

# America in the Modern World

## Complete Unit Guide Packet

### Overview

The word most often used to describe America in the 1970s is “[malaise](#)”. A general feeling of discomfort or uneasiness without an exact cause. Of course, there were causes. America was coming out of a long and unpopular war in Vietnam without a clear victory. The [worst political scandal](#) in America’s history forced President Richard Nixon to resign in the face of impeachment. An economy that had been growing since World War 2 finally began to sputter into a recession.

After 52 Americans were [taken hostage in Iran](#) in 1979, confidence in the American economy and government hit nose-dived. Looking for a change and the promise of a better future, voters elected Ronald Reagan, ushering in a decade dominated by conservative ideas known as the “Reagan Era”.

Cable television and personal computers drastically [changed life](#) for many Americans in the 1980s and the economy improved. However, the recreational use of deadly drugs increased, especially in cities, and First Lady Nancy Reagan urged young people to, “Just say no!” America was also rocked by the spread of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome, or AIDS. This deadly disease was most commonly communicated by sexual contact and the sharing of intravenous needles.



The US finally [won the Cold War](#) when the Soviet Union collapsed, but the country soon found itself in another conflict when Iraq’s Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait. America led a coalition in [Operation Desert Storm](#) to a decisive victory. Political partisanship rose in the 1990s as Congress went back and forth under Democratic and Republican control. President Bill Clinton was impeached for lying about an affair and obstruction of justice in 1998. He was acquitted but the partisanship remained, especially after the Supreme Court was needed to help resolve the razor-thin 2000 presidential election in Bush v. Gore.

The country came together after the [September 11<sup>th</sup> terrorist attacks](#) in 2001. Intelligence agencies quickly identified the radical Islamic militant group al-Qaeda and the US went to war in Afghanistan and Iraq. These wars continued through the election of Barack Obama in 2008, but partisanship returned and has dominated the political landscape in the years since.

### Essential Questions

- Did the Watergate scandal demonstrate a weakness or a sign of strength in America’s system of government?
- Did Ronald Reagan’s policies strengthen or weaken America?
- Is the world safer since the end of the Cold War?
- What is America’s role in the global community?
- How did America’s shift away from an industrial economy affect its population?
- Are peace and stability in the Middle East vital to the economic and national security interests of the US?
- How have America’s demographics changed over the past 40 years?
- How did the September 11<sup>th</sup> terrorist attacks impact America’s foreign and domestic policies?
- How has the role of women and once marginalized groups changed in American society, politics, and the economy?

# Vocabulary

**Directions:** For each vocabulary term, write a definition in your own words in the space provided.

<b>Watergate</b>	
<b>Roe v. Wade</b>	
<b>Immigration Act of 1965</b>	
<b>Equal Rights Amendment</b>	
<b>Americans with Disabilities Act</b>	
<b>HIV/AIDS</b>	
<b>Al Qaeda</b>	
<b>Patriot Act</b>	
<b>War on Terror</b>	

# Geography of Modern America

**Directions:** Use the map of America below and your knowledge of America to answer the questions at the bottom.



Which cities and regions of America have grown the most of the past few decades?

Why do you think these areas have grown?

What impact has this growth had on America and America politics?

# People to Know

**Directions:** Click on each name to learn more about each figure from US History. Then, identify the significant contributions that person made to American history in this era.

Name: <a href="#">Phyllis Schlafly</a> Contributions:	Name: <a href="#">Shirley Chisholm</a> Contributions:	Name: <a href="#">Sandra Day O'Connor</a> Contributions:
Name: <a href="#">Richard Nixon</a> Term in Office: Contributions:	Name: <a href="#">Jimmy Carter</a> Term in Office: Contributions:	Name: <a href="#">Ronald Reagan</a> Term in Office: Contributions:
Name: <a href="#">Bill Clinton</a> Term in Office: Contributions:	Name: <a href="#">George W. Bush</a> Term in Office: Contributions:	Name: <a href="#">Barack Obama</a> Term in Office: Contributions:

# Timeline of Modern America

**Directions:** Click on each event to learn more about it. Then, assign the date next to it and briefly explain the significance for each event in the last column.

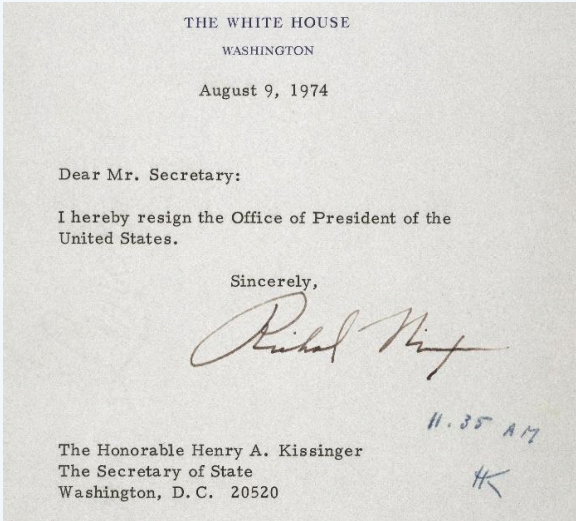
Year	Event	Significance
	<a href="#">Richard Nixon Resigns the Presidency</a>	
	<a href="#">Iran Hostage Crisis</a>	
	<a href="#">Ronald Reagan Elected President</a>	
	<a href="#">Iran-Contra Affair Uncovered</a>	
	<a href="#">Operation Desert Storm Begins</a>	
	<a href="#">Collapse of the Soviet Union</a>	
	<a href="#">NAFTA Goes into Effect</a>	
	<a href="#">President Clinton Impeached</a>	
	<a href="#">Supreme Court Decides Bush v Gore</a>	
	<a href="#">9/11 Attacks</a>	
	<a href="#">The Great Recession Strikes</a>	
	<a href="#">Barack Obama Takes Office</a>	

