

## A

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**abolitionists** people who favored abolition, the ending of slavery

**adapt** to change in order to survive in a new or different environment or situation

**agrarian** a person who favors an agricultural way of life and government policies that support agricultural interests

**AIDS:** Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome, a disease that weakens the body's ability to fight off infection and illness

**aliens** people who have come from other countries and are not yet citizens

**ally** a nation that joins another nation in some common effort, such as winning a war

**amendment** a change to the constitution

**annex** To add a territory to a country. Such an addition is called an *annexation*.

**arsenal** a place where weapons and ammunition are stored

**Articles of Confederation** The first written plan of government for the United States. A "confederation" is an association of states who cooperate for a common purpose.

**assembly** an elected group of lawmakers

**assimilation** the process by which immigrants or other newcomers acquire the attitudes, behaviors, and cultural patterns of the society around them

## B

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**bicameral** Having two lawmaking parts. *Bicameral* comes from Latin words meaning "two rooms."

**bill** a proposed law

**Bill of Rights** a formal listing of the basic rights of citizen

**blockade** a closing off of an area to keep people or supplies from going in or out

**boycott** To refuse to buy one or more goods from a certain source. An organized refusal by many people is also called a boycott.

## C

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**capitalism** an economic system based on the private ownership of farms and businesses

**carpetbaggers** northerners who went to the South after the Civil War to gain money and political power

**cash crops** crops, such as tobacco, sugar, and cotton, raised in large quantities in order to be sold for profit

**checks and balances** the system that allows each branch of government to limit the powers of the other branches

**civil rights** the rights that are guaranteed by the Constitution to all people as citizens, especially equal treatment under the law

**civil servants** employees of the government

**civil war** a war fought between the people of a single country

**class** A part of society defined by such qualities as wealth, occupation, and inherited titles or honors. A society may have an upper class, a middle class, and a lower class.

**collective bargaining** a method for negotiating labor issues in which union representatives bargain with employers on behalf of the union's members

**colony** a new settlement or territory established and governed by a country in another land

**compromise** an agreement in which both sides in a dispute agree to give up something they want in order to achieve a settlement

**Confederacy** the independent country declared by 11 southern states, who called themselves the Confederate States of America

**conquistadors** Spanish soldier-explorers, especially those who conquered the native peoples of Mexico and Peru

**conservation** the effort to protect something valuable from being destroyed or used up

**constitution** a written plan that provides the basic framework of a government

**converts** people who accept a new religion

**corporation** a business that is owned by many investors

**cotton gin** a hand-operated machine that cleans seeds and other unwanted material from cotton

**cultural region** an area in which a group of people share a similar culture and language

**culture** a people's way of life, including beliefs, customs, food, dwellings, and clothing

## D

**Declaration of Sentiments** A formal statement of injustices suffered by women, written by the organizers of the Seneca Falls Convention. *Sentiments* means "beliefs" or "convictions."

**defendants** people who are required to defend themselves in a legal action; an example is an accused person who is put on trial for a crime

**deforestation** the clearing away of forests

**democratic** Ruled by the people. In a democracy, citizens elect representatives to make and carry out laws.

**diplomacy** The art of conducting negotiations with other countries. People who engage in diplomacy are called *diplomats*.

**discrimination** unequal treatment based on a person's race, gender, religion, place of birth, or other arbitrary characteristic

**doctrine** a statement of official government policy, especially in foreign affairs

**draft** a system for requiring citizens to join their country's armed forces

## E

**economy** the way a society organizes the manufacture and exchange of things of value, such as money, food, products, and services

**Electoral College** The group established by the Constitution to elect the president and vice president. Voters in each state choose their electors.

**emancipation** the act of freeing people from slavery

**embargo** a government order that stops merchant ships from leaving or entering a country's ports

**Enlightenment** the "Age of Reason" in 17th and 18th century Europe. Enlightenment thinkers emphasized using rational thought to discover truths about nature and society

**entrepreneur** someone who starts a business and is good at making money

**environment** all of the physical surroundings in a place, including land, water, animals, plants, and climate

**executive branch** the part of government that "executes" (carries out) the laws

**expansionists** Americans who favored extending the United States' power by taking control of new territories

## F

**federalism** the constitutional system that shares power between the national and state governments

**feminist** a person who is actively concerned with achieving social, political, and economic equality for women

**First Great Awakening** a revival of religious feeling and belief in the American colonies that began in the 1730s

**folk art** art made by ordinary people (as opposed to trained artists) using traditional methods

**foreign policy** guidelines for how a country handles political and economic interactions with other countries

**forty-niners** the people (almost all young men) who joined the rush for gold in California in 1849

**freedmen** African Americans who had been set free from slavery

**fugitive** a person who flees or tries to escape (for example, from slavery)

## G

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**Great Depression** a drastic decline in the economy that led to widespread unemployment and poverty in the 1930s

**guerrillas** soldiers who operate on their own and are not part of a regular army

## H

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**habeas corpus** a written order from a court that gives a person the right to a trial before being jailed

**heritage** the traditional beliefs, values, and customs of a family or country

**homestead** a plot of land where pioneers could build a home, farm, or ranch

**homesteader** a farmer who is given a plot of public land (called a *homestead*) in return for cultivating it

## I

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**immigrant** A person who moves from one country to another. Such a movement is called *immigration*.

**impeach** to formally accuse an official of a crime related to official duties

**imperialism** the policy of extending a nation's power by gaining political and economic control over other countries

**inauguration** a formal ceremony to mark the beginning of something, such as a president's term of office

**indentured servant** A person who signed an indenture, or an agreement to work for a master for a period of years. Indentured servants were not free until they completed their term of service.

**independence** freedom from control by another government or country

**Industrial Revolution** The dramatic change in economies brought about by the use of machines to do work formerly done by hand. The Industrial Revolution began in England in the late 1700s and spread to America and the rest of Europe.

**industrialist** a person whose wealth comes from the ownership of industrial businesses and who favors government policies that support industry

**industrialization** the birth and growth of businesses that make and distribute products through the use of machinery

**interest group** an organization that actively promotes the views of some part of the public on specific issues

**Internet** a network that allows computers in locations around the world to share information

**interstate commerce** trade and other business dealings that cross state lines

**irrigation** a system for bringing water to farmland by artificial means, such as using a dam to trap water and ditches to channel it to fields

**isolationism** a policy of avoiding political or military agreements with other countries; first established by George Washington

## J

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**Jim Crow laws** Laws enforcing segregation of blacks and whites in the South after the Civil War. "Jim Crow" was a black character in an entertainer's act in the mid-1800s.

**judicial branch** the part of government, consisting of the Supreme Court and lower federal courts, that interprets the laws

## L

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**laissez-faire** The theory that economies work best when governments do not interfere with them. (*Laissez-faire* is French for "leave alone.")

**legislative branch** The lawmaking part of government, called the *legislature*. To *legislate* is to make a law.

**Loyalists** American colonists who were loyal to the British government

