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AQA - GCSE (Grade 9-1)

29

## STUDY GUIDE

# America, 1920–1973: Opportunity and Inequality



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STUDY GUIDE  
**America, 1920–1973: Opportunity and Inequality**

AQA - GCSE





Published by Clever Lili Limited.

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First published 2020

ISBN 978-1-913887-28-5

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## HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

In this study guide, you will see a series of icons, highlighted words and page references. The key below will help you quickly establish what these mean and where to go for more information.

### Icons

-  **WHAT** questions cover the key events and themes.
-  **WHO** questions cover the key people involved.
-  **WHEN** questions cover the timings of key events.
-  **WHERE** questions cover the locations of key moments.
-  **WHY** questions cover the reasons behind key events.
-  **HOW** questions take a closer look at the way in which events, situations and trends occur.
-  **IMPORTANCE** questions take a closer look at the significance of events, situations, and recurrent trends and themes.
-  **DECISIONS** questions take a closer look at choices made at events and situations during this era.

### Highlighted words

**Abdicate** - occasionally, you will see certain words highlighted within an answer. This means that, if you need it, you'll find an explanation of the word or phrase in the glossary which starts on [page 18](#).

### Page references

**Tudor** (*p.7*) - occasionally, a certain subject within an answer is covered in more depth on a different page. If you'd like to learn more about it, you can go directly to the page indicated.

## WHAT IS THIS BOOK ABOUT?

America 1920-1973: Opportunity and inequality is a period study that focuses on the development of the USA over the course of around fifty years. The course covers the inequality in America, with segregation and poverty, and also the opportunity, with economic success, consumerism and entertainment. You will study the political, economic, social and cultural aspects of America in this period, and the role of key individuals and groups in shaping the USA.

### Purpose

This study enables you to gain a deeper understanding of America and the combination of great opportunity and great inequality that existed in the 20th century. You will investigate the impact of presidential policies, the cultural changes, the economic developments, and the divisions that have shaped America. This course will enable you to develop the historical skills of comparing and evaluating interpretations, explanation, and making judgements.

### Enquiries

America 1920-1973 is split into 3 key enquiries: The American people and the 'Boom'; Americans' experiences of the Depression and the New Deal; and Post-War America.

- ⌚ Enquiry 1 looks at America in the 1920s. It considers the causes and impact of the 'Boom', the social and cultural developments, and the divisions that existed within society with anti-immigrant and racist tension.
- ⌚ Enquiry 2 looks at America in the 1930s and during the Second World War. It considers the impact of the Depression, Roosevelt's New Deal, and the impact of the Second World War.
- ⌚ Enquiry 3 looks at post-war America. It considers American society with the developments in culture, McCarthyism, and consumerism. It also covers the civil rights campaigns, women's campaigns, and the presidential policies of Kennedy and Johnson.

### Key Individuals

Some of the key individuals studied on this course include:

- 👤 Henry Ford.
- 👤 Herbert Hoover.
- 👤 Al Capone.
- 👤 Franklin D Roosevelt.
- 👤 Martin Luther King.
- 👤 Malcolm X.
- 👤 John F Kennedy.
- 👤 Lyndon B Johnson.

### Key Events

Some of the key events you will study on this course include:

- 📅 The Economic 'Boom'.
- 📅 The Wall Street Crash and the Great Depression.
- 📅 The New Deal.
- 📅 The impact of the Second World War.
- 📅 The Red Scare.
- 📅 The Civil Rights Movement.
- 📅 The policies of John F Kennedy and Lyndon B Johnson.

### Assessment

America 1920-1973: Opportunity and inequality forms part of Paper 1, which you have a total of 2 hours to complete. You should spend 1 hour on this section of the paper. There will be 6 exam questions, which will assess what you have learnt on the America 1920-1973 course.

- ✳️ Question 1 is worth 4 marks. This question requires you to examine two interpretations, and assesses your ability to show how interpretations differ.
- ✳️ Question 2 is worth 4 marks. This question requires you to examine 2 interpretations, and assess why the authors might give different interpretations.