Which event from this era do you feel had the biggest impact on the US?

How did America's demographics change over this time period?

# Key Concepts

**Directions:** For each section, either takes notes on the required topics or answer the questions in complete sentences.

	<p>Richard Nixon's <a href="#"><u>Resignation Letter</u></a> from August 9, 1974, the day following his televised resignation speech. It was addressed to the Secretary of State, in keeping with a law passed by Congress in 1792. The letter became effective when Secretary of State Henry Kissinger initialed it at 11:35 a.m.</p> <p>Why was Nixon forced to resign the presidency?</p>
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<p>The <a href="#"><u>Equal Rights Amendment (ERA)</u></a> was originally written by Alice Paul and Crystal Eastman and was first introduced in Congress in December 1923. It was approved by the House of Representatives in October 1971 and by the Senate in March 1972, thus <a href="#"><u>submitting the ERA</u></a> to the state legislatures for ratification.</p> <p>Why was the ERA not ratified by the states after passing through Congress?</p>	<p>Section 1. Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex.</p> <p>Section 2. The Congress shall have the power to enforce, by appropriate legislation, the provisions of this article.</p> <p>Section 3. This article shall take effect 2 years after the date of ratification.</p>
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<p>"This right of privacy, whether it be founded in the 14th Amendment's concept of personal liberty and restrictions upon state action, as we feel it is, or ... in the 9th Amendment's reservation of rights to the people, is broad enough to encompass a woman's decision whether or not to terminate her pregnancy.</p> <p>We need not resolve the difficult question of when life begins. When those trained in the respective disciplines of medicine, philosophy, and theology are unable to arrive at any consensus, the judiciary, in this point in the development of man's knowledge, is not in a position to speculate as to the answer."</p> <p>- Justice Blackburn, Concurring</p>	<p><a href="#"><u>Roe v. Wade</u></a> was a landmark Supreme Court decision in which the Court ruled that the Constitution protects a pregnant woman's liberty to choose to have an abortion without excessive government restriction.</p> <p>On what foundation did the Court find that women should have the right to an abortion?</p>
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The [Iran–Contra affair](#) was a scandal in the United States that occurred during the second term of the Reagan Administration officials secretly facilitated the sale of weapons to Iran, which was the subject of an arms embargo. The administration hoped to use the proceeds of the sale to fund right-wing rebel groups known as Contras in Nicaragua.

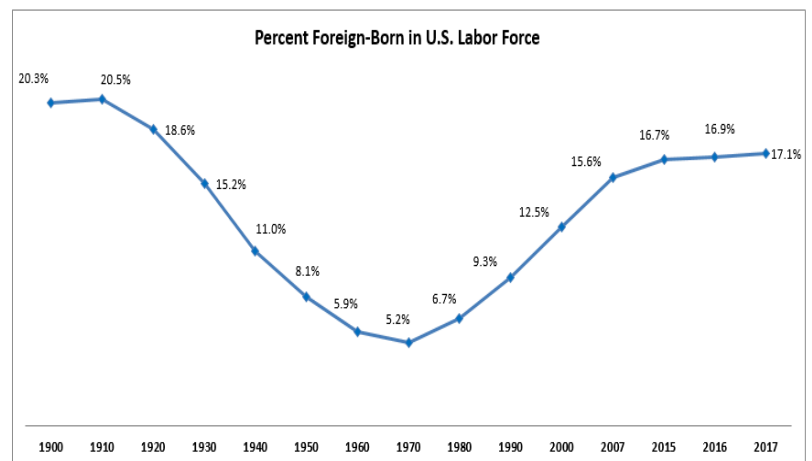
What was President Reagan's [explanation](#) for Iran-Contra and do you accept it? Explain why or why not.

"First, let me say I take full responsibility for my own actions and for those of my administration. As angry as I may be about activities undertaken without my knowledge, I am still accountable for those activities. As disappointed as I may be in some who served me, I'm still the one who must answer to the American people for this behavior.

A few months ago, I told the American people I did not trade arms for hostages. My heart and my best intentions still tell me that's true, but the facts and the evidence tell me it is not. ... As reported, what began as a strategic opening to Iran deteriorated, in its implementation, into trading arms for hostages. This runs counter to my own beliefs, to administration policy, and to the original strategy we had in mind."

