

8th Grade American History Facts

Important dates

1. **Jamestown**, the first permanent English settlement, was founded in **1607**.
2. The Pilgrims landed at Plymouth and signed the Mayflower Compact in **1620**.
3. The **Declaration of Independence** was signed on **July 4, 1776**.
4. The **Constitution** of the United States was written in **1787**.
5. President Thomas Jefferson purchased the **Louisiana Territory** from France in **1803**.
6. The **Civil War** was fought from **1861-1865**.

Important Places and Events

7. The opening shots of the American Revolution were fired at **Lexington and Concord, Massachusetts** in April 1775.
8. The **Battle of Saratoga** was the turning point of the American Revolution.
9. The British defeat at **Yorktown, Virginia** by George Washington's troops signaled the end of the American Revolution.
10. The first shots of the Civil War were fired at **Fort Sumter**, in South Carolina.
11. The **Battle of Antietam** was the bloodiest single day of battle in the Civil War. Both Union and Confederate sides suffered severe losses; neither were destroyed.
12. The **Battle of Gettysburg** was the turning point in the Civil War for the North. Confederate troops were forced to retreat and never invaded the North again.
13. The capture of **Vicksburg, Mississippi** by the North in 1863 effectively split the Confederacy in two and gave control of the Mississippi River to the Union.
14. **Appomattox Court House** is the small town in Virginia where Robert E. Lee surrendered the Confederate Army to Ulysses S. Grant ending the Civil War.
15. **Valley Forge** is the camp where the Continental Army under Washington endured a winter of terrible suffering lacking decent food, clothing, and shelter.

Important Vocabulary

16. **Mercantilism** is an economic theory that a country's strength is measured by the amount of gold it has, that a country should sell more than it buys and that the colonies exist for the benefit of the Mother Country.
17. **Impressment** is the forcing of people into military service. It was a major cause of the War of 1812.

18. An **abolitionist** was a person who wanted to end slavery in the United States.
19. A **protective tariff** is a tax placed on goods from another country to protect the home industry.
20. **Sectionalism** is a strong sense of loyalty to a state or section instead of to the whole country.
21. **Manifest Destiny** is the belief that the United States should own all of the land between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans.
22. The **Temperance Movement** was a campaign against the sale or drinking of alcohol.
23. **Civil Disobedience** is the refusal to obey a government law or laws as a means of passive resistance because of one's moral conviction or belief. Example: The actions of Henry David Thoreau.
24. The **House of Burgesses** was the first representative assembly in the new world.
25. **Free Enterprise** is the freedom of private businesses to operate competitively for profit with minimal government regulation.
26. **Amend** means to change.
27. **Unalienable rights** are rights that cannot be given up, taken away or transferred. Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness are some of those rights.
28. **Tyranny** is a cruel and unjust government.
29. A **democracy** is a form of government that is run for and by the people, giving people the supreme power.
30. **Ratify** means to approve by vote.
31. **Judicial Review** is the right of the Supreme Court to judge laws passed by Congress and determines whether they are constitutional or not.
32. **Due Process of law** means that the government must follow procedures established by law and guaranteed by the Constitution. (*examples include a speedy trial, no unreasonable search or seizure*)
33. **Federalists** were supporters of the Constitution who favored a strong national government. For example: Alexander Hamilton and James Madison.
34. **Anti-federalists** were people opposed to the Constitution, preferring more power be given to the state governments than to the national government. For example: Patrick Henry and George Mason
35. **Nullification** is the idea of a state declaring a federal law illegal.
36. **Primary Sources** are the original records of an event. They include eyewitness reports, records created at the time of an event, speeches, and letters by people involved in the event, photographs and artifacts.
37. **Secondary Sources** are the later writings and interpretations of historians and writers. Often secondary sources, like textbooks and articles, provide summaries of information found in primary sources.
38. **Industrial Revolution** was the era in which a change from household industries to factory production using powered machinery took place.

39. **Transatlantic slave trade** is the exchange of slaves and goods between the West Indies, the American Colonies, and West Africa.

Principles of Government

40. **Checks and Balances** is a system set up by the Constitution in which each branch of the federal government has the power to check, or control, the actions of the other branches.
41. **Federalism** is the sharing of power between the states and the national government.
42. **Popular Sovereignty** is the political theory that government is subject to the will of the people.
43. **Separation of Powers** is a system in which each branch of government has its own powers. *For example: Legislative-makes laws, Executive-enforces laws, Judicial-interprets laws*
44. **Limited Government** is when the Constitution limits the actions of government by specifically listing powers it does and does not have.
45. **Republicanism** is when people elect their political representatives.
46. **Individual Rights** are the basic liberties and rights of all citizens guaranteed by the Bill of Rights.