## WHAT IS THIS BOOK ABOUT?

- ❖ Question 3 is worth 8 marks. This question requires you to show your understanding of the two interpretations, and to use your contextual knowledge to evaluate how convincing the interpretations are.
- ❖ Question 4 is worth 4 marks. It requires you to describe two features or characteristics of a particular aspect of the period.
- ❖ Question 5 is worth 8 marks. It requires you to explain how one group or development - such as women, or African Americans - was affected by a key event or development, such as the Second World War.
- ❖ Question 6 is worth 12 marks. It requires you to write an essay based on two given factors. You will need to reach a judgement in a conclusion about which of the factors was more important in affecting a development or a change in the USA.

Sample

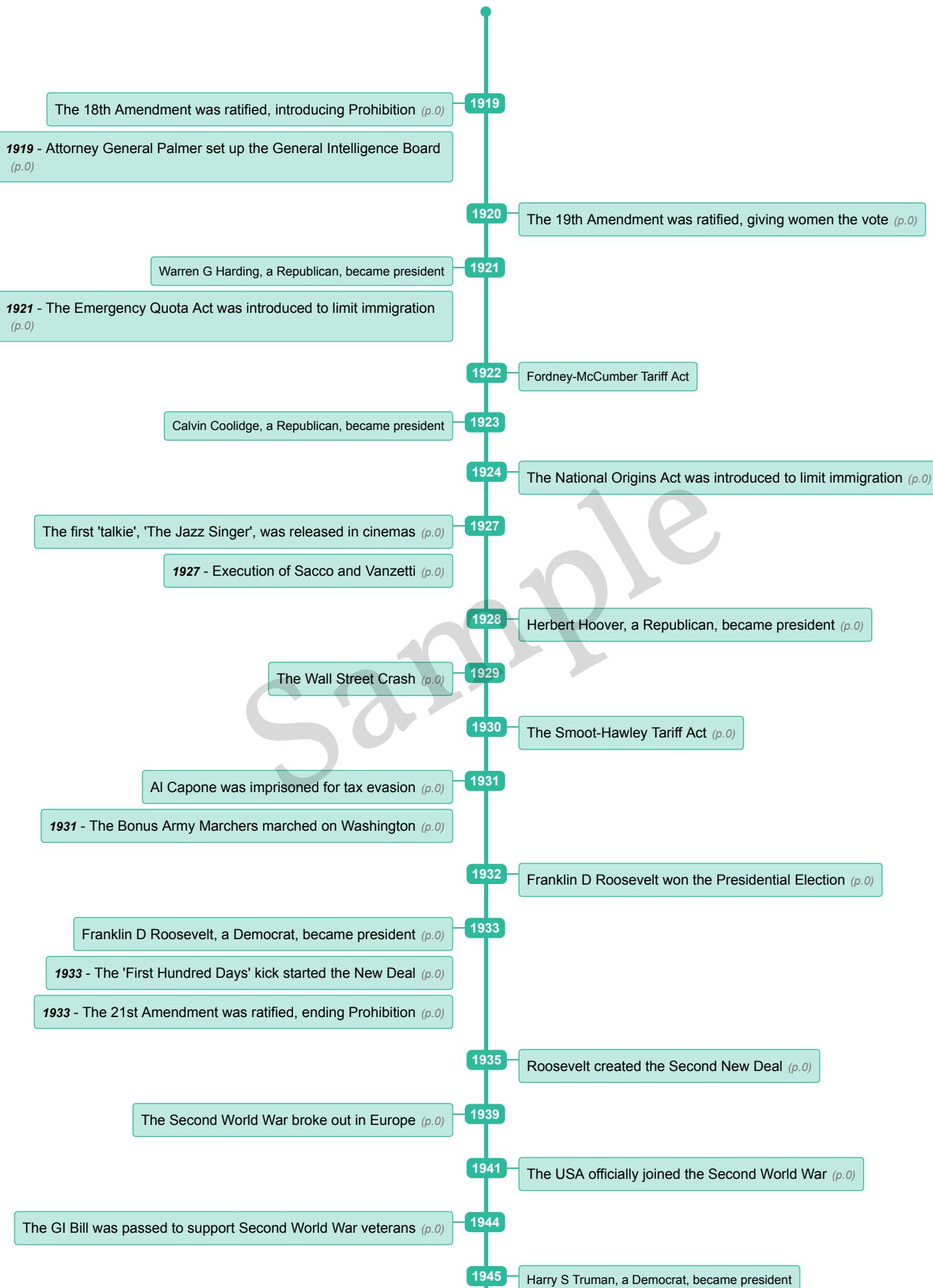


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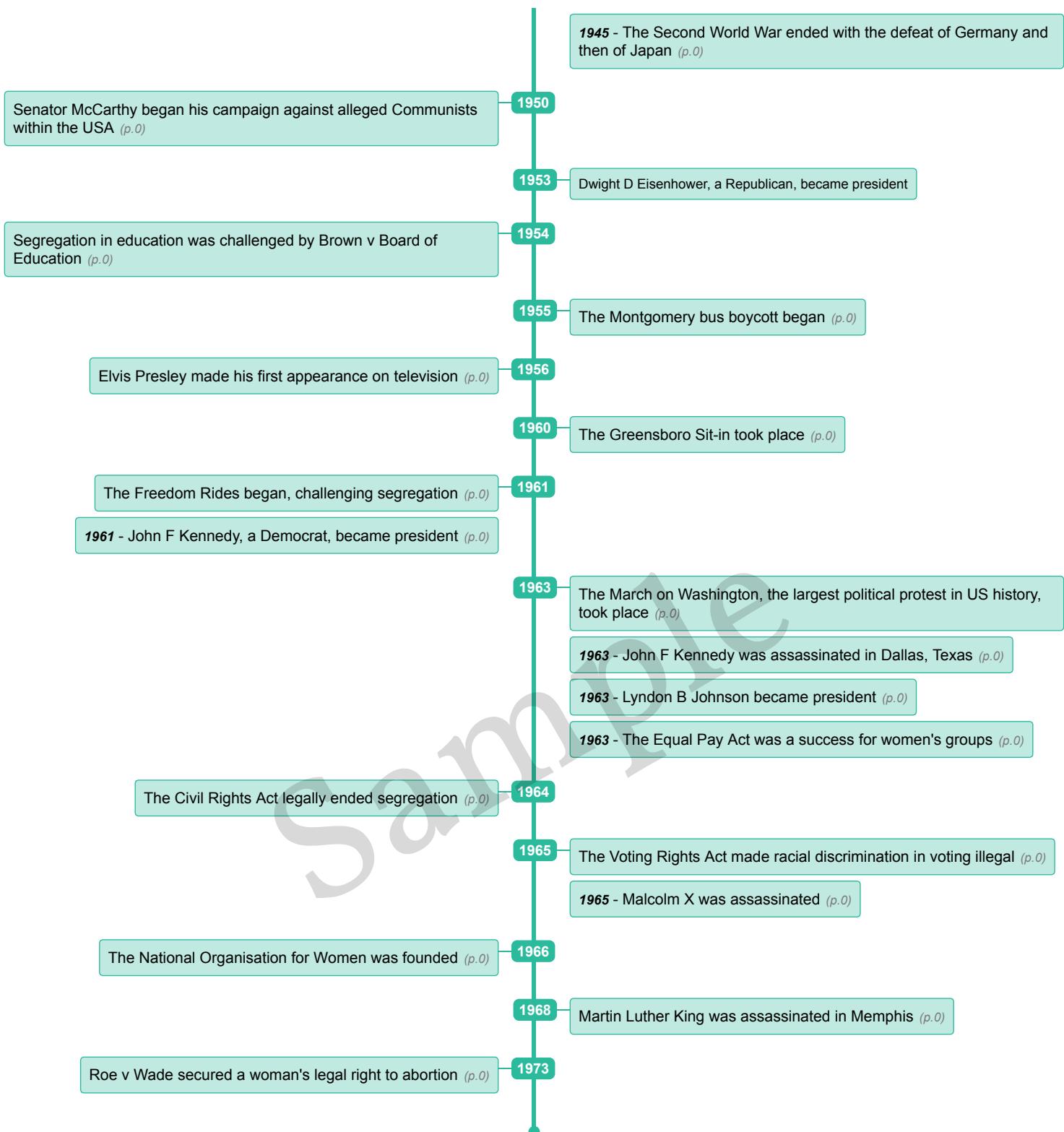
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# AMERICA 1920-1973: OPPORTUNITY AND INEQUALITY

## TIMELINE



## AMERICA 1920-1973: OPPORTUNITY AND INEQUALITY



Sample



# USA AT THE END OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR

*'I believe in America... because we have great dreams and because we have the opportunity to make those dreams come true.'*  
Wendell Willkie



## What was America like in 1918?

At the end of the First World War, America was a large country made up of 48 **states**. It was rich in natural resources, experiencing rapid **industrialisation**, and had a young and diverse **population**.



