

Themes in History

Among the important themes in U.S. history are the promise of technology, the rights enjoyed by Americans, and the roles of women in the 21st century. As you study U.S. history, you will encounter these and other themes again and again. The Americans focuses on nine themes, described on these pages. What do you think are the important issues raised by each theme?

DIVERSITY AND THE NATIONAL IDENTITY

E Pluribus Unum—From the Many, One. Pick up a dollar bill and you'll find this Latin motto on the Great Seal of the United States. From the first settlement, this has been a land of many peoples, cultures, and faiths. This mixing of ethnic, racial, and religious groups has produced a rich and uniquely American culture. It has also led to competition and conflict. Today, the United States is more diverse than ever, yet the nation's motto remains *E Pluribus Unum*. (See **Tracing Themes** on page 466.)

Critical Thinking

How do you think America today is enriched by its diversity?

AMERICA IN WORLD AFFAIRS

From the earliest colonial times, the United States has been influenced by the events, people, and forms of government in other nations—and America has influenced world affairs. Today, relationships between the United States and other countries are more critical than ever, as modern communications and transportation have drawn the world closer together. As America continues to participate in world affairs, questions of trade, diplomacy, and regional conflict will grow in importance. (See **Tracing Themes** on page 610.)

Critical Thinking

What do you think America's role in the world should be in the 21st century?

ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

America has always been a land of economic opportunity. Blessed with fertile land and abundant resources, this has been a country where anyone who has worked hard has had a chance to prosper. Indeed, American history is full of heartening "rags-to-riches" success stories. Just as inspiring are the heroic struggles of women and minorities who fought to improve their economic prospects. As your generation enters the work force, you and your friends will have the opportunity to write your own success stories. (See **Tracing Themes** on page 634.)

Critical Thinking

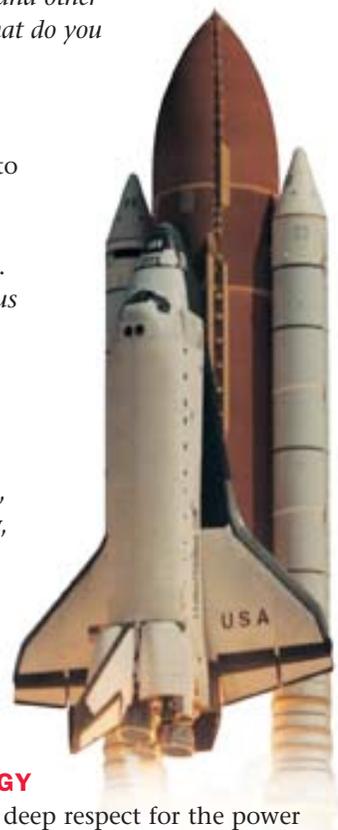
What do you think are the most exciting economic opportunities for Americans today?

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Americans have always had a deep respect for the power of science and technology to improve life. In the past two centuries, new inventions, new technologies, and scientific breakthroughs have transformed the United States—and continue to appear at a dizzying pace. Which ones will change your life? You can be sure that some will, and in ways that no one can yet predict. (See **Tracing Themes** on page 794.)

Critical Thinking

How do you think science and technology will change American life in the 21st century?



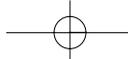
WOMEN AND POLITICAL POWER

More than half of all Americans are women, but only recently have their contributions and concerns found their way into history books. American women have helped shape the social and political history of every era. In their private roles as wives and mothers, they have strengthened families and raised America's children. In their more public roles as workers, reformers, and crusaders for equal rights, they have attacked the nation's worst social ills and challenged barriers to women's full participation in American life. (See **Tracing Themes** on page 124.)

Critical Thinking

What do you think is the most important goal for American women today?





IMMIGRATION AND MIGRATION

Seeking a better life seems to be part of the American character. This nation was first established by and has remained a magnet for immigrants. One out of every ten people living in the United States today was born in another country. Moreover, every year one out of every six Americans moves to a new address. (See **Tracing Themes** on page 1094.)

Critical Thinking

Why do you think people continue to have the dream of immigrating to the United States?

STATES' RIGHTS

The power struggle between states and the federal government has caused controversy since the country's beginning. In 1861 the conflict led to the Civil War, in which Southern states acted upon the belief that they had the right to nullify acts of the federal government and even to leave the Union if they chose to do so. Throughout the history of this country, state and federal governments have squared off on this and other constitutional issues. (See **Tracing Themes** on page 322.)

Critical Thinking

When do you think a state has the right to challenge a federal law?

VOTING RIGHTS

When Americans first began their experiment with democracy, only white men with property could vote or hold office. Over the past two centuries, women, African Americans, and other groups have fought for and won the right to vote and participate in government. Today the challenge is getting people to exercise the right to vote. In 2000, only 50.7 percent of eligible voters cast ballots in the presidential election. (See **Tracing Themes** on page 174.)

