

U.S. History Projects

Mexican Fiesta - Plan a fiesta to honor Hispanic influences in our country. Include Hispanic foods and music. Prepare posters or presentations that show Hispanic influence on our language, place names, and architecture. Invite the class to attend.

Present a Skit - Prepare a play about the lost colony of Roanoke. Base the play on the historical facts of the story. Begin with John White and Walter Raleigh planning the colony. Act out a reasonable explanation for the colony's disappearance. End with John White returning to find the colony missing. Write dialogue for the characters and bring in basic props. Present the skit to the class.

Make a Chart - Make an organizational chart of the feudal system, noting the rank of each class. Use arrows to indicate the system of loyalty. Display and explain your chart to the class.

Present a Skit - Write a dialogue that might have occurred between a European monarch and Christopher Columbus. In the dialogue, the monarch and Columbus discuss the advantages and disadvantages for each if the monarch backs Columbus's voyage to the East. Present the skit to the class.

Hold a Debate - Prepare for a debate on the assertion, "Exploration during the age of discovery was more dangerous than modern exploration." Present it to the class.

Make Some Maps - Prepare a series of four maps that show exploration of the Americas between 1490 and 1610. The maps should indicate the routes of the explorers and the areas they claimed during the following time periods: (a) 1490-1519 (b) 1520-1549 (c) 1550-1579 (d) 1580-1610. A map key should show the nations for which the explorers claimed the lands.

Make a Chart - Make a chart comparing Spanish conquests in Mexico and Peru. Topics should include geography, native civilizations, the backgrounds of the conquistadors Cortes and Pizarro, and the methods used to conquer each region. Display and explain your chart to the class.

Write a Documentary - Create a documentary about Sir Francis Drake. Include a story about Drake's background, his heroic escape around the world, and eyewitness account of his defeat of the Spanish Armada, and imagined interviews with Drake and his crew. You may present this as live interviews and narrations (write the dialogue out), as a video, in written form, or in cartoon form.

Make a Chart - Make a chart comparing Spain's and England's methods of establishing colonies.

Topics of comparison should include time periods, role of monarchs, location of colonies, reasons for colonization, and ways of encouraging settlement. Display and present your chart to the class.

Make a Map - Make a map to show the Spanish system of “mercantilism.” Label the colonies and use symbols or pictures to show products and raw materials from each area and finished goods from Spain. Draw arrows to indicate the flow of trade between Spain and its colonies. Display and explain your map for the class.

Make a Model - Southern Plantations and New England Towns had a particular pattern to their arrangement. They were functional and each area had a particular purpose. Decide which of these types of living areas you would like to learn more about. On heavy cardboard or a board, construct a model of either. Label each part of your model. Display and explain your model to the class.

Construct a Clothing Booklet - Clothing fashions and customs in colonial times differed greatly from today. Often they were made to fit the climate of the area and the social class of the people wearing them. If you are artistically inclined, construct a booklet with illustrations and explanations of the various types of clothing worn in different parts of the colonies. The booklet should include a cover, table of contents, and should be at least 10 pages in length. Display and explain your booklet to the class.

Make a Model - The English and French built many forts in the wilderness areas of the New World to guard against Indian attacks and to serve as trading centers. Using sticks, dough, string, heavy paper, etc. construct a model of an early American fort. Your model should be painted or colored with magic marker and should be set in a forest scene just as it would appear in those days. The model should be placed on a board or heavy cardboard. Labels should be used to name the various parts of the fort. Display and explain your model to the class.

Make a Crossword Puzzle - Make a crossword puzzle using names, terms, and places from colonial America. There should be at least 40 clues and an answer key. Duplicate the puzzle and hand it out to the class as an extra credit option.

Write a Letter - Read more about the Battle of Quebec in the French and Indian War. Then write a letter from an English soldier to someone he knows at home (you pretend to be the soldier). Describe the battle, using factual information. Embellish the letter with details of an act of heroism on your part. The letter should be at least 300 words long and should be read to the class.

Make a Promotional Poster - Make a poster and a travel brochure to “sell” one of the three colonial regions to a would-be settlers. Emphasize the region’s strengths and its differences from the other two regions. The poster should be done on poster board and the brochure on folded paper. Share these promotional items with your class.

Research a Crop - Find information on planting, harvesting, and use of one of these crops: tobacco, indigo, or rice. Diagram and illustrate the information on a poster (or posters if necessary). Share the information with your class.

Create a War Pamphlet - Create a pamphlet explaining the French and Indian War. Use a question-style format to present your information. For example, you might use questions such as these: What was the French and Indian War? When and where was the war fought? Who were the important military leaders on each side? What were the terms of the treaty that ended the war? Illustrate the pamphlet with maps, pictures, diagrams, etc. Share your pamphlet with the class.

