

American History Glossary

TERM	DEFINITION
A	
Artifact	A material object of a culture such as a tool, an article of clothing or a prepared food.

C	
Colonialism	A system where one country extends its control over foreign dependencies, especially for economic benefit.
Country	A unit of political space, the entire land area of a nation or state.
Credibility	The quality or state of offering reasonable grounds for being believed.
Cultural Institution	An established custom, practice or relationship of importance to a society.
Cultural Perspective	The complex set of meanings, attitudes, values and ideas belonging to a cultural group.
Cultural Practice	A pattern of behavior accepted by a society.
Cultural Product	A tangible (e.g., a painting, a cathedral, a mosque, a piece of literature, a pair of chopsticks) or intangible (e.g., an oral tale, a dance, a sacred ritual, a system of education) aspect produced by a cultural group.
Culture	Learned behavior of a group of people, which includes their belief systems and languages, their social relationships, their institutions and organization, and their material goods such as food, clothing, buildings, tools and machines.
D	
Democracy	A system of government in which political control is exercised by all the people, either directly or through their elected representatives.
Dictatorship	A system of government in which those who rule usually acquire and maintain authority by force and cannot be held responsible to the will of the people.
Discrimination	Unfair treatment of a person or group based on a variety of prejudices.
Due Process of Law	The right of every citizen to be protected against arbitrary action by the government.
E	
Economic Growth	An increase in an economy's ability to produce goods and services over time.
Entrepreneur	An individual who organizes the use of productive resources to produce goods or services.
Entrepreneurship	The organization of productive resources by a person willing to take risks to start a business.
Ex Post Facto Law	A legislative act that retroactively makes an act a crime, makes a crime a more serious crime, makes a criminal punishment more severe, or changes trial rules to make conviction easier.

TERM	DEFINITION
F	
Federalism	A form of political organization in which governmental power is divided between a central government and territorial subdivisions - under the U.S. Constitution, between the national and state governments.
I	
Imperialism	A policy used by strong countries to gain social, political and economic control over foreign territories.
Institutionalized Discrimination	Unfair treatment of a group based on prejudice and carried out by governments, organizations and companies that limit freedoms in political, economic, social, cultural and any other field of public life.
Institutionalized Racism	The use of institutional policies, practices and/or procedures to withhold rights, privileges and opportunities from the race that is believed to be inferior.
M	
Multinational Corporation	A large corporation that produces and sells its goods and services throughout the world.

N	
Nation	A group of people bound together by a strong sense of shared values and cultural characteristics, including language, religion and common history.
Natural Rights	A belief that individuals are naturally endowed with basic human rights that cannot be taken away or given up.
P	
Perspective	A specific point of view in understanding or judging things or events.
Physical Map	A portrayal on a flat surface of the physical features of the Earth (e.g., landforms, elevations).
Pictograph	A diagram or graph using pictured objects to convey ideas or information.
Political Map	A portrayal on a flat surface of the political features of the Earth (e.g., international boundaries, capitals, political subdivisions).
Prejudice	An adverse opinion or judgment formed beforehand or without full knowledge or complete examination of the facts; a preconceived idea or preference.
Primary Source	An account of an event by someone who was present at the event.

TERM	DEFINITION
R	
Racism	The belief that members of one's own race are superior physically, mentally, culturally and morally to members of other races.
Reliability	The degree to which something is trustworthy or is suitable to be depended upon.
Responsibilities	The conditions or tasks for which a person is accountable or answerable.
Rights	Just claims that belong to a person by law, nature or tradition.

S	
Secondary Source	An account of an event by someone who was not present at the event.
Standard of Living	A person's or group's level of material well-being, as measured by education, housing, healthcare and nutrition.

T	
Territory	An area of land; the land and waters under the jurisdiction of a state, nation or sovereign.