Critical Thinking

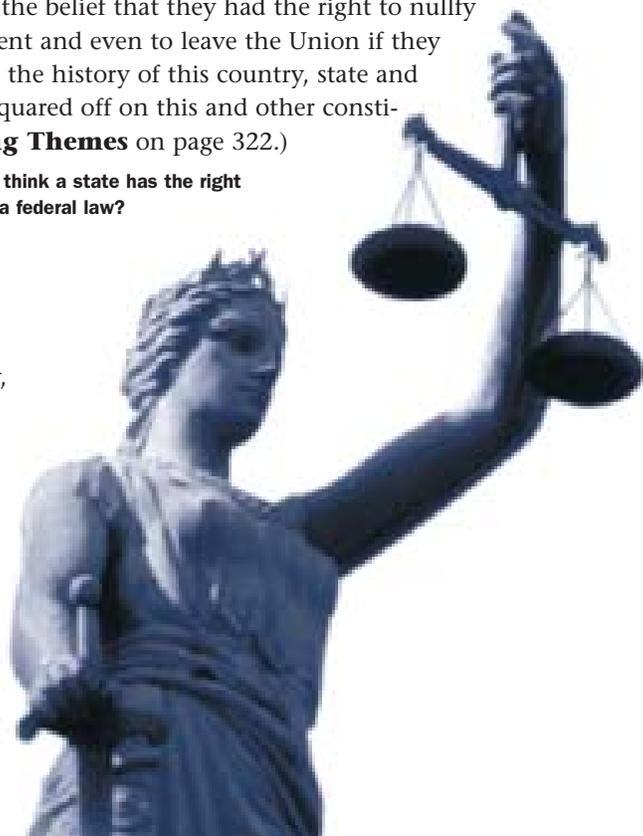
What do you think can be done to bring more Americans into the democratic process?

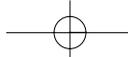
CIVIL RIGHTS

The American system of government is based on a simple but revolutionary idea: Every citizen has certain rights and liberties. Among them are the right to participate in government and to exercise such liberties as freedom of speech and worship. Deciding who should have what rights, how these rights should be exercised, and how to protect a person's civil rights is anything but easy. Defining and protecting our civil rights is not likely to get any easier. (See **Tracing Themes** on page 930.)

Critical Thinking

What issue of civil rights do you think is most critical in the United States today?





Themes in Geography

The history of a nation is shaped as much by geography as by people and events. Paying attention to the following themes of geography can help you recognize when geographic forces are at work in the story of the United States.

LOCATION

Geographers speak of absolute location—the latitude and longitude of an area—and of relative location—where one area is in relation to another. In absolute terms, the city of San Francisco lies at 37°45' North latitude and 122°26' West longitude. This information allows you to pinpoint San Francisco on a map. In relative terms, San Francisco lies at the western edge of North America and looks out across the vast Pacific Ocean. This information helps explain San Francisco's history as a port city where people and ideas have come together.

Critical Thinking Locate your city or town on both a political and a physical map. How has location influenced the history of your city or town?

REGION

Geographers use the idea of region to show what places in close proximity to one another have in common. As a part of the Pacific Coast region, San Francisco shares with Seattle, Washington, and Portland, Oregon, a mild, rainy climate and an economic interest in international shipping. As a part of California, San Francisco shares economic and environmental concerns of the state as a whole.

Critical Thinking To what region or regions does your area belong? How have the characteristics and concerns of your region changed over the last generation?

HUMAN-ENVIRONMENT INTERACTION

Wherever people live, they affect the environment in the way they modify their natural surroundings. They build shelters and clear trees. They turn the earth inside out to extract its resources. People in the San Francisco Bay area have built bridges in order to move around more easily. People have also modified the bay itself, reducing its area by about one-third as they filled in tidelands for development.

Critical Thinking How have people in your area modified their surroundings? What consequences might these modifications have?

PLACE

Place, in geography, refers to what an area looks like in physical and human terms. An area's landforms, soil, climate, and resources are aspects of place. So are the numbers and cultures of the population. San Francisco's natural harbor has made the city an international port. It is connected to the American River—where gold was discovered in 1848. Its position along a major fault line has subjected it to periodic earthquakes, the most disastrous in 1906. During its history, San Francisco has attracted people from North America, Europe, Asia, and various Pacific islands, making its population one of the most diverse in the United States.

Critical Thinking What is unique about the place where you live and the people who live there? What past events contributed to its uniqueness?

MOVEMENT

One place or region can influence another through the movement of people, materials, and even ideas. San Francisco has been the site of many important movements of people and cultures. It has been a port of entry for immigrants, many of them Asian. It also lies along the path that Spanish missionaries trod in their quest to convert native peoples.

Critical Thinking When and by what groups was your area settled? What trends in movement today may shape the future of your area?

