, the year that the English landed in Jamestown, Virginia, and founded the first permanent English settlement in the New World. In a nutshell, this period focuses on Native Americans and on early, non-English exploration of the New World, especially that of the Spanish. The big concepts for this period are:

- Native American societies, especially the way they adapted to their environments
- Spanish exploration and the effect it had on native populations (e.g., disease, warfare, the encomienda system)
- The Columbian Exchange

Period 2: 1607-1754

The next period is largely focused on European (including the British this time) exploration and settlement. The beginning date is the founding of Jamestown, as discussed above. The end date is the start of the French and Indian War, which totally changed the game in the British colonies. The big concepts for this period are:

- Motivations for and patterns of immigration by the Spanish, English, Dutch, and French
- Interactions between Europeans and Native Americans
- Characteristics of the 13 British colonies (including regional distinctions between Southern, Middle Atlantic, and New England colonies)
- Economic policies: mercantilism, salutary neglect
- Origins of the African Slave Trade in North America (1619)

Period 3: 1754-1800

Here we start to focus exclusively on the British colonies that will turn into the United States. The starting year, 1754, is the beginning of the French and Indian War. This marked the end of salutary neglect and the beginning of growing tensions between the colonies and Great Britain. The period takes you through the tumultuous revolution and its aftermath to the year 1800, in which the new democracy is solidified by its first official peaceful transfer of power between two political parties. The big concepts for this period are:

- Britain's attempt to tighten control on the colonies following the French and Indian War
- Building colonial resentment towards British policies (especially taxes)
- The Revolutionary War
- The Articles of Confederation (and the reasons for their failure)
- The Constitution (drafting, contents, and ratification debate)
- The Washington and Adams administrations, as well as the election of 1800
- Relations between the young U.S. and European powers, as well as Native Americans

Period 4: 1800-1848

The U.S. was growing in territory and strength, but faced internal threats to its stability. The big concepts for this period are:

- Evolution of political parties
- Westward expansion (including the Louisiana Purchase)
- Growing sectionalism and tensions over the expansion of slavery (e.g., Missouri Compromise)
- Growth of the abolitionist and women's rights movements
- The Industrial Revolution and the growth of railroads

Period 5: 1844-1877

Period 5 centers on the Civil War—its causes, events, and aftermath. The big concepts for this period are:

- Westward expansion (Manifest Destiny, Mexican-American War)
- Increased immigration (especially from Ireland and Asia) and the resulting tensions
- Growing tensions over slavery and states' rights
- Civil War (major events, advantages/disadvantages of each side, outcome)
- Reconstruction

Period 6: 1865-1898

This is the Gilded Age, where America was bright and shiny on the outside (industrial growth, wealth, railroads, big cities, population growth) and dark and grimy inside (terrible working conditions, socioeconomic stratification, racism, political corruption). The big concepts for this period are:

- Industrialization and the growth of big business (and all the good and bad that came with that)
- Migration: immigration and urbanization
- Racial tensions and segregation

Period 7: 1890-1945

This period sees the United States starting to get pulled onto the world stage in a big way for the first time. The big concepts for this period are:

- Progressive reforms
- Imperialism
- World War I
- The Great Depression (causes, effects, the New Deal)
- World War II

Period 8: 1945-1980

In the aftermath of World War II, the United States emerged as one of two major world powers. The Cold War dominated foreign policy, while domestically, the U.S. went through many social changes. The big concepts for this period are:

- Cold War
- Civil Rights Movement
- Increasing polarization of society between liberal and conservative ideologies

Period 9: 1980-Present

This is the modern, post-Cold War era. The big concepts for this period are:

- End of the Cold War
- War on terrorism
- Technological development
- Environmental issues

North America 1822



Map of English Colonial Settlements

MAPS [practice](#)



