

# **SOCIAL STUDIES 901 THE HERITAGE OF THE UNITED STATES**

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# THE HERITAGE OF THE UNITED STATES

A *heritage* is what a person receives from the past. It includes his ancestral line and the training, teaching, and customs which those in the past have handed down through the generations. A godly heritage is a priceless gift, one which should be treasured and preserved for the generations to come.

There are, however, other kinds of heritages than a godly heritage. The word *heritage* may be used in a more narrow or a more specialized sense. For example, we may think of a person's musical heritage or of a community's farming heritage or of a country's political heritage.

In this LIGHTUNIT you are going to be studying the political heritage of the United States, and you will especially be observing how that heritage has been characterized by freedom.

Just as the word *heritage* may mean different things to different people, so it is with the word *freedom*. To the Christian, freedom means first of all deliverance from sin and self. The inner bondage of the soul is changed to liberty when we give our lives in loving obedience to Jesus Christ. The word *freedom* to a sinner, however, may mean almost the opposite. He would think of freedom as permission to do as he pleases. In this LIGHTUNIT, you will be thinking of freedom in yet a third sense. You will be considering the rights and liberties which are granted to the citizens of the United States—civil freedoms such as the freedom of speech, the freedom of religion, and the freedom of the press.

There are many symbols of this kind of freedom in the United States. The Statue of Liberty in New York Harbor is a symbol of this freedom and has been a welcome sight to thousands of immigrants who have come from countries where these liberties were not granted. Other symbols of freedom in the United States would include buildings such as the White

House, Independence Hall, and the Washington Monument; particular items, such as the Liberty Bell and the U.S. flag; or songs, such as "The Star-Spangled Banner," which is the national anthem of the United States.

Since as Christians we have a dual citizenship—a heavenly as well as an earthly—we do not look at life the same way other earthly citizens do. Nor do we study history with the same perspective. The political past and present is indeed a part of our life and heritage, and it is therefore worthy of study. At the same time, because our heavenly citizenship is given to us of God and is of a more enduring nature, it is therefore of greater importance to us. We desire to be law-abiding citizens of our earthly country and to be a positive influence for righteousness in our communities. But much more, we desire to be obedient citizens of heaven. Therefore we do not enter into the political structure of our earthly country, even though many of the ideals of our government were based upon Biblical principles of justice and equality.

Studying the heritage of freedom of the United States in this LIGHTUNIT, you will see that changes have occurred with passing generations. Certainly not all the changes have been wrong, but some are very alarming. There has been a shift toward social permissiveness—toward freedom as defined by the sinner. Moral looseness has brought on a downward trend similar to the moral decay of Rome, Babylon, and Sodom and Gomorrah. Invariably this downward trend leads to a breakdown in family ties and family structure. This, too, is becoming part of the heritage of the United States.

Christians dare not look at any part of their heritage lightly. Hopefully, as you study, you will become better equipped to do your part in passing on a godly heritage to the generations to come.

## OBJECTIVES

**Read these objectives.** The objectives tell you what you will be able to do when you have successfully completed this LIGHTUNIT.

When you have finished this LIGHTUNIT, you should be able:

1. To tell what life in the early colonies was like and what made it so difficult.
2. To explain why conflicts developed and caused changes in the United States.
3. To describe the expansion of the United States.
4. To trace the development of the United States government and political parties.
5. To name the freedom principles upheld during the forming of the government of the United States and tell why they were popular.

6. To describe the people who promoted these principles in the forming of the United States and how they promoted them.
7. To describe the position of Mennonites during the Revolutionary Era and the difficulties they encountered.
8. To tell how Mennonites contributed to their communities in colonial America.
9. To name some reasons for immigration to America.
10. To explain how factors such as immigration, technology, education, and social reform have shaped American society.
11. To name people who have had major influence in shaping American society.
12. To describe ways in which American society has changed and tell how nominal Christianity has gone along with society.
13. To name Biblical principles which guide Christians in North American society.

**Survey the LIGHTUNIT.** Ask yourself some questions about this study. Write your questions here.

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## 1. HISTORICAL AND POLITICAL BACKGROUNDS

What hardships would you brave for the freedoms you enjoy in North America? Many Europeans had to answer this question before they left their countries for new frontiers. They left friends, relatives, and familiar communities. They came in ships that lacked medicines, food, and clothing supplies. At times they faced hostile Indians and the rigors of an untamed land and unfavorable climate. Many settlers did not survive the early years because of their inability to cope with the difficulties in the new world.

