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Growing pains
What tensions arose as the USA grew, 1789–1838?

The history of America is often told as a story of movement, of feet tramping from place to place, of people striking out to build a new future. For over 150 years, however, the first inhabitants of England’s colonies in North America lived only in the East, in the land between the Atlantic Ocean and the system of mountain ranges known as the Appalachians. These mountains, together with French and Spanish lands in the South and West, made a natural barrier to any movement westwards.

In the 1770s, however, a few bold families disobeyed their British rulers and made their way through the Appalachians and settled in the lands beyond. By 1789, the colonists had thrown off British rule and had set up their own government which encouraged movement over the Appalachians. Since then, millions of Americans have settled and lived in the West.

Two views of America’s expansion

- Until quite recently, the history of this growth of the United States of America was generally told as a positive story. Americans saw themselves as pioneers, moving out to settle and tame a continent, bringing trade and helping to make the land useful. In this version of events, Americans went to claim land for their new nation, to spread the Christian religion and to bring freedom to all.

- More recent historians, however, have challenged the idea that the growth of America was entirely positive. They point out that the expansion of America was bought at great cost. In order to claim land, indigenous peoples were forcibly removed from their homes. These historians also argue that the wealth which allowed the new nation to expand was created on the backs of enslaved men and women who fuelled America’s booming cotton industry. It was a story of tension, pain and suffering.

The Enquiry

In just 50 years, between 1789 and 1838, the United States expanded rapidly, claiming land and forming new states in territories west of the Appalachian Mountains. By 1838, it grew to cover nearly half of the continent of North America. The number of states doubled from 13 to 26. Much of this land was taken through direct conflict with the Indian tribes already living there. Other land was acquired from the Spanish in the south, the French in the west and the British in the north.

In this Enquiry you will try to unpick the tensions which were created as the United States began its development from a relatively small, new nation, to one of the largest and most important countries in the world, filling much of the land shown in the map on page 8.

You will focus on three important developments:
1. Expansion: how and why America began to grow after the War of Independence in the period between 1789 and 1838.
2. Exploitation: how and why slavery became the backbone of America’s wealth between 1793 and 1838.
3. Expulsion: how and why the indigenous peoples of the eastern USA were moved to new lands between 1830 and 1838.

As you learn about these three developments, you will need to identify tensions or ‘growing pains’ that the new nation experienced as it increased so rapidly in these years. Make notes in a table like this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Where expansion was happening</th>
<th>Why expansion was happening</th>
<th>What tensions the expansion reveals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Your final challenge will include using your notes to annotate a simple map of the United States, as if for use in a textbook like this. It will have the heading, ‘The growing pains of the USA, 1789–1838’.
Expansion: Moving into new lands, 1789–1838

As the map below clearly shows, the years between 1789 and 1838 saw enormous changes in North America. In particular, the United States pushed westwards setting up new states as the Union expanded. As you will learn, the growth revealed significant tensions within the new, young nation.

Record

As you read pages 10–13 you should add your first entries to your list of the USA’s ‘growing pains’ (see page 9).

Reflect

Study the map below.

1. Which states were added to the Union (the United States) between 1789 and 1838?
2. Do you think growing so far and so fast would make it more or less likely that the nation would experience tensions and growing pains?

The Indians of the East

During the American War of Independence, Indian tribes that lived in the lands to the northwest of the original 13 colonies supported the British side. These tribes, such as the Iroquois and Miami, knew that the British had agreed not to expand their American colonies into Indian lands. In 1783, however, the British lost the war and, as part of the peace treaty, they handed over 230 million acres of Indian lands to the newly created United States of America (see the yellow shading on the map on page 10).

As the Indians had not been defeated in the war, they were extremely angry that the British had given their lands away and had effectively placed them under the rule of the new United States government.

The US government called the lands to the north of the River Ohio to the ‘Northwest Territory’. The lands to the south of the Ohio were called the ‘Southwest Territory’. In the Southwest Territory, frontiersmen set up farms in Indian-held land west of Virginia and the Carolinas even before the War of Independence. This was one reason why so many Indian tribes supported the British against the Americans.

Once the frontiersmen had set up farms in Indian lands, they demanded that the government help to defend them against Indian attack. When no help was given, the settlers attacked the Indians themselves, leading to bloody conflicts between the two sides.

Defeat and dispossession

When he became president in 1789, George Washington believed that there was a real possibility that the Indians in the Northwest Territory might attack the United States. He was especially worried that Britain might support an Indian attack, hoping to win American lands back for the British Crown.

From 1791, Washington put 80 per cent of his government budget into a huge campaign against the Indians. In 1794, the Indians were defeated at the Battle of Fallen Timbers and a year later their leaders agreed to the Treaty of Greenville. This allowed the US to take vast areas of the Northwest Territory under its control and even more settlers moved there. Eventually, the different areas of land became full states and joined the Union. Ohio, Indiana, Illinois and Michigan were all formed out of the northwestern lands between 1803 and 1837. In the Southwest Territory, the new states of Kentucky, Tennessee, Mississippi and Alabama were added by 1819.

As the USA spread, the Indians who had occupied this land moved further west. These regions were often already inhabited by other Indian tribes, creating conflict between the Indians.
**John Brown – fanatical abolitionist**

Most Northern abolitionists were committed to using peaceful methods to argue their case. John Brown was different.