Dramatize a Court Case - Consider what would happen if Nathaniel Bacon stood trial in Virginia after his uprising was put down by English soldiers. With two or three other students, prepare to

act out Bacon's imaginary trial in class. You may wish to include the parts of Bacon, the judge, a lawyer, and the colonial governor.

Make a Chart - Make a chart of the English colonies. List the following information for each colony: its founder, the date founded, reasons for its establishment, and important settlements. Add other facts that distinguish one colony from another. Share your chart with your class.

Research Thanksgiving - Find more information about the first Thanksgiving celebration. Write a report (in essay or chart form) describing what kinds of food were served, who attended, and what activities the day included. Then compare the first Thanksgiving celebrations with how we observe it today.

Design a Flow Chart - Design a flow chart showing how a bill becomes a law. Share your efforts with the class by explaining each of the steps.

Make an Outline - Outline the Constitution on the computer. For the Amendments, include a brief description. Share your outline by explaining the main parts of the Constitution.

Make a Chart - Make a chart that clearly explains each of the 26 amendments. Share your chart with the class by explaining each amendment in your own words.

Hold a Debate - Plan and carry out a debate between Thomas Jefferson and John Adams that might have taken place before the election of 1800. Each side should consist of 2 people: A candidate and his campaign manager. The debate format is listed below. All speeches, rebuttals, and closings should be planned together by the candidates and campaign managers. The debate will be performed in front of the class with the teacher as moderator.

Candidate 1 - Opening Speech (2 min.)
Candidate 2 - Rebuttal (1 min.)
Candidate 1 - Closing (30 sec.)

Candidate 2 - Opening Speech (2 min.)
Candidate 1 - Rebuttal (1 min.)
Candidate 2 - Closing (30 sec.)

Make a Promotional Poster - Make a poster that promotes one of the first two political parties. Include as much information as you can find on the views of the party as well as the famous people who were members of the party. Share your poster with the class.

Research a Person - Choose one of the following people to research: John Marshall, Dolley Madison, Daniel Boone, Zebulon Pike, Tecumseh, Toussaint L'Ouverture, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, George Washington. Write and illustrate a biography (300 words or more) about your subject's life and his or her achievements. Share the information with your class.

Create a War Pamphlet - Create a pamphlet explaining the War of 1812. Use a question-style format to present your information. For example, you might use questions such as these: Why was the War of 1812 fought? When and where was the war fought? Who were the important military leaders on each side? What were some of the important battles fought in the war? What good came out of the war for the United States? What were the terms of the treaty that ended the war? Illustrate the pamphlet with maps, pictures, diagrams, etc. Share your pamphlet with the class.

Make a Chart - Thomas Jefferson and John Adams both died on July 4, 1826 — the fiftieth anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. Make chart that compares the lives of these two outstanding Americans. Point out the ways in which they were similar and the ways in which they

were different.

Present a Panel Discussion - Working in a group of four to six people, organize and present information about how our government works. Entitle the presentation “Our Government in Action.” Using charts, overheads, posters, pictures, etc., explain the following: **the separation of powers, the election of government leaders, the qualifications for candidates, government terms of office, the system of checks and balances, and amending the constitution.** Allow opportunities for questions by the class. * As an option instead of posters, charts, etc., you may use food items that the class can later eat to represent the parts you are talking about.

Become an Expert on the Preamble - Memorize the Preamble to the Constitution. Recite it to the class and then explain what each phrase means. You may use charts, overheads, etc.

Act Out a Court Case - During the early 1800’s the strength of the Supreme Court grew enormously. Several key cases, reviewed by the Supreme Court under Chief Justice John Marshall led to this unprecedented growth in power. Research one of the cases and act it out for the class. Your presentation should include a brief introduction to familiarize everyone with the background of the case and a summary afterwards that tells how the case strengthened the Supreme Court. The court cases you may choose from are listed below.

McCulloch v. Maryland (1819)
Cohens v. Virginia (1821)
Gibbons v. Ogden (1824)
Fletcher v. Peck (1810)
Dartmouth College v. Woodward (1819)

Construct a Clothing Booklet - Clothing fashions and customs in colonial times differed greatly from today. Often they were made to fit the climate of the area and the social class of the people wearing them. If you are artistically inclined, construct a booklet with illustrations and explanations of the various types of clothing worn in different parts of the colonies. The booklet should include a cover, table of contents, and should be at least 10 pages in length.

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Explain a Poem - Read “Paul Revere’s Ride” by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. Write a brief summary of what is happening in each verse. Compare this to a factual account from another source. Set up your work in three columns on a large poster board:

Column 1 = Verses of the actual poem
Column 2 = Paraphrased explanation by you
Column 3 = Factual account of what happened.

