

US History Periodization

This song divides the time span of US history into segments based on the defining characteristic of each period.

EXPLORATION (1), COLONIES (2), REVOLUTION (3),

CONSTITUTION (4), TWO STREAM POLITICS (5) AND

SECTIONALISM SsWiNg (6),

CIVIL WAR (7), RECONSTRUCTION (8), REST O' WEST (9),

GILDED STAGE (10), PROGRESSIVES (11), IMPERIALISM (12)

AND WORLD WAR I (13).

ROARING '20s (14), DEPRESSION '30s (15), WORLD WAR II (16),

COLD WAR '50s (17), STORMY '60s (18), ME 1970's (19),

GO-GO '80s (20), '90s ONLINE (21).

Notes

- 1) **EXPLORATION**: the period of European exploration and contact with Native-Americans in the 15th & 16th Centuries
- 2) **COLONIES**: Colonial America from the 17th Century through the late 18th Century. The colonies were a part of the British Empire.
- 3) **REVOLUTION**: the American Revolution and War of Independence in the late 18th Century
- 4) **CONSTITUTION**: from the Confederation period through ratification of the Constitution, 1781-1787
- 5) **TWO STREAM POLITICS**: “Two stream” refers to the presence of two opposing ideological currents in American political life. During the

administration of George Washington, two parties emerged, Federalists and Democratic-Republicans. Although the names of the political parties have changed over time, there have been two predominant ideological streams throughout American history.

6) **SECTIONALISM SsWiNg**: The nation began to divide into distinct sections in the ante-bellum decades (ante-bellum means pre-Civil War; early-mid-19th Century). SsWiNg is a mnemonic device suggesting the defining characteristic of each section: Ss=South and slavery; Wi=West and internal improvements (development of economic infrastructure); Ng=North and growth, specifically, rapid economic growth during the early Industrial Revolution.

7) **CIVIL WAR**: (1861-1865) the War between the Union and the Confederacy.

8) **RECONSTRUCTION**: (1865-1877) the period of rebuilding and national reconciliation after the Civil War.

9) **REST O' WEST**: the second major period of Western expansion in the last half of the 19th Century. The United States expanded to the Pacific.

10) **GILDED STAGE**: During the period of rapid industrial growth in the late 19th and early 20th Centuries the modern American class structure emerged. The word "gilded" suggests that prosperity was visible on the surface, but not underneath. An economic elite wielded extraordinary wealth and power but the majority of citizens were working class. Many lived in poverty.

11) **PROGRESSIVES**: (late 19th to early 20th Century) In this era, government acted to protect citizens from abuses committed by unregulated corporations.

12) **IMPERIALISM**: (late 19th Century to World War I) The territory of the United States expanded and the US became a global power.

13) **WORLD WAR I**: (1914 to 1919) The US entered World War I in 1917.

14) **ROARING '20's**: (1920's) The name reflects the influence of the automobile, which was mass produced for the first time in the 1920's. Social and cultural life was less restrained in this decade.

15) **DEPRESSION '30's**: (1930's) The economic collapse known as the Great Depression defines this decade.

16) **WORLD WAR II**: (1939-1945) The US entered the World War II at the end of 1941, after the attack on Pearl Harbor.

- 17) **COLD WAR '50s**: (1950's) The global conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union dominated domestic and foreign affairs.
- 18) **STORMY '60s**: (1960's) This name defines the 1960's as a decade of social and cultural rebellion, particularly for American youth.
- 19) **ME 1970's**: Novelist Thomas Wolfe popularized this name for the 1970's, a time when people were absorbed with their own personal interests.
- 20) **GO GO '80s**: This name refers to the growing economy of the 1980's as well as the decrease in federal regulation of the market economy.
- 21) **'90s ON LINE**: (1990's) recognizes the transformation of economic and social life with the introduction of the internet

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