Important Documents and Policies

47. The **Magna Carta**, signed in 1215 by King John of England, was the first document that limited power of the ruler.
48. The **English Bill of Rights** protected the rights of English citizens and became the basis for the American Bill of Rights.
49. The **Declaration of Independence** was a document written by Thomas Jefferson, declaring the colonies independence from England.
50. In the **Proclamation of 1763**, King George III declared that the Appalachian Mountains were the western boundary of the colonies.
51. The **Articles of Confederation** was the first American constitution. It was a very weak document that limited the power of the Congress by giving states the final authority over all decisions.
52. The **Constitution of the United States** sets out the laws and principles of the government of the United States.
53. **George Washington's Farewell Address** advised the United States to stay "neutral in its relations with other nations" and to avoid "entangling alliances".
54. The **Monroe Doctrine** was a foreign policy stating that 1) the U.S. would not interfere in European affairs, and 2) that the western hemisphere was closed to colonization and/ or interference by European nations.
55. The **Treaty of Paris of 1763** ended the French and Indian War and effectively kicked the French out of North America.
56. The **Treaty of Paris of 1783** ended the American Revolution and forced Britain to recognize the United States as an independent nation.

57. The **Northwest Ordinance** was a policy of establishing the principles and procedures for the orderly expansion of the United States.
58. The **Mayflower Compact** was the self-governing agreement signed in 1620 by the Pilgrims in Plymouth, to consult each other about laws for the colony and a promise to work together to make it succeed.
59. The **Fundamental Orders of Connecticut** was the first written constitution in America, and it described the organization of representative government.
60. The **Federalist Papers** were a series of essays written by James Madison, John Jay, and Alexander Hamilton, defending the Constitution and the principles on which the government of the United States was founded.
61. **Common Sense** was a pamphlet written by Thomas Paine to convince colonists that it was time to become independent from Britain.
62. The **Bill of Rights** is the first ten amendments to the Constitution and detail the protection of individual liberties.
63. The **Indian Removal Act** allowed the federal government to pay Native Americans to move west of the Mississippi River and resulted in the Trail of Tears..
64. The **Gettysburg Address** was a short speech given by Abraham Lincoln to dedicate a cemetery for soldiers who died at the Battle of Gettysburg. It is considered to be a profound statement of American ideals.
65. Abraham Lincoln issued the **Emancipation Proclamation** on January 1, 1863, setting all slaves in the Confederate states free.
66. **Lincoln's First Inaugural Address** stated that, "no state...can lawfully get out of the Union", but pledged there would be no war unless the South started it.
67. **Jefferson Davis' Inaugural Address** stated that the South wanted to pursue their own interests in forming a new nation and would go to war with the Union if necessary.
68. **Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address** was meant to help heal and restore the country after four years of Civil War.
69. The **Great Compromise** created two houses of Congress. One based on population, the other gave equal representation to each state.
70. The **Three-Fifths Compromise** was an agreement reached at the Constitutional Convention to count each slave as three-fifths of a free person for both state representation and taxation purposes.
71. The **Intolerable Acts** were a group of harsh laws intended to punish the colonists of Massachusetts for their resistance to British rule, also known as the Coercive Acts.
72. The **Stamp Act** was a British tax placed on all printed material in the colonies.
73. **Reconstruction** was the reorganization and rebuilding of the former Confederate states after the Civil War.

