

**Our American Story**  
Session 3, 2019  
Fridays, 9:00-10:45  
**Lori Peters, Instructor**

**Course Objective and Overview:**

Students will acquire a general overview of the 8th grade social studies standards. Please note: not all important events and concepts can be presented. Students in grade 8 should study the ideas, issues and events starting with the framing of the Constitution; the development of American democratic institutions, founded on the Judeo-Christian heritage and English parliamentary traditions, particularly the shaping of the Constitution; and the development of American politics, society, culture and economy, as related to the emergence of major regional differences. Students will learn about the challenges facing a new nation, with an emphasis on the causes, course, and consequences of the Civil War. They will make connections between the rise of industrialization, and contemporary social and economic conditions.

**Each class with include:**

- Preview of big ideas in context
- Viewing of episodes from the series *America: The Story of Us* and parts of movies (*John Adams* and *Lincoln*), as well as other video segments
- Active note-taking, using outline of key concepts from film(s)
- Reading
- Discussion, reflection

**Independent Work Expected, 1.5-2 hrs/wk:** Each class is followed with a reading packet (4-8 pages). The reading packet each week supports the information presented in class but may include details not covered in class, or omit details covered in class, to more adequately cover the topic. Independent activities may include questions, mapping, and/or pictorials. The course will culminate with each student researching and presenting a topic of his or her choice related the birth of our nation (a topic list will be provided in week 4).

**Course Expectations:**

- Read proficiently at a 7<sup>th</sup> grade level or above
- Arrive on time and be prepared to learn. Note taking is expected.
- This class will move quickly! Students should be willing to keep up with pace of the class as best they can. If not, it is highly recommended that ALL materials be reviewed again at home.
- Be open to ideas, discussion, and collaboration.
- Materials needed: Spiral notebook, folder, assignment notebook, and pencil/pen. Some independent reading will be assigned, and all materials should be brought to class. Optional: dictionary for personal use (check to make sure it has advanced historical terms in it).

***Important: There is a lot to cover in each class, and there will be little “down time”; many concepts will need further review and independent research to deepen understanding. This overview is for reference only; not all topics may be explored fully, and/or may not coincide precisely with video coverage.***

**1/18** What does it mean to be free? What does it mean to have individual rights? What was our Judeo-Christian heritage? We start with the settlement of Jamestown and Plymouth, then review some events and sentiments leading up to the American Revolution- starting with the reasons for New World settlement in the first place. Concepts such as the Great Awakening will be explored, as well as key phrases in the Declaration of Independence: “All men are created equal” and “unalienable rights”.

**1/25** Focus on the American Revolution. What were events leading to it? Who were the key players? Where, when and why? What do we need to remember most? How did the American Revolution impact other nations, such as France?

**2/1** The documents that became the foundation of our nation: Focus on the US Constitution, and its Constitution's significance. How did English parliamentary traditions lead to a consensus-driven model of democracy (e.g. "checks and balances")? We will explore some early documents that paved the way to the Constitution, such as the Magna Carta, the English Bill of Rights, the Mayflower-Compact, Paine's *Common Sense* and the Federalist Papers. We will also define various models of government. We will look at parts of the Constitution, such as the Bill of Rights and the Articles of Confederation, as well as the significance of the First Amendment and the concept of the separation of church and state.

**2/8** Who were the major players in the development of our country and its governmental structure? We will look at some of the contributions of Madison, Hamilton, and Jay (Federalist Papers), and the roles that Jefferson, Madison, Washington, and others had in writing and ratifying major documents. We will also look at how these leaders had the foresight to set the foundation for the American political system that we have today, including the place of the Supreme Court in defining policy.

**No class on 2/15 due to President's Day Weekend**

**2/22** What were some major celebrations, conflicts and problems that defined the ideals of early Americans? We will touch upon famous speeches, the birth of capitalism (and what that means), industrialization, to daily life traditions. We will make connections as to how a people once united around a single purpose slowly developed their own territorial and political divisions. We will look at the divergent paths of people in the south, from 1800 to the mid-1800s and the challenges they faced, while comparing the lives of blacks in the south to the free blacks in the north- and events and sentiments leading to Civil War. A timeline of events may include: Monroe Doctrine, Mexican-American War, Henry Clay's American System, Great Irish Famine (immigration boost), Jackson's presidency, settlement and expansion. ***Students will receive a topic from which to choose, and they will have one week to decide their project.***

**3/1** What led up to the Civil War, and who were the agrarians and the industrialists? Who were the major players on both sides of the war? We will look at the general roles, ambitions, and needs of the Confederates and those supporting the Union. We will connect the tremendous impact of Lincoln, and how he fought to keep our nation together.

**3/8** How did a nation reconstruct itself? We will explore the bitter divisions that remained after the Civil War, and how former slaves lived, such as the Buffalo Soldiers, and the rise of racial segregation (Jim Crow, Ku Klux Klan). We will look at the 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Amendments as related to Reconstruction. Post Reconstruction era and the Industrial Revolution (although the term "revolution" is debated). How did textiles, steam power, and iron-making transform a nation? Who were some key players? We will touch upon Rockefeller and Carnegie, as well as some policies that affected the labor movement, unions, and so forth.

**3/15** Share Our American Story study projects. Parents are encouraged to attend.