### SECTION OBJECTIVES

**Read these objectives.** When you have completed this section, you should be able:

1. To tell what life in the early colonies was like and what made it so difficult.
2. To explain why conflicts developed and caused changes in the United States.
3. To describe the expansion of the United States.
4. To trace the development of the United States government and political parties.

### VOCABULARY

**Study these words** to enhance your learning success in this section.

**absolute monarch** (ab' su lūt mon' urk). Ruler who rules with no limits or restrictions.

**acquisition** (ak' wu zish' un). Something acquired or gained.

**annexation** (an' ek sā' shun). The act of adding on; that which is added.

**charter** (chär' tur). A grant from a state or country.

**coercive** (kō er' siv). Forcing obedience; leaving no room for individual choice.

**despot** (des' put). A ruler with absolute power and authority.

**dissension** (di sen' shun). Strong disagreement often accompanied by hard feelings.

**era** (ir' u). A period in history having specific characteristics; a series of particular historical events.

**fortitude** (fôr' tu tüd). Strength of mind that enables a person to face danger or trouble.

**proprietary** (pru pri' u ter' ë). Owner or group of owners of a grant from the king of England.

**tactics** (tak' tiks). Procedures to gain advantage or success; methods.

**whim** (hwim). A sudden fancy or notion.



**Note:** All vocabulary words in this LIGHTUNIT appear in **boldface** print the first time they are used. If you are unsure of the meaning when you are reading, study the definitions given.

**Pronunciation Key:** hat, âge, câre, fâr; let, êqual, tèrm; it, îce; hot, ôpen, ôrder; oil; out; cup, pût, rûle; child; long; thin; /FH/ for then; /zh/ for measure; /u/ represents /a/ in about, /e/ in taken, /i/ in pencil, /o/ in lemon, and /u/ in circus.

## AMERICAN COLONIES

The first Americans were the Indians. The hundreds of tribes in existence had many different languages and ways of life. Their lives consisted of hunting game and raising crops, such as maize (corn), beans, or squash. Some tribes constantly traveled in search of food, never establishing permanent homes. Some Indian tribes helped the early settlers when they came. As the number of pioneers increased, more land was needed. The resulting westward movement caused the white man to become a threat to the Indians' way of life. Many Indians and many white men became bitter enemies because of this movement.

The discovery of the New World created excitement in Europe. The New World offered many Europeans the opportunity for wealth, power, and adventure. The rulers and merchants of Europe wanted to gain control of the resources in the New World. The leaders of the countries also wanted new territories. These territories and resources would increase their importance as well as their power. In the quest for adventure, personal fame, and fortune, many European countries set up trading posts and colonies in the New World.

Many of these explorers, however, did not find what they were seeking. The gold and other riches which had been easily exploited in South America were lacking in North America. Neither did they find civilizations to help supply their needs. Instead, they found a wilderness sparsely inhabited by Indians.

Not all who came to the New World were motivated by pride and greed. Many Christians sought religious freedom. Others had a desire to spread their faith to the natives of the new land.

But no matter what their motives were for coming, all early settlers encountered many hardships. Although the new land was rich with a fertile soil, an abundant water supply, and bountiful minerals, the first immigrants knew little of what lay beyond the eastern settlements. Life was at first a matter of survival. Many of the skills which the colonists brought with them from the old country were useless in the new land, or needed to be greatly adapted. Housewives had to help build houses. Doctors had to learn to cut down trees and clear land. Farmers had to learn new methods of farming and adjust to new crops in order to survive.



### Complete these activities.

1.1 Write F beside each item which is a symbol of U.S. freedom.

- |                                  |                              |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| a. _____ the Washington Monument | d. _____ a cross             |
| b. _____ a heart                 | e. _____ the national anthem |
| c. _____ the U.S. flag           | f. _____ the Liberty Bell    |

1.2 List three wrong motives (a-c) and two Christian motives (d, e) which prompted immigration to the U.S.

- |          |          |
|----------|----------|
| a. _____ | d. _____ |
| b. _____ | e. _____ |
| c. _____ |          |

1.3 Briefly describe each of the following:

a. dual citizenship \_\_\_\_\_

b. godly heritage \_\_\_\_\_

c. adjustments in the New World \_\_\_\_\_

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## MAJOR CONFLICTS

Throughout the history of the world, wars have always been a part of men's lives. Children are born with an inclination to fight when things do not suit them. Unless they are taught Biblical principles of peace and nonresistance, they will naturally rise in opposition to other men, groups, governments, and **despots** when they feel that their reasons are strong enough or are just.

