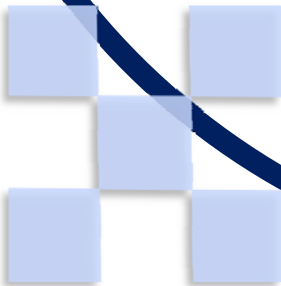




# CORE CONCEPTS IN U.S. & TEXAS HISTORY

**Level:** Grades 5 & 6



HEXCO ACADEMIC

Educational Tools for the Serious Student

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**Government Concepts** - A government is the system by which a state or community is administered. In the U.S., the government consists of three branches: the Executive Branch, which signs the laws, the Legislative Branch, which creates the laws, and the Judicial Branch, which ensures the laws are constitutional. Each is independent, but the three provide a system of checks and balances that prevent any one branch from dominating another. The evolution of American Democracy was a slow process and assembled from many sources. Democratic ideas were not new, but it required synthesis of varied ideas to create the U.S. format of government.

### History of Representative Government

- The word *democracy* comes from two Greek words, *demos* meaning *people* and *kratos* meaning *power*. In a democracy, the *people* have the *power*. Athens, Greece was the first direct democracy. The Romans had written laws that were applied by judges to all citizens. Voting for a leader was not an option. All eligible citizens were expected to participate to make the republic succeed, but not everyone was eligible to vote. Public service was expected. The word *republic* comes from two Latin words, *res* meaning *things* and *publica* meaning public, hence public things. A democracy and a republic are both representative governments.
- The Vikings were fearless raiders overseas, but had an organized and democratic society at home. They founded many cities in England, Ireland and mainland Europe and brought their laws and ideas with them. Their governing body was established in the 500s, and all free men were obligated to participate. The Greeks, the Romans and even the Vikings all created governments that required the citizens to participate, and ideas from all of those ancient groups influenced the government that Americans have today.
- The English wrote the *Magna Carta* in 1215. It was signed by King John, but it only applied to the upper classes. It limited the power of the king and gave more power to the nobles. It established important rights, like a trial by jury and the ability for many people to own private property, not just nobles.
- In the U.S., the House of Burgesses was established as early as 1619 in Jamestown, Virginia, and was the first type of legislative governing body in the New World. Representatives, called Burgesses, met and wrote laws that applied to the colonists. This was the first true step toward a representative government in the Americas. The following year, the *Mayflower Compact* was signed before they landed in the New World. It defined how the colony would be governed at Plymouth. The government was planned to be just and equal, and all colonists had to follow the same rules.
- The *English Bill of Rights*, written in 1689, stated that laws needed to be approved by Parliament, not just the king. These laws let people make requests of the king, allowed a peacetime army to be kept only with Parliament's approval and gave some civilians the right to bear arms – not just the military.
- The Iroquois League in the northeast region of the U.S. created a Great Binding Law that served much like a constitution. It created a governing body for all of the member tribes, and the Great Council was made of members from each tribe. It was a system that Benjamin Franklin respected.

**Cultures of the World** - The world can be divided into multiple major cultural regions. Each of these regions can, of course, be further subdivided. The most obvious subdivision is by country.

- United States and Canada
  - Mexico, Central and South America
  - Europe
  - Russia and Northern Eurasia
  - Southwest Asia
  - Africa
  - Middle East and Southeast Asia
  - Oceania
- The **United States** is made up of immigrants from many different cultures. Each of these has contributed to make up a culture that is now identified with the U.S.

Blue jeans are unique to the American culture. They were developed by two men in 1873 in California as durable fabric pants for cowboys and miners. Certain foods are unique to this culture, including hamburgers, hot dogs, french fries, apple pie, fried chicken, peanut butter, popcorn and Coca-Cola.

The Western novel as a literary genre was developed in America, and movies of Hollywood are uniquely American, as are baseball, American football and basketball.

Americans are considered very informal people. They do not think it rude to call someone whom they have just met by their first name. They typically like to have personal space around them, and they don't stand too close to others, whether it be in a line or on a bus. They usually greet by shaking hands, and this is considered offensive in some other countries.

- **China** has a much longer history, and traditions are quite different than in the U.S. Chopsticks are used in place of a knife and fork and date to about 2000 years ago. A special party is given on a child's 10<sup>th</sup> birthday, often in a hotel or large restaurant. Guests are expected to make a subtle donation and receive a gift for attending.

School classrooms in China often have shared desks, meaning two people sit at one desk. Students go to school six days a week. There are so many students in China that only the top students qualify to go to high school.

Due to overcrowding, China has a one-child-per-family policy. Male children are expected to support their parents in their old age, therefore male children are more desired than females.

- **Australia** has a culture founded on working heroes, migrants and Aboriginal Dreamtime, which are stories passed down through song lyrics for at least 50,000 years. These stories tell of their history, especially how to find water sources, where the best hunting grounds exist and how their battles were fought and their injuries sustained.

Australians love sports and it is estimated that 6½ million people are registered in playing some sport. Rugby, cricket, swimming and sailing are just some of the sports at which Australians excel.

Since 80% of all residents live near the coast, the beach lifestyle is a big part of life. The arts are very important in Australia. Residents flock to movies, dance performances and galleries.

An Australian invented the first artificial ice machine in 1879, allowing meat to be shipped across two oceans to Great Britain. The boomerang is an iconic symbol of the Aborigine culture, who was the first and only to use this aerodynamic piece of wood for thousands of years in hunting small game.