Explain a Treaty - Find out all you can about the Treaty of Paris of 1783. Make before and after maps to show the results of the treaty. Explain the reason behind each part of the treaty. Then write a summary that answers the question “Was this a ‘good’ treaty?” Answer the question from three

viewpoints: Patriot, Loyalist, British Government, and Native American. Give reasons for your answers.

Research Famous Quotes - Find information about each of the famous quotes listed below. Summarize the context in which it was spoken (place, time, reason, etc.). Explain what the speaker probably meant by the words. Display your findings in a creative way. Share your research with the class.

“Give me liberty or give me death!” (Patrick Henry)

“These are the times that try men’s souls.” (Thomas Paine)

“I have not yet begun to fight!” (John Paul Jones)

“I only regret that I have but one life to lose for my country.” (Nathan Hale)

“We must all hang together, or assuredly we shall all hang separately.” (Ben Franklin)

Discuss the Christian Viewpoint - Was it right for the colonists to fight for their independence? When is it right to do this? What other options were available for the colonists? What do you think the colonists should have done? Consult at least two other people that would have knowledge and expertise in this area. Write your thoughts in a persuasive essay of at least 300 words.

Make a Time Line - Make a time line of the events leading up to and including the Revolutionary War. Your first year should be 1763. Your final event should be the Treaty of Paris of 1783. Each event on the time line should be accompanied by a brief explanation of the event. Come up with a creative way to display your time line.

Read a Book - Read the novel *The Fighting Ground* by Avi. Take the AR test on the book and pass. Give a brief oral book report, telling the class a little bit about the book.

Make a Chart - Make a chart of the English colonies. List the following information for each colony: its founder, the date founded, reasons for its establishment, and important settlements. Add at least two other facts about each colony that distinguishes it from the others.

Make a Crossword Puzzle - Make a crossword puzzle using the terms from either chapter 21 or chapters 20 and 22. Include a smaller answer key. Duplicate and give out to those who want extra credit. Correct the puzzle when it’s completed.

Make a Giant Cause & Effect Poster - Make a large poster that shows all the possible causes and effects of industrialization. Share your poster with the class, explaining your reasons behind each cause and effect.

Be Gompers - Imagine you are Samuel Gompers. You wish to get a group of skilled workers to join an AFL union. Prepare an argument of why those workers should join the union, emphasizing their problems and how a union can help them. Present your argument in a creative way to the class.

The Farmer in the Dells - You’re a mid-western farmer from the Dells area of Wisconsin. Write a speech that promotes farm issues (It may help to also read about the platform of the People’s Party). The speech should be written as if it would be given to city dwellers. Deliver your speech to the class.

Make a Chart - Make a chart entitled “Farm Life, 1860 - 1900”. Divide the chart into four vertical columns headed “Decade,” “Changes in Technology,” “Farm Organization or Party,” and “Important Farm Issues.” Enter the appropriate information under each heading. If you wish,

add pictures and other pertinent information. Share your chart with the class.

Make a Who's Who Display - Prepare a display entitled "Who's Who in America in the Late 1800's". Each part of the display should contain brief descriptions of a particular group of famous people, such as politicians, capitalists, inventors, writers, artists, etc. (Think of your own categories). Share your display with the class.

Make a Large Lifestyle Chart - Make a chart comparing the mining, ranching, and homesteading lifestyles. Compare each group's work, the place where each group lived, the hardships of each lifestyle, as well as the goals and values of each way of life. Get information from your textbook and other sources! Share you chart with the class.

Make an Effective Diagram - Make a diagram of the two big problems that faced farmers in the late 1800's. (Supply & Demand and Gold Standard). The diagram should effectively summarize the two problems on a large enough display board (or paper) so that it can be read easily from a distance. Share you diagram with the class.

Video Tape an Interview - Tape a mock interview with one of the three big industrialists we studied in Chapter 21. The interview should be based on information found in your textbook and other sources.

Decide the Matter Once and for All - Write an essay entitled, "The Three Real Causes of the Settlement of the West." Your essay should thoroughly explain your reasons and attempt to answer possible disagreements (this is called writing a "rebuttal"). Persuasively read the essay to the class. (1)

Do Some "Depressing" Research - Research the stock market crash of October 29, 1929, and the subsequent depression called the Great Depression. Write a 300 word report and share it with the class.

Write for NBC - Write a brief episode for "Little House on the Prairie." Use the Ingalls family to depict a day in the life of an 1880's farm family. The family should encounter and attempt to solve a problem that homesteaders actually would have had during that time in history. Perform the episode for the class. (The playwright will receive the credit for this one, while the other actors can receive extra credit above and beyond what they receive for their own project)

Make Some Chow - Research the "chuck wagon," the kitchen facility of the western rancher when he traveled on cattle drives. What kind of food was served? Prepare some "Classic Cattle Drive Dishes" to share with the class.