In Old Testament times, God dealt with His people as a nation. When they entered the promised land, they were directed to destroy some of the pagan Canaanite people living there. These people were corrupt, immoral idol worshipers. Many times, God gave miraculous help to the Israelites, especially when they were obedient to Him. For example, He drowned the Egyptians in the Red Sea, cast hailstones upon the Amorites, and caused the walls of Jericho to fall.

Since the time of Christ, God deals with His people through the church. The church and state are to be separate. Romans 13 explains that governments are set up by men to keep the ungodly in check. They use force, even bloodshed, to punish lawbreakers. Governments also wage wars against other nations for such reasons as overthrowing undesirable rulers, gaining new territory, or winning independence. Christians are to respect and obey their governments, but they cannot take part in an organization that uses force or seeks vengeance. Christians are to love their enemies and do good to those who do them hurt. Thus if a government by law asks something of the Christian which he cannot in good conscience fulfill, he must have the **fortitude** to "obey God rather than men," as did Peter and John in Acts 4.

The various immigrants which settled the United States represented many different nationalities and religious groups. William Penn, a Quaker, founded Pennsylvania and established almost complete religious freedom. Many Quakers settled in Pennsyl-

vania. Maryland was established primarily for wealthy Catholics. The Pilgrims wanted religious freedom; and the Puritans, who believed the government should be the church, wanted unified religious communities. The Puritans restricted religious practices in their colonies and sometimes persecuted other groups such as the Quakers.

Although the majority of immigrants came from England, many settlers came from the European countries of Ireland, Holland, France, Spain, and Germany. With so much diversity in the backgrounds, economics, and reasons for starting a new life in a new world, settlers in the New World were certain to see conflicts arise.

The French controlled much of Eastern Canada and points on the Mississippi River. As the British settlers moved westward, they began to undermine France's control of the valuable Ohio River valley. Frenchmen had always been able to get along well with the Indians and had easily learned survival in the backwoods wilderness. The British colonists, however, did not respect the claims of the French to this land. Therefore, fighting broke out.

During this stage of history, England, as well as other European countries, allowed the colonists to exist with very little interference. When the colonies needed assistance, the "mother country" was there to give a helping hand. During the French and Indian War, Britain helped the colonies fight.

The English defeated the French, who lost all claims to any part of the New World. English colonists moved westward into the Ohio valley. The English-speaking peoples also dominated the Canadian area as well as the area later known as the United States.

After the French and Indian War ended, England began to impose more strict supervision on the colonists. Extra taxes were imposed and enforced on products of all kinds that came from England. Acts were passed whereby the colonists were forced

to house soldiers who supposedly were for the protection of the colonies. The colonists felt they should not be taxed without helping to levy the taxes.

When the colonists complained, most of the taxes were repealed or modified, leaving only a tax on tea. A group rebelled against this tax by boarding a tea ship in Boston harbor at night and throwing the tea into the water to protest "taxation without representation." The rebels were dressed as Indians to avoid identification. Britain immediately closed Boston harbor and demanded that the citizens pay for the tea.

Some people pushed for independence at all costs. The *Boston Tea Party* and many similar events led to the American Revolution. Thousands of people from both sides were killed in this war. As a result, the United States of America came into existence as a new nation.

Minor conflicts continued between the colonists and Britain for many years as England still refused to accept the idea that the colonists were really independent. The War of 1812 was the last major conflict between England and the new nation.



**Boston Tea Party**



**Complete each statement.**

- 1.4 The Pilgrims sought \_\_\_\_\_ .
- 1.5 A colony which attracted many Quakers was started by \_\_\_\_\_ .
- 1.6 A colony for Catholics was started in \_\_\_\_\_ .
- 1.7 The settlers who wished to establish unified religious communities were the \_\_\_\_\_ .