Dear Students, Parents, and Teachers:

Welcome to the U.S. History Bee Study Guide!

We have divided all of American history into three chapters: American History to 1815, American History from 1815 to 1933, and American History from 1933 to the Present.

Each chapter has four parts. The first explains why we’ve divided history the way we did—what makes 1933 such an important year? Hopefully, these explanations introduce you to historical “turning points,” and provide some context for the concepts and facts offered in the other three parts of the chapter.

The second section of each chapter offers the “great themes” for that period of time. Reading about these themes should allow you to think of history not just as a set of facts to memorize, and will give you a greater understanding of historical progress and the truly BIG concepts that tie those facts together.

The third and fourth parts of each chapter offer lists of people, places, things, and events you need to know and should know, respectively. The “Need to Knows” are not necessarily more important than “Should Knows”—they just tend to come up in National History Bee questions more often.

So please enjoy the Study Guide. Keep an eye out for anything in bold in the first two parts of each chapter; study up as much as you can on the terms in the third and fourth parts. And remember—while this Study Guide should get you started, there is so much more to history than what’s in the next ten pages. A good History Bee competitor will know the Study Guide forward and backward; a great one will go above and beyond, reading books and scouring through encyclopedias.

Have fun with the Study Guide, and good luck!
American History to 1815

What’s so important about 1815?
The year 1815 marked the end of the War of 1812. While the U.S. had already gained its independence during the Revolution, the War of 1812 was the young country’s first great test, and showed that America would be able to sustain itself.

What are the great themes of American History up to 1815?
The beginnings of the United States were humble—our first immigrants tended to be religious minorities, debtors, or otherwise destined for only modest success in their home countries. Their problems didn’t end upon arrival—they faced the harsh realities of the land, and the 17th and 18th centuries also saw a great deal of conflict between settlers and Native Americans.

Though many European countries colonized America, by 1763, at the end of the French and Indian War, the British and their 13 colonies dominated the American landscape. Colonists under the rule of Britain and King George III began to rebel against “no taxation without representation.” Buoyed by the ideals of Thomas Jefferson’s Declaration of Independence, the Americans defeated the British to earn their freedom in the Revolutionary War.

Upon receiving their independence, the Americans sought to live under the very limited government outlined by the Articles of Confederation, but eventually turned to a somewhat stronger federal government outlined by 1787’s Constitution. Still, this Constitution was constrained by a Bill of Rights limiting the power of government.

Between 1787 and the War of 1812, the U.S. completed the Louisiana Purchase, doubling the size of the country. Increasing tensions with the British during this time led to the War of 1812, during which Britain invaded the U.S. and burned down the White House. But the Americans recovered, and the war was fought to a draw.

What You Need to Know (People, Places, Things, and Events)
- Alexander Hamilton was a Founder and the first Secretary of the Treasury. He established the First Bank of the U.S., helped write the Federalist Papers, espoused Federalist ideas, and was killed in a duel by Aaron Burr.
- Benjamin Franklin was a Founder who wrote Poor Richard’s Almanack, and worked on scientific projects concerning bifocals and electricity.
- George Washington was the first American president, and before that, led the Continental Army. He encouraged the US to stay out of foreign affairs and avoid the political party system.
- John Marshall was the fourth Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, serving from 1801 to 1835. He was a Federalist, and his court’s rulings tended to give more power to the federal government.
His ruling in *Marbury v. Madison* set the precedent for judicial review.

- **Thomas Jefferson** was the third U.S. president. He authored the Declaration of Independence, completed the Louisiana Purchase, sent Lewis and Clark west, supported separation of church and state, and founded the University of Virginia.

**What You Should Know**

- “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God”
- Anne Hutchinson
- Articles of Confederation
- Bacon’s Rebellion
- Battle of Bunker Hill
- Battle of Saratoga
- Battle of Trenton
- Benedict Arnold
- Boston Massacre
- Boston Tea Party
- Election of 1800
- Eli Whitney
- Embargo Act
- Georgia
- Hartford Convention
- Horatio Gates
- Iroquois Confederacy
- John Adams
- John Trumbull
- King Philip’s War
- Lewis and Clark
- Louisiana Purchase
- *Marbury v. Madison*
- Maryland
- Massachusetts
- Mayflower
- Mississippi River
- Nathan Hale
- Patrick Henry
- Paul Revere
- Philip Freneau
- Puritans
- Quakers
- Sacagawea
- Salem Witch Trials
- Second Great Awakening
- Stamp Act
- Tobacco
- War of 1812
- Whiskey Rebellion
- XYZ Affair

**American History, 1815-1933**

**What’s so important about 1933?**

In the year 1933, Franklin D. Roosevelt became president of the United States. FDR’s **New Deal**, designed to fight the Great Depression, transformed the role of the U.S. federal government. His four terms as president also included our involvement in World War II, which took many American lives but also set the US on its path to superpower status.

**What are the great themes of American History from 1815 to 1933?**

America entered a period of prosperity and peace known as the **Era of Good Feelings** coming out of the War of 1812, but good feelings didn’t last long. The period between 1815 and the **Civil War** was dominated by controversy over slavery and, as the U.S. **expanded to the West**, whether new states would be free or have slaves. Other significant events between 1815 and the Civil War were the beginnings of the **women’s suffrage movement** and the **industrialization** of America, including the completion of the **transcontinental railroad**.
But the **Civil War**, which began when **Abraham Lincoln** took office in 1861 and lasted until 1865, divided the **North** and **South** over the issue of slavery. By the end of the Civil War, the North prevailed, slaves were **emancipated** and the South went into a period of **Reconstruction**. Reconstruction rebuilt the South, but its attempts to integrate African-Americans into Southern society failed—though nominally free, they would be the victims of segregation for another century.

