

## STUDENT READING QUESTIONS

to accompany

# The American Pageant

Twelfth Edition

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## Themes In American History

At its worst, a U.S. history survey course can seem like an uninterrupted stream of names, dates, and events from a dead past signifying little for the present or the future. At its best, the study of our past can be an engaging human drama, shedding light on the present and shaping the future. An understanding of the country's past can produce critical insights into issues of importance today and to the world in which you will function over the next 60 years or so.

Although the course is organized chronologically, try to fit the historical debates and developments you will study this year into some of these critical themes which are certain to affect you in the future.

### Political

- ⇒ America's changing role in world affairs (expansionist, isolationist, interventionist, etc.)
- ⇒ America as a moral leader—do we practice what we preach?
- ⇒ The democratic experiment—how well does it work?
- ⇒ Evolution of the two-party system (changing party views; is it permanent?)
- ⇒ Role and size of government in the economy and society (Hamilton vs. Jefferson to FDR vs. Reagan)

### Economic

- ⇒ Free-market capitalism (evolution; economic vitality vs. social equity; etc.)
- ⇒ Changing economic base (local agriculture to national industry to a global technology/information/service-based economy)
- ⇒ The accelerating pace of technological innovation
- ⇒ The environmental cost of economic expansion
- ⇒ Role of government in the economy (neutral force, promoter, regulator, direct participant?)

### Social

- ⇒ Changing roles and perception of women
- ⇒ Race relations—primarily white and black; increasingly Hispanic and Asian
- ⇒ Immigration and growing population diversity
- ⇒ Prevailing lifestyles—rural to urban / suburban to?
- ⇒ Popular protests—the people as agents for change

### Cultural

- ⇒ Changing roles and perception of the family
- ⇒ Religion in America (separation of church and state; evangelical bursts, etc.)
- ⇒ Implications of the information age
- ⇒ Movement from a local and regional to a mass consumer culture
- ⇒ Evolving trends in art, literature, and popular culture

# CHAPTER 1

## New World Beginnings, 33,000 B.C.–A.D. 1783

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1. **Part One Intro. (pp. 2–3)** This introduction gives you a preview of the authors' answers to certain key questions about America up to the establishment of the United States. Look at this section and list three major questions you think the authors will be addressing in the first eight chapters.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

2. **The Earliest Americans (pp. 4–10)**

- a. List three things you found new or particularly interesting about the Native American societies that existed prior to their discovery by Europeans.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

- b. \*\*\* What comments do you have about the differing views (pp. 9–11) of the relation of humans to nature held by Europeans (**humans have dominion over the earth**) and Native Americans (**humans must live in harmony with nature**)? Is one better than the other?

3. **Direct and Indirect Discovery of America (pp. 10–14)**

- a. What is the connection the authors make between the eventual discovery of America and the Crusades, Marco Polo, and the European taste for exotic goods from Asia?

- b. List three of the factors mentioned by the authors on pp. 13–14 as coming together to produce the voyage of Columbus.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

- c. How did the New World discovery build an interdependent global economic system? What were the distinctive roles played by Europe, Africa, and America in this new system?

Europe:

Africa:

America:

4. **Worlds Collide (pp. 14–16)**

- a. List three of the most important plants and animals introduced from America to Europe, and vice versa:

America to Europe

Europe to America

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

b. We usually think of military defeat as causing the downfall of most Native American civilizations. But in reality it was \_\_\_\_\_ that caused the decimation of up to \_\_\_\_\_ percent of Native American population. \*\*\* Hitler's Holocaust in Europe was responsible for the extermination of 6 million Jews. List one similarity and one major difference you see between the Holocaust and the fate of Native Americans at the hands of the Europeans.

Similarity

Difference

c. \*\*\* (Optional) Do you have any theories as to why Native Americans died of European diseases and Europeans didn't die of Native American diseases?

**5. Spanish *Conquistadores* (pp. 16–24)**

a. List the areas explored by the following Spanish expeditions to North America:

Ponce de Leon:

Hernando de Soto:

Francisco Coronado:

Hernán Cortés:

b. In 1769, Father \_\_\_\_\_ started a string of missions designed both to colonize California and Christianize the native Californians. \*\*\* What is your view of this?

c. What main difference do the authors point out (pp. 23–24) between Spanish interaction with native peoples and that of the English? \*\*\* Can you think of any reason for this difference?