## How big was the USA in 1918?

In 1918, America spread across 9 million square miles. It stretched from Canada to Mexico, and from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean.



## What was the size of the US population in 1918?

About 109 million people lived in America in 1918.



## Who lived in America in 1918?

In 1918, people living in the USA came from a variety of backgrounds:

- Europeans, Latin Americans and Asians continued to emigrate to the country throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries.
- Many African-Americans lived there because their ancestors had been brought there as slaves.
- Many of the longer-standing **immigrants**, whose families had lived in America for generations, were known as White Anglo-Saxon Protestants, or **WASPs**.
- Native Americans, whose ancestors had lived in America before the settlers, also lived there.



## Who experienced racism in America in 1918?

In the mixed cultural heritage of the USA in 1918, some groups experienced **prejudice**, racism and disadvantages.

- Slavery didn't end until after the end of the American Civil War, in 1865, and African-Americans continued to experience racism and inequality.
- Immigration** laws were passed to reduce the number of **immigrants** in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, particularly from certain countries.
- Native Americans were forced to live on **reservations** as their lands had been taken over by settlers.



## What natural resources did America have in 1918?

In 1918 the USA was rich in a number of natural resources:

- Timber.
- Coal.
- Iron.
- Gold and silver.
- Oil reserves.
- Farmland, which was used to grow crops such as wheat, corn, tobacco and cotton.
- Workers - America had a young and growing **population** to work in its **industries**.



# USA GOVERNMENT

*'To live under the American Constitution is the greatest political privilege that was ever accorded to the human race.'*  
President Calvin Coolidge



## How does the American government work?

The USA is a **democracy** and a **republic**. Its government is defined by the **constitution**, which sets out how it should be run.



## What role does the constitution play in the American government?

The **constitution** is a set of laws that define how America is run. It is seen as having the highest authority in any government.



## How is the constitution amended in the American government?

The American **constitution** is designed to be difficult to amend. There are 2 main ways it can be done.

- Congress has to pass the amendment with a two-thirds majority in both houses. It then has to be approved by three quarters of all **state legislatures**.
- A **constitutional** convention can be called to draft an amendment if desired by two thirds of all **states**. This method has never been used.



## What does unconstitutional mean in the American government?

Anything that breaks the laws of the **constitution** is said to be **unconstitutional** and can not legally exist.



## What were the powers of the American government in 1918?

Law-making powers were shared between the **federal** (central) and **state** governments in 3 main ways:

- The **federal** government in Washington DC was responsible for **foreign policy**, war, trade between **states** and the **currency**.
- The **state** governments were responsible for education, marriage laws, trade within the state and local government.
- The **federal** and **state** governments shared control of law and order, the courts, taxes, banks, and public **welfare**.



## How was the American government structured?

Power in the **federal** government was divided between 3 branches - the executive (**president**), **legislature** (Congress) and judiciary (courts).

- The **president** (executive) suggested laws, ran **foreign policy** and the army, and appointed government **ministers**.
- Congress (**legislature**) was split into two houses: the Senate and the House of Representatives. They passed laws, agreed taxes and endorsed the **president's** appointments of judges and **ministers**.
- The Supreme Court (the judiciary) interpreted laws and the **constitution** and was the highest court of appeal for people to question decisions by the government and courts.



## What checks and balances are there in the American government?

The US government was arranged to make sure no single group could take over or have too much power over the others in 4 main ways:

- The **president** could **veto** laws by Congress, but Congress could override the veto with a two-thirds majority. Congress could also withhold taxes or stop the president from appointing judges or **ministers**.
- The **president** could appoint judges for the Supreme Court, but the Supreme Court could stop the president's actions if it decided they were **unconstitutional**.



- Congress could override Supreme Court judgements by passing amendments to change the [constitution](#), but the Supreme Court could say Congress's other laws were [unconstitutional](#).
- Congress could remove a [president](#) from office due to acts of [treason](#), [bribery](#) or another high crime; this is known as [impeachment](#).