After **Reconstruction** came two periods of American history directly related to each other: the **Gilded Age** and the **Progressive Era**. The **Gilded Age** reaped the benefits of industrialization and brought massive wealth to “captains of industry,” but it was a period of great inequality and great suffering for many. The **Progressive Era** was a reaction to the Gilded Age, and succeeded in providing better conditions for workers and finally, in 1920, giving women the right to vote.

As the Progressive Era came towards its end in the 1910s, the U.S. became involved in **World War I**. The U.S. was only active in **World War I** for one year, and fought with the victorious Allied Powers against the Central Powers. Following **World War I**, the U.S. saw a period of great economic success and cultural change known as the **Roaring Twenties**. The ‘20s came to an end with the stock market crash of 1929 and the crippling effects of the **Great Depression**.

It was with the Depression in mind that Americans went to the polls and elected **FDR** president in 1932.

**What You Need to Know (People, Places, Things, and Events)**

- **Abraham Lincoln** was the 16th President of the U.S. He was president during the Civil War, gave the Gettysburg Address, and issued the Emancipation Proclamation. He was the first Republican president.
- **Clarence Darrow** was a famous defense lawyer at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries. He defended Illinois murderers Leopold and Loeb, and science teacher John Scopes in the famous “Scopes Monkey Trial.”
- **William Jennings Bryan** was a Democratic and Populist politician who lost the 1896 and 1900 presidential elections. He served as Wilson’s Secretary of State from 1913 to 1915, and gave the famous “Cross of Gold” speech in 1896.
- **Andrew Jackson** was a prominent American General and later served as President of the U.S. from 1829 to 1837. His administration saw the Nullification Crisis and the Trail of Tears and his Vice-President **Martin Van Buren** succeeded him.
**What You Should Know**

- Battle of Gettysburg
- Chicago
- D.W. Griffith
- 14th Amendment
- Election of 1876
- Free Silver
- Grover Cleveland
- Haymarket Square Riot
- Henry David Thoreau
- Mark Twain
- Seneca Falls Convention
- South Carolina
- Steel industry
- Spanish-American War
- Theodore Roosevelt
- Thomas Edison
- Trail of Tears
- Woodrow Wilson
- Wright Brothers
- Zachary Taylor

**American History, 1933-Present**

**What are the great themes of American History since 1933?**

Mired in the Great Depression, the American people elected FDR president. His New Deal was a serious of federal programs to stimulate the economy and advance the country. While it’s still unclear whether his New Deal was an economic success, there’s no doubt that America’s involvement in World War II, after the attack on Pearl Harbor, got its economy back on track.

Following World War II, in which the U.S. defeated the Axis powers—with many lives lost, though—the new threat was the Cold War. Until its end in 1991, the U.S. would try to “win” the war in two ways: one, by building up its nuclear arsenal; and two, by using often questionable means to contain communism and support capitalist states. The strategy of containment informed U.S. involvement in the Korean War in the 1950s, and the Vietnam War in the 1960s. The Vietnam War was greatly unpopular among the American people.

Besides the Vietnam War, the decade of the 1960s was notable for the anti-poverty set of programs known as The Great Society, which included Medicare and Medicaid. It was also known for the Civil Rights Movement, in which minorities and oppressed groups—most importantly African-Americans and women—fought for equality. The work of leaders such as Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr. brought an end to segregation in the South and encouraged equality among blacks and whites.

The 1970s and 1980s were defined by the Watergate scandal, which forced President Nixon to resign, and the birth of the conservative movement, which was led by Ronald Reagan and defined as a backlash against the progressive values embodied by much of the 1960s.
What You Need to Know (People, Places, Things, and Events)

- **John F. Kennedy** was the first Catholic president. He was elected in 1960 and assassinated by Lee Harvey Oswald in 1963. He oversaw the Bay of Pigs invasion and the Cuban Missile Crisis, and fought for America’s space program.
- The **Korean War** was a 1950s war in which the U.S. sought to protect South Korea from falling under the influence of North Korea, China, and communism. The U.S. made a famous amphibious landing at Inchon, and the result of the war was the creation of a demilitarized zone between the two Koreas.
- **Richard Nixon** served as Vice-President under Dwight D. Eisenhower in the 1950s and lost the Election of 1960 to JFK after the first set of presidential debates to be televised. Nixon was elected president in the Election of 1968 after which he helped expand trade in China and was ultimately impeached for his part in the Watergate Scandal. He was pardoned of any wrongdoing by his successor, President Gerald Ford.
- **Ronald Reagan** was a conservative Republican president who urged Gorbachev to tear down the Berlin Wall, was in office during the Iran-Contra scandal, supported supply-side economics, and was shot by John Hinckley. Before he turned to politics, Reagan was a Hollywood actor.

What You Should Know

- Aaron Copland
- Agricultural Adjustment Act (AAA)
- Alger Hiss
- Battle of Midway
- Bill Clinton
- Barry Goldwater
- Brown v. Board of Ed
- Douglas MacArthur
- Dwight Eisenhower
- Election of 1948
- FDR
- Great Society
- Japanese internment
- Jimmy Carter
- John Nance Garner
- Joe McCarthy
- Martin Luther King, Jr.
- NAFTA
- New Deal
- Oklahoma City bombing
- Roe v. Wade
- School prayer
- The Grapes of Wrath
- US-Iran Relations
- Warren Court
- Watergate