- President Ronald Reagan (1987)

How have America's demographics changed over the past century and what accounts for this change?



"One of the principal issues in the appeal we have accepted is precisely whether the votes that have been ordered to be counted are, under a reasonable interpretation of Florida law, "legally cast vote[s]." The counting of votes that are of questionable legality does in my view threaten irreparable harm to petitioner Bush, and to the country, by casting a cloud upon what he claims to be the legitimacy of his election. Count first, and rule upon legality afterwards, is not a recipe for producing election results that have the public acceptance democratic stability requires.

- Justice Scalia, Concurring

"Counting every legally cast vote cannot constitute irreparable harm [...] Preventing the recount from being completed will inevitably cast a cloud on the legitimacy of the election."

- Justice Stevens, Dissenting

On December 13, 2000, the Supreme Court ruled 5-4 in the [case of Bush v. Gore](#) to halt the Florida recount that was occurring. The Electoral College was scheduled to meet on December 18, 2000, to decide the presidential election.

What impact did the Supreme Court's decision in Bush v. Gore have?

What is your analysis of the concurring (agreeing) and dissenting (disagreeing) opinions?

# Visual Literacy

**Directions:** Use the included images and captions to answer each of the questions.

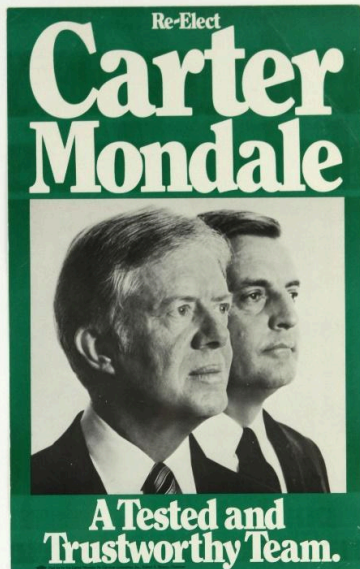


After resigning the presidency, Richard Nixon smiles and gives his signature salute with arms outstretched from the presidential helicopter.

Do you think President Ford pardoning Nixon was the right thing to do? Why or why not?

In the 1970s, the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) seemed destined to pass swiftly through state legislatures and become the 27<sup>th</sup> Amendment, but conservative opposition stopped the Amendment just short of ratification.

What were conservative arguments against the ERA?



Republican nominee Ronald Reagan defeated Democrat Jimmy Carter in the 1980 presidential election. Some historians consider Reagan's victory to be a realigning election that marked the start of the "Reagan Era".

Based on the campaign posters, what did each party wish to convey?





Shortly after the invasion of Iraq in 2003, US Marines helped to **topple a statue of Saddam Hussein** in Firdos Square in Baghdad. The destruction of the statue was shown live on cable news networks as it happened and made the front pages of newspapers across the world.

What was the symbolic significance of toppling this statue?

The Statue of Liberty with the World Trade Center towers burning in the **background on September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001**.

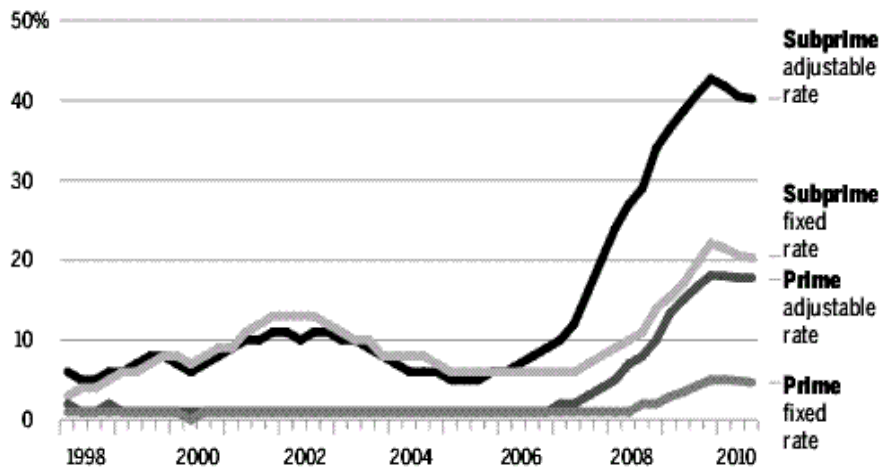
To what extent do the 9/11 attacks still impact life in America today?



## Mortgage Delinquencies by Loan Type

Serious delinquencies started earlier and were substantially higher among subprime adjustable-rate loans, compared with other loan types.

IN PERCENT, BY TYPE



NOTE: Serious delinquencies include mortgages 90 days or more past due and those in foreclosure.

SOURCE: Mortgage Bankers Association National Delinquency Survey

A **subprime mortgage** is usually offered to prospective borrowers with weaker credit records at a higher interest rate. A mortgage becomes **delinquent** when the borrower doesn't make the required payments.

Why do you think so many more adjustable rate mortgages became delinquent?

What impact did this have on the American economy in 2008?