## How can a president be impeached within the American government?

There are 4 key stages to [impeach](#) a president.

- [Impeachment](#) proceedings can begin if it is believed the [president](#) has committed [treason](#), [bribery](#) or another high crime.
- First, Congress investigates the accusations.
- Then, the House of Representatives passes articles of [impeachment](#).
- Finally, Congress puts the accused [president](#) on trial. If they vote by a two-thirds majority that the president is guilty, the president is removed from office.



## Which political parties were there in the American government in 1918?

By 1918, there were 2 main political parties in America:

- The Republicans, who wanted businesses to succeed.
- The Democrats, who wanted a solution to America's social problems.



## Who are the Republicans in American government?

In 1918, the Republicans wanted to see businesses succeed and believed the government should only play a small role in running the country.



## Who are the Democrats in American government?

In 1918, the Democrats wanted the government to play a larger role in running America in order to solve the country's social problems.



## How do state governments work within the American government?

Like the [federal](#) government, [state](#) governments were divided into executive, [legislature](#) and judicial branches.

- The executive branch was headed by a governor, elected by the people.
- The [legislature](#) usually had two houses, a Senate and a House of Representatives, to vote on laws and the [state](#) budget.
- The [state](#) judicial branch was led by the state Supreme Court.



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REMAINING PAGES REMOVED.  
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# GLOSSARY

## A

**Abolish, Abolished** - to stop something, or get rid of it.

**Agricultural** - relating to agriculture.

**Agriculture** - an umbrella term to do with farming, growing crops or raising animals.

**Anarchism** - the belief all government and organisation of society should be abolished.

**Anti-Semitic** - to be against, or hostile to, Jews.

**Armistice** - an agreement between two or more opposing sides in a war to stop fighting.

**Assassinate** - to murder someone, usually an important figure, often for religious or political reasons.

**Assassination** - the act of murdering someone, usually an important person.

**Assembly** - a meeting of a group of people, often as part of a country's government, to make decisions.

## B

**Bankrupt** - to be insolvent; to have run out of resources with which to pay existing debts.

**Blacklist** - the blocking of trade as a means to punish.

**Boycott** - a way of protesting or bringing about change by refusing to buy something or use services.

**Bribe, Bribery, Bribes** - to dishonestly persuade someone to do something for you in return for money or other inducements.

## C

**Campaign** - a political movement to get something changed; in military terms, it refers to a series of operations to achieve a goal.

**Catholic** - a Christian who belongs to the Roman Catholic Church.

**Cavalry** - the name given to soldiers who fight on horseback.

**Civil rights** - the rights a citizen has to political or social freedoms, such as the right to vote or freedom of speech.

**Claim** - someone's assertion of their right to something - for example, a claim to the throne.

**Commissions** - the collective term for several organisations set up by the League of Nations to solve global issues.

**Communism** - the belief, based on the ideas of Karl Marx, that all people should be equal in society without government, money or private property. Everything is owned by the people, and each person receives according to need.

**Communist** - a believer in communism.

**Conference** - a formal meeting to discuss common issues of interest or concern.

**Conservative** - someone who dislikes change and prefers traditional values. It can also refer to a member of the

Conservative Party.

**Constitution** - rules, laws or principles that set out how a country is governed.

**Constitutional** - relating to the constitution.

**Consumer goods** - products that people buy.

**Containment** - meaning to keep something under control or within limits, it often refers to the American idea of stopping the spread of communism.

**Cooperate, Cooperation** - to work together to achieve a common aim. Frequently used in relation to politics, economics or law.

**Corrupt** - when someone is willing to act dishonestly for their own personal gain.

**Council** - an advisory or administrative body set up to manage the affairs of a place or organisation. The Council of the League of Nations contained the organisation's most powerful members.

**Credit** - the ability to borrow money, or use goods or services, on the understanding that it will be paid for later.

**Culture** - the ideas, customs, and social behaviour of a particular people or society.

**Currency** - an umbrella term for any form of legal tender, but most commonly referring to money.

## D

**Debt** - when something, usually money, is owed by a person, organisation or institution to another.

**Democracy** - a political system where a population votes for its government on a regular basis. The word is Greek for 'the rule of people' or 'people power'.