This portrait of Brown was painted in 1859 by Ole Peter Hansen Bøling, a Norwegian artist working in the USA. It shows something of Brown’s intense and fanatical devotion to the abolition of slavery in America. This fanaticism led to two famous incidents that were landmarks in the USA’s drift into civil war.

After years of hardship, family bereavements and failures in various types of work across the Northern states, Brown felt God was calling him to commit his life to the cause of abolitionism. He became involved in the Underground Railroad and this led him to meet the great ex-slave abolitionist Frederick Douglass in 1847. Clearly Brown was already considering the use of violence in the cause of abolitionism at that stage, as Douglass later wrote:

> From this night spent with John Brown in Springfield, Mass. 1847 while I continued to write and speak against slavery, I became all the same less hopeful for its peaceful abolition. My utterances became more and more tinged by the colour of this man’s strong impressions.

Douglass was right to worry.

‘Bleeding Kansas’

In 1854, the territory of Kansas was thrown open for pro- and anti-slavery settlers to move in ahead of any vote about whether it should become a slave state (see page 48). The brutal violence between supporters of each cause meant that the territory became known as ‘Bleeding Kansas’.

By 1856, Brown had lost patience with any idea of peaceful resistance as news came through of a dreadful attack by pro-slavery settlers against the anti-slavery town of Lawrence. He went to Kansas where some of his sons lived and gathered them together. They then kidnapped five pro-slavery settlers and hacked them to death with swords. His actions made him a hero of many in the anti-slavery movement and fed further violence that claimed more than 200 lives in Kansas over three years.

Eighty years later, a Kansas artist, John Curry, painted Brown’s actions in a mural (see page 61). The original is held in Kansas City’s state capitol building. In the mural, Brown is seen on the Kansas plain. In the distance, fires burn and a tornado rips through the land. Brown himself looks like another force of nature. He holds a bible in one hand and a rifle in the other. Behind him a line of settlers makes its way across the plain while settlers from the North and South stand face to face in deadly opposition. At Brown’s feet lie the bodies of a Unionist and a Confederate soldier.

Curry’s dramatic picture shows Brown’s mission as a bloody dress rehearsal for the Civil War which would tear the USA in half in 1861. Three years after his Kansas butchery, Brown once again helped move the USA closer to war.

The attack on Harper’s Ferry

In October 1859, Brown was in Virginia with a small band of committed followers. He was planning to attack an arms store at Harper’s Ferry, where large quantities of US army weapons and ammunition were held. He would then march on Virginia’s slave plantations, freeing slaves and arming them. He was confident that within days he could be leading a large army of freed and well-armed slaves through the South and that this action would eventually bring slavery to an end.

Brown tried to persuade Frederick Douglass to support him, but Douglass refused to help, telling Brown that the plan was sure to fail and was also sure to bring the abolitionist cause into disrepute.

The attack went ahead on 16 October and, sure enough, it was a dismal failure. Several of Brown’s followers were killed. Brown himself was captured and imprisoned. The portrait on page 60 shows him wrapped in his prison cloak. He defended himself passionately at his trial but he was found guilty and, on 2 December 1859, he was hanged.

Even those who disapproved of his methods came to admire Brown’s commitment and he was soon seen as an abolitionist hero by some. A legend grew up that on his way to his death, Brown calmly kissed a black slave child, but there is no evidence for this. The scene, however, became a popular subject for paintings where Brown appears as some sort of saintly prophet, going calmly to his death as a martyr.
Preparing for the examination

The World period study forms the first half of Paper 3: World History. It is worth 20 per cent of your GCSE. To succeed in the examination, you will need to think clearly about different aspects of The Making of America, 1789–1900 and to support your ideas with accurate knowledge. This section suggests some revision strategies and explains the types of examination questions that you can expect.

Summaries of the five issues

Your study of The Making of America, 1789–1900 has covered five important issues:

1. America’s expansion, 1789–1838
2. The West, 1839–60
3. Civil War and Reconstruction, 1861–77
4. Settlement and conflict on the Plains, 1861–77
5. American cultures, 1877–1900.

To prepare for the examination it will help to produce clear and accurate summary notes for each issue. In the specification for your GCSE course, each of these five issues is divided into three sections. We divided each enquiry in this book into three stages to match these sections and to help you build your knowledge and understanding step by step. Your summary notes for each issue will need to cover each of the three sections. Here are four suggestions for structuring your revision notes. Choose the one that is best for you, or use a variety if you prefer.

1. Mind maps
A mind map on A3 paper is a good way to summarise each of the sections for a particular issue. You could use a different colour for each section.

2. Charts
If you find it easier to learn from lists then a summary chart for each issue you have studied might be best for you. You can use the format shown here or design your own. Just make sure that you include clear summary points for each of the three sections in each enquiry you have studied.

3. Small cards
Small cards are a flexible way to make revision notes. You could create a set of revision cards for each of the five main issues/enquiries you have studied. It would be good to use a different colour for each set of cards.

4. Podcasts
If you learn best by listening to information, you could record your knowledge and understanding by producing podcasts to summarise what you have learned about each of the five main issues. You could produce your podcast with a friend using a question-and-answer format.