# WORLD

## Canada

- **Physical Features** - Canada shares the following with the U.S.: the Rocky Mountains, the Appalachians, the Great Plains and the Great Lakes. The Saint Lawrence is the primary river, and it links the Great Lakes to the Atlantic.
- **Climate** - Central and Eastern Canada have a humid, continental climate in the southern regions. The Southwest is the mildest area with a marine, west coast climate. Much of the center and northern regions have a subarctic climate. The far north has tundra and ice cap climates.
- **Resources and Economy** - The Atlantic and Pacific coasts have rich fishing areas. In the central plains, growing wheat and raising cattle is important. Natural resources include nickel, zinc and uranium, and they are the world's leading source of these. Trees from the extensive forests are used for lumber and for pulp which is used to make paper. Newsprint is exported to the U.S., Britain and Japan.
- **History** - Not unlike the U.S., Canada was explored by the Europeans. The French were the first to colonize, and the British also established colonies. Native Americans were living in the country when explorers and colonists arrive. An active fur trade was an early business.
- **Culture** - This is varied across Canada. Many Thai, Vietnamese and other Asians immigrated to British Columbia, and now all major cities in Canada have a significant population of Asians. Others have come from Africa, the Caribbean and Latin America, bringing with them foods and celebrations from their countries.
- **Government** - Canada is a federation with a central government led by a Prime Minister. There are ten provincial governments that are each headed by a premier. This format is similar to the U.S. Federal and state system.
- **Language** - English is the primary language in most of Canada. Quebec has French as the primary language.



## Texas Timeline

**225 to 65 million BC** - During this period at least 16 types of dinosaurs roamed Texas.

Around 11,000 to 8000 BC the first immigrants arrived in the region. Artifacts and bones have been found of mammoths, horses, camels, ancient bison, giant short-faced bears and giant armadillos from prehistoric periods at Lubbock Lake Landmark Site.

- There is evidence of distinctive rock art painted on cave walls and other rock surfaces left by lower-Pecos River area people from around 4000 BC.
- Presence of Indians in Texas dates to around 2300 BC.

**c. 1500 BC to c. 1500 AD** - The first people were migrating to Texas and starting settlements during this period.

- c. 1500 BC - Corn was raised by farmers near Presidio in La Junta de los Ríos, which means *meeting of the rivers*. This was probably the oldest continuously cultivated farmland in Texas.
- 800 AD - 1500 AD - The Buried City is a pre-Columbian site on Wolf Creek in the Panhandle. This was a hunting and farming community with stone dwellings.
- c. 1400 - The beginning of the Caddo Confederacy in East Texas was during this period. Their society was based on agriculture, and they lived in very large communities.

**c. 1500 AD to 1800 AD - Explorers and Missionaries** - Europeans explored and settled the Texas area, starting with the Spanish conquistadors. Horses were brought by the conquistadors during the early part of this period, and many were ultimately left and taken by the Indians for their own use. The missionaries for the Catholic church came to establish missions in Texas, though many were established and then moved to safer places.

**1519 - Pineda, Alonso Alvarez de** - (?-1520) He was from Spain and a map-maker who had the task of charting the Gulf Coast of what is now Texas. He was one of the first Europeans to reach Texas. He claimed Texas for Spain and mapped what is now Corpus Christi Bay.

**1527 - Cabeza de Vaca, Álvar Núñez** - (1490-1557) A Spanish explorer, his group shipwrecked near Galveston and became stranded. The survivors left the coast and traveled inland to trade with the Indians and explore Texas searching for a route to Mexico, where they hoped to reach Mexico City and the Spanish officials who lived there.

- **Narváez, Pánfilo de** - (1470-1528) He was also from Spain and landed with 250 to 300 men near present-day Tampa Bay, Florida. He claimed the land for Spain, but was then abandoned by the ship's captain. They used handmade rafts to go across the Gulf of Mexico with Cabeza de Vaca and Estavanico, trying to find a Spanish settlement that would help them. Just two rafts reached Galveston Island. They reported many deaths over the winter. Only four survivors finally reached Mexico.

- **Estavanico** - (c. 1500-1539) Also called Estéban, Black Stephen, or Stephen the Moor, he was a native of Morocco and the first African-born slave to traverse Texas. He defined a west-by-northwest route from the site of what is now San Antonio to Pecos. A surviving member of the Narváez and Cabeza de Vaca expedition, he was later sent to find the fabled Seven Cities of Cibola.

**1539 - Marcos de Niza, Fray** - (1495-1558) He was a Franciscan friar who explored starting from Mexico and claimed to have seen the Seven Cities of Cibola from a distance. What he probably saw was the desert sun shining on the adobe brick of the Pueblo Indians' villages, not pure gold buildings. This sighting began a frantic search of the New World by explorers, each hoping to be the first to find the city.

**1541 - Coronado, Francisco Vázquez de** - (1510-1554) He was a Spanish explorer who was also the governor of a territory in northern Mexico claimed by Spain. He traveled into the present Southwest U.S. and across northern Texas in search of the Seven Cities of Cibola. When he arrived there he and his party realized that there was no gold. They went on all the way to the Grand Canyon and the Colorado River, becoming the first Europeans to see the magnificent canyon. He searched for gold in Texas and passed through the Panhandle and the Palo Duro Canyon region. Horses were brought to Texas by the Spanish at this time.