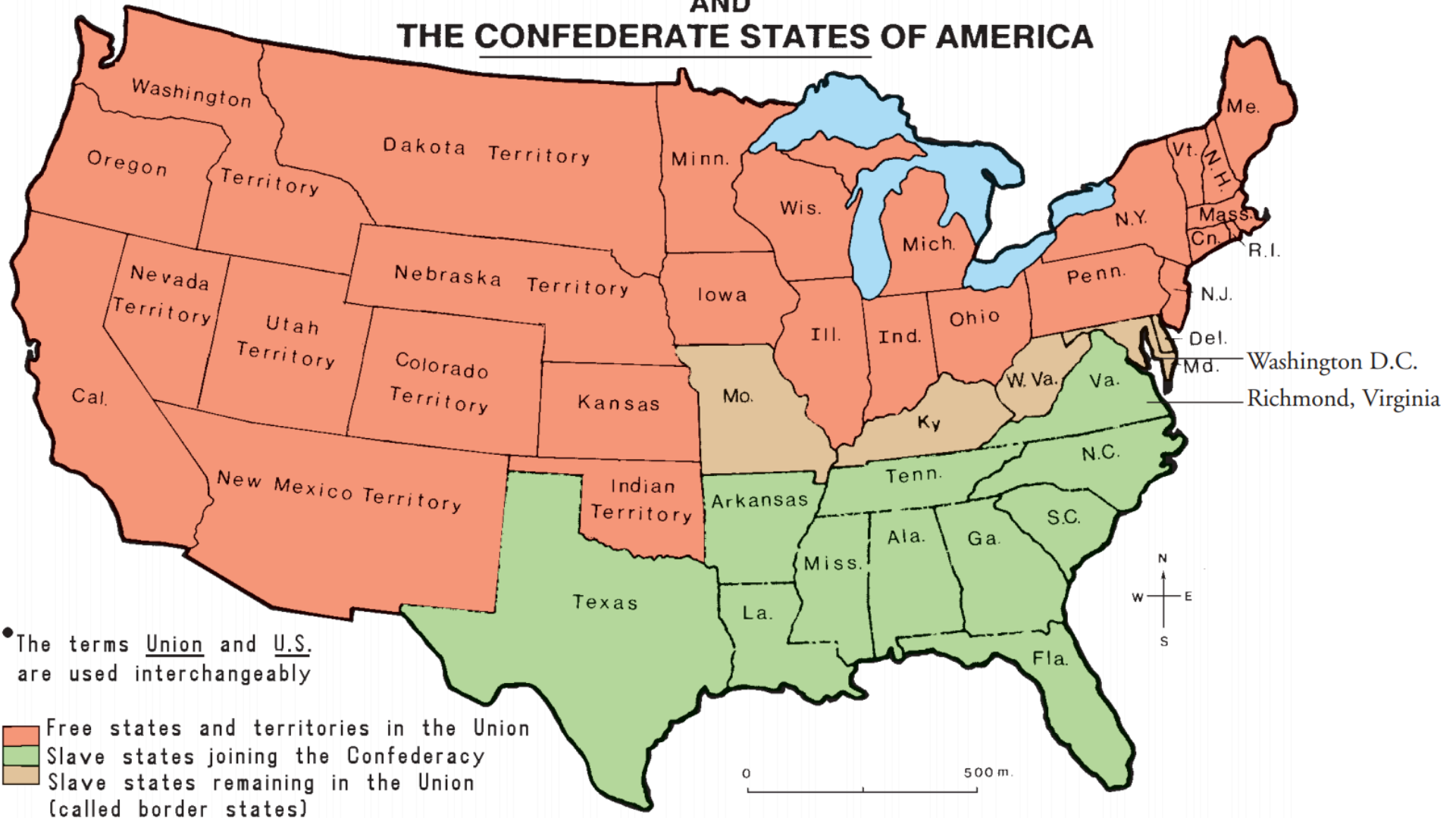
Map of American Expansion

Growth of the United States 1783-1853

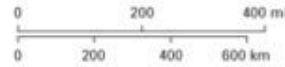


Civil War Divisions

1863: THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA AND THE CONFEDERATE STATES OF AMERICA