Important People

74. **Crispus Attucks** was a free African American who was the first colonist killed at the Boston Massacre.
75. **Sam Adams** was a member of the Sons of Liberty who started the Committee of Correspondence to stir public support for American independence.
76. **Ben Franklin** was an inventor, statesman, diplomat, signer of the Declaration of Independence and delegate to Constitutional Convention.
77. **King George III** was the King of England who disbanded the colonial legislatures, taxed the colonies, and refused the Olive Branch Petition leading to the final break with the colonies.
78. **Thomas Jefferson** wrote the Declaration of Independence; became the 3rd President of the United States and purchased the Louisiana territory, doubling the size of the United States.
79. **George Washington** was the leader of the Continental Army who became the first President of the United States.
80. **John Marshall** was Supreme Court Justice and statesman who shaped American constitutional law and made the Supreme Court a center of power.
81. **Andrew Jackson** was the leader of the original Democratic Party and a “President of the people”. He was also responsible for the Trail of Tears, which forced Native Americans west of the Mississippi River.
82. **John Quincy Adams** was a Secretary of State, member of Congress, and 6th President of the US. He wanted the federal government to guide economic growth.
83. **John C. Calhoun** was a South Carolina Congressman and Senator who spoke for the South before the Civil War.
84. **Henry Clay** was a powerful Kentucky Congressman and Senator who proposed the American System and the Compromise of 1850.
85. **Daniel Webster** was a Massachusetts Congressman and Senator who spoke for the North and the preservation of the Union.
86. **Jefferson Davis** was the President of the Confederacy during the Civil War.
87. **Ulysses S. Grant** was the General of the Union Army and was responsible for winning the Civil War for the North.
88. **Robert E. Lee** was the General of the Confederate Army.
89. **Abraham Lincoln** was the 16th President of the United States who successfully put the Union back together only to be assassinated 5 days after the Civil War ended.
90. **Alexander Hamilton** was a leader of the Federalists, first Treasurer of the United States, creator of the Bank of the U.S., and killed in a duel by the Vice President of the United States, Aaron Burr.
91. **Patrick Henry** was a passionate patriot who became famous for his fiery speeches in favor of American independence. His most famous quote included the words, “Give me liberty or give me death!”
92. **James Madison** is considered to be the “Father of the Constitution”.
93. **Frederick Douglass** was a former slave who became the best-known black abolitionist in the country.
94. **Harriet Tubman** was an escaped slave who became a Conductor on the Underground Railroad and helped over 300 slaves to freedom in the North.
95. **Elizabeth Cady Stanton** organized the Seneca Falls Convention creating the Women’s Rights Movement in the United States.
96. **Abigail Adams** was the wife of John Adams and strong supporter of women’s rights.
97. **James Armistead** was the first African American spy during the American Revolution.
98. **Wentworth Cheswell** was an African-American teacher, American Revolutionary War veteran and the first African American to hold office.
99. **Bernardo de Galvez** was the Spanish governor of Louisiana during the American Revolution who aided the colonies by attacking the British.
100. **Marquis de Lafayette** was a French nobleman who became a trusted aid to Washington during the American Revolution.
101. **George Mason** was an Anti-Federalist who proposed a bill of rights to be added to the Constitution.
102. **Hiram Rhodes Revels** was the first African American to serve in the United States Senate.
103. **Haym Solomon** helped to raise money to support the American Revolutionary war cause.
104. **Mercy Otis Warren** was an Anti-Federalist that feared the Constitution would make the central government too powerful.
105. **Susan B. Anthony** played a pivotal role in the 19th century women's rights movement to introduce women's suffrage into the United States.
106. **Harriet Beecher Stowe** wrote the novel *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, describing the evils of slavery. The book greatly influenced the abolitionist movement
107. **John Locke** was an English philosopher who believed that all people have natural rights including the right to life, liberty, and property.
108. **Charles de Montesquieu** was a French writer who declared that the powers of government should be separated and balanced against each other.
109. **Thomas Hooker** founded the colony of Connecticut and helped adapt the Fundamental Orders of Connecticut. Believed in the principle of equality for all mankind and is considered the “Father of American Democracy.”
110. **William Penn**, a Quaker, founded the colony of Pennsylvania. He wanted the colony to be a safe haven for other Quakers and people of diverse backgrounds. Penn established a form of representative government for the colony.
111. **Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson** was a Confederate General and hero of the 1st Battle of Bull Run. He was revered in the South for his bravery and valor

Inventions

- 112. The **Cotton Gin** was an invention by Eli Whitney that speeded the cleaning of cotton fibers and in effect, increased the need for slaves.
- 113. **Interchangeable parts** are identical machine parts that could be quickly put together to make a complete product. They made it possible to produce many different kinds of goods on a mass scale and reduced the price of manufactured goods.
- 114. The successful use of the **Steamboat** by Robert Fulton revolutionized transportation and trade in the United States.

Supreme Court Cases

- 115. **Marbury v. Madison** was the 1803 Court decision that gave the Supreme Court the right to determine whether a law violates the Constitution. It set up the principle of **judicial review**.
- 116. **Dred Scott v. Sanford** was the Supreme Court decision that said slaves were property and not citizens and that Congress had no right to ban slavery in the territories.
- 117. **McCulloch v. Maryland** established the foundation for expanded congressional authority. It supports the Necessary and Proper Clause in the Constitution.
- 118. In **Gibbons v. Ogden** the court held that federal law takes precedence over state law in interstate commerce.
- 119. **Worcester v. Georgia** said that the state of Georgia had no right to interfere with the Cherokee but President Jackson refused to enforce the ruling and the Cherokee were forced to leave on the Trail of Tears.

Amendments to the Constitution

- 120. The **First Amendment** states that “Congress shall make no law” restricting freedom of speech, religion, press, assembly, and petition.
- 121. The **Second Amendment** guarantees the right of states to organize militias, or armies, and the right of individuals to bear arms.
- 122. The **Third Amendment** forbids the government to order private citizens to allow soldiers to live in their homes.
- 123. The **Fourth Amendment** requires that warrants be issued if property is to be searched or seized (taken) by the government.
- 124. The **Fifth Amendment** protects an accused person from having to testify against him or herself (self-incrimination); bans double jeopardy, and guarantees that no person will suffer the loss of life, liberty, or property without due process of law.
- 125. The **Sixth Amendment** guarantees the right to a speedy public trial by an impartial jury; the right to a lawyer; the right to cross examine witnesses; and the right to force witnesses at a trial to testify.
- 126. The **Seventh Amendment** guarantees the right to a jury trial in civil suits.

- 127. The **Eighth Amendment** prohibits cruel and unusual punishment and excessive bail or fines.
- 128. The **Ninth Amendment** states that the people have rights other than those specifically mentioned in the Constitution.
- 129. The **Tenth Amendment** states that powers not given to the federal government belong to the states.
- 130. The **Thirteenth Amendment** abolished slavery.
- 131. The **Fourteenth Amendment** guarantees citizenship and rights to all people born or naturalized in the United States.
- 132. The **Fifteenth Amendment** guarantees the right to vote to all citizens regardless of race.