**Deploy** - to move military troops or equipment into position or a place so they are ready for action.

**Deport** - to expel someone from a country and, usually, return them to their homeland.

**Desegregation** - a policy of removing racial segregation (separation).

**Dictator** - a ruler with absolute power over a country, often acquired by force.

**Discriminate, Discrimination** - to treat a person or group of people differently and in an unfair way.

## E

**Economic** - relating to the economy; also used when justifying something in terms of profitability.

**Economy** - a country, state or region's position in terms of production and consumption of goods and services, and the supply of money.

**Electrification** - Bringing electricity to places that previously did not have it.

**Empire** - a group of states or countries ruled over and controlled by a single monarch.

## GLOSSARY

**Export** - to transport goods for sale to another country.

**Extreme** - furthest from the centre or any given point. If someone holds extreme views, they are not moderate and are considered radical.

### F

**Fasting** - to deliberately refrain from eating, and often drinking, for a period of time.

**Federal** - in US politics this means 'national', referring to the whole country rather than any individual state.

**Feminist** - someone who believes in feminism.

**Figurehead** - Someone who acts as a symbolic leader for something.

**Foreign policy** - a government's strategy for dealing with other nations.

**Full employment** - when virtually everyone able and willing to work in a country has a job.

### G

**Ghetto** - part of a city, often a slum area, occupied by a minority group.

### H

**Hire purchase** - a system where goods can be bought and paid for with a deposit and instalments over a period of time.

### I

**Illiterate** - unable to read or write.

**Immigrant** - someone who moves to another country.

**Immigration** - the act of coming to a foreign country with the intention of living there permanently.

**Impeach, Impeachment** - to charge someone, usually a high-ranking government official, with treason or a crime against the state.

**Import** - to bring goods or services into a different country to sell.

**Independence, Independent** - to be free of control, often meaning by another country, allowing the people of a nation the ability to govern themselves.

**Industrial** - related to industry, manufacturing and/or production.

**Industrialisation, Industrialise, Industrialised** - the process of developing industry in a country or region where previously there was little or none.

**Industry** - the part of the economy concerned with turning raw materials into manufactured goods, for example making furniture from wood.

**Inferior** - lower in rank, status or quality.

**Infrastructure** - the basic physical and organisational facilities a society or country needs to function, such as transport networks,

communications and power.

**Innovate, Innovation** - the introduction and development of new things, such as inventions, methods or ideas.

**Integrate** - to bring people or groups with specific characteristics or needs into equal participation with others; to merge one thing with another to form a single entity.

**Interpretation, Interpretations** - a perceived meaning or particular explanation of something.

**Investor** - someone who puts money into something with the expectation of future profit.

### J

**Juries, Jury** - a group of people sworn to listen to evidence on a legal case and then deliver an impartial verdict based on what they have heard.

### L

**Laissez-faire** - the idea a government should take a hands-off approach to matters such as public health or the free market; it translates from the French as 'let it be'.

**Left wing** - used to describe political groups or individuals with beliefs that are usually centered around socialism and the idea of reform.

**Legislation** - a term for laws when they are considered collectively, for example housing legislation.

**Legislature** - The organisation or set of people who have the power to create laws.

**Loophole** - an ambiguity or inadequacy in the law or a set of rules which allows people to do something that would otherwise be forbidden or illegal.

**Lynch, Lynched, Lynching** - the killing of someone by a group of people for an alleged offence without a legal trial, usually publicly and often by hanging.

### M

**Malnutrition** - lack of proper nutrition caused by not eating enough of the right things or not having enough to eat. It can also be caused by the body not being able to use the food that is eaten.

**Mechanisation** - Where human workers are replaced by machines or robots.

**Middle class** - refers to the socio-economic group which includes people who are educated and have professional jobs, such as teachers or lawyers.

**Militant** - using violent or more aggressive methods in a protest or for a cause.

**Minister** - a senior member of government, usually responsible for a particular area such as education or finance.

**Moderate** - someone who is not extreme.

**Modernise** - to update something to make it suitable for modern times, often by using modern equipment or modern ideas.

## GLOSSARY

**Morals** - a person's set of rules about what they consider right and wrong, used to guide their actions and behaviour.