Topography of the United States





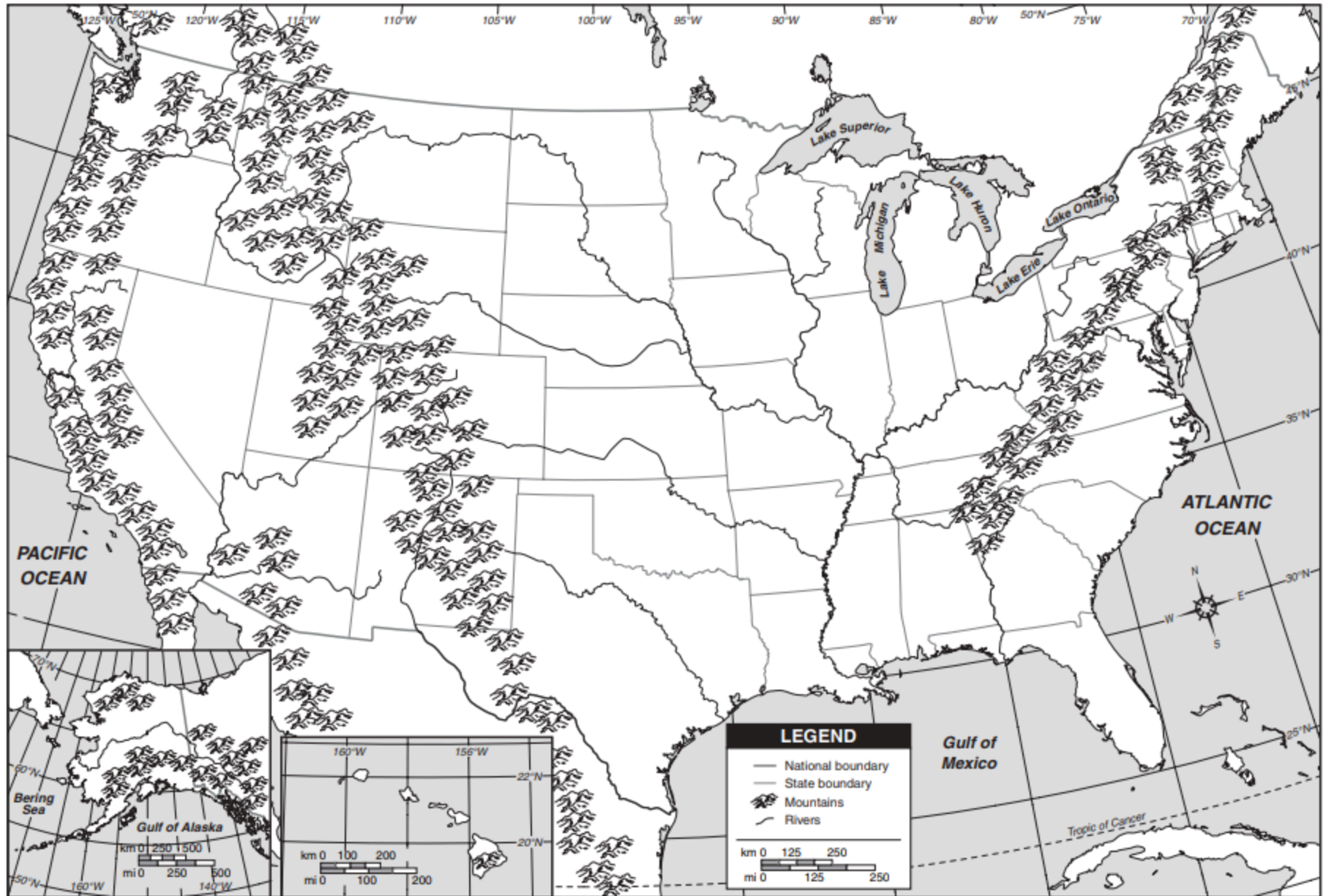
Use the blank maps to practice: regions, rivers, mountains, land acquisition parcels, states, colonies, historically important cities, and union v. confederate states.





Colonial America - 1776

USA: Physical



Use the blank maps to practice: regions, rivers, mountains, land acquisition parcels, states, colonies, historically important cities, and union v. confederate states.