### N

**Nationalisation** - the transfer of control or ownership of a sector of industry, such as banking or rail, from the private sector to the state.

**Nationalism, Nationalist, Nationalistic** - identifying with your own nation and supporting its interests, often to the detriment or exclusion of other nations.

### P

**Persecute** - to treat someone unfairly because of their race, religion or political beliefs.

**Pilgrimage** - journey undertaken to a sacred place, usually for religious or spiritual reasons.

**Poll** - a vote or survey.

**Polling Station** - a place where people go to vote.

**Population** - the number of people who live in a specified place.

**Poverty** - the state of being extremely poor.

**Precedent** - an earlier event used as an example in later, similar situations; often used the courts when they rule on a case similar to one held previously.

**Predecessor** - the person who came before; the previous person to fill a role or position.

**Prejudice** - prejudice - when you assume something about someone based on a feature like their religion or skin colour, rather than knowing it as fact.

**President** - the elected head of state of a republic.

**Prevent, Preventative, Preventive** - steps taken to stop something from happening.

**Proclamation** - a public or official announcement of great importance.

**Production** - a term used to describe how much of something is made, for example saying a factory has a high production rate.

**Profit** - generally refers to financial gain; the amount of money made after deducting buying, operating or production costs.

**Prosecute** - to institute or conduct legal proceedings against a person or organisation.

**Prosperity** - the state of thriving, enjoying good fortune and/or social status.

**Provision** - the act of providing or supplying something for someone.

### R

**Radical, Radicalism** - people who want complete or extensive change, usually politically or socially.

**Raid** - a quick surprise attack on the enemy.

**Ratification, Ratified** - to give formal agreement or consent to something.

**Rebellion** - armed resistance against a government or leader, or resistance to other authority or control.

**Reform, Reforming** - change, usually in order to improve an institution or practice.

**Relief** - something that reduces pressure on people, often through financial or practical support.

**Repressive** - a harsh or authoritarian action; usually used to describe governmental abuse of power.

**Republic** - a state or country run by elected representatives and an elected/nominated president. There is no monarch.

**Reservation** - an area of land given to Native Americans by the US government to keep them away from settlers.

**Rig, Rigged** - politically, to interfere in or fix an election to determine the winner.

**Riots** - violent disturbances involving a crowd of people.

### S

**Segregation** - when people are kept separately from each other - often used in the context of race.

**Sharecropper** - someone who farmed land belonging to a landowner in return for giving them a share of their crops.

**Sin** - in religion, an immoral act against God's laws.

**Soviet** - an elected workers' council at local, regional or national level in the former Soviet Union. It can also be a reference to the Soviet Union or the USSR.

**Standard of living** - level of wealth and goods available to an individual or group.

**State, States** - an area of land or a territory ruled by one government.

**Sterilisation, Sterilise** - to clean something so it is free of bacteria; also refers to a medical procedure that prevents a person from being able to reproduce.

**Stocks** - a restraining device that trapped the feet and ankles, used as a humiliating form of punishment. Located outdoors in a public place, criminals were locked into them for days at a time.

**Strike** - a refusal by employees to work as a form of protest, usually to bring about change in their working conditions. It puts pressure on their employer, who cannot run the business without workers.

**Suburban** - An outer area of a city, usually where houses are less tightly packed in.

**Suppress, Suppression** - the use of force to stop something, such as a protest.

### T

**Tactic** - a strategy or method of achieving a goal.

**Tariff, Trade tariff** - a tax placed on imports, increasing their cost.

**Trade unions** - organised groups of workers who cooperate to make their lives better at work. For example, they might negotiate for better pay and then organise a strike if one is refused.

**Treason** - the crime of betraying one's country, often involving an attempt to overthrow the government or kill the monarch.

### U

**Unconstitutional** - not in accordance with the constitution of a country or organisation.

**Upper class** - a socio-economic group consisting of the richest people in a society who are wealthy because they own land or property.

### V

**Veteran, Veterans** - an ex-soldier.

**Veto** - the right to reject a decision or proposal.

### W

**WASP** - white Anglo-Saxon Protestant.

**Welfare** - wellbeing; often refers to money and services given to the poorest people.

**White supremacist** - one who believes white people are superior to people of other ethnicities and should therefore be dominant.

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