

U.S. History Week 8/9: May 26-June 5

Big Idea: Major Events in United States' history from the 1960s-early 2000s

Big Questions:

What determines "historical significance"?

How does popular culture influence a society?



This week we will learn about:

Major Events of Modern 20th Century America

Historical Significance of Pop Culture

Background: We are squeezed for time here, so we're going to have to cover material a bit more efficiently for the next two weeks as we look at significant events from the 1960s - 2000s. You will choose several topics from the list below to research. For each topic, you will answer the questions below. **Here is an example from Ms. Spitz: (Your write-ups DO NOT have to be as long as the example necessarily!)**

EXAMPLE WRITE-UP: "Friends TV Series"

1) The One About the Basics: Friends was an iconic tv show that will forever hold a place in the American TV Hall of Fame. (Is that a thing? I don't think that's a thing, but it should be a thing! Doesn't that sound Ross??). It aired for 10 seasons on NBC from 1994-2004 and is considered by many to be the sitcom most emblematic of early 2000's pop culture. The premise of the sitcom was 6 friends in their 20s (FRIENDS. GET IT??!) who live together in NYC as they navigate relationships, careers, families, and of course, coffee shops. The show's beloved 6 main characters are in many ways caricatures of themselves as the show evolves. Monica Geller is the type-A chef, who is sister to Ross Geller (the nerdy paleontologist in love with Rachel), and best friend to Rachel Green (beautiful yet ditzzy fashionista). Chandler is college pals with Ross, whose sarcasm and self-deprecating humor is the perfect roommate fit for Joey, an aspiring actor who is quite the ladies' man. Rounding out the group is Monica's former roommate Phoebe, an eccentric masseuse who also dabbles in songwriting. #smellycat



2) The One About Its Significance: *Friends* was so much more than a great TV show. There are countless reasons as to why *Friends* as a TV Series is now a piece of America and forever changed American TV. First, all six of its main cast members fought and demanded equal pay, far ahead of its time. Both the men and women stars of the show made the same amount, and did not give in until the network agreed. While Hollywood still has some catching up to do, the *Friends* cast set the precedent for shows like *The Big Bang Theory*, in which cast members similarly unified to demand equal pay for all cast members regardless of gender. The show is also seen as dealing with LGBTQ issues far ahead of its time. Ross' first wife leaves him for a woman, and they later get married. This episode aired in 1996, and was considered to be groundbreaking for its time. (Although the two women were not allowed to kiss and the actual wedding scene only lasted about 60 seconds). Another envelope-pushing issue is that of Chandler's dad, who left his mother for the pool boy and later identifies as a trans woman. Granted, she is played by Kathleen Turner and not a female trans actress, but for the time, this was the first TV Show with that level of popularity portraying trans characters. Further, many feel the show redefined the notion of the American Family---highlighting how friends can be family too. This also

set the precedent for future shows like *How I Met Your Mother*, *Girls*, etc in which family is made up of friends. To this day, many foreigners' understanding of what it means to be a young American in NYC is often framed through this show. Adding to that, the show was at its peak of popularity when 9/11 happened. Many Americans found comfort, unity, and humor through the show, as well as shining a silly, fun light of America during a scary and turbulent time.

3) The One About Our Founding ideals: The show strongly connects to our founding ideals of opportunity. The setting of New York is seen by many as the mecca for American opportunity, and the show documents the characters striving to find their way and seek out opportunities for career, love, friendships, and family. The show also deals with issues of Rights---as mentioned above, issues around marriage, gender, and identity were common themes throughout the shows' ten seasons.

4) The One About Connections: *Friends* deeply connects to our year-long themes of membership, community, and choices. Especially right now in the midst of a global pandemic, having an escape and sources of comfort and humor are especially important. I feel like during these last few months, many Americans are finding connection and community through entertainment (Tiger King, Last Dance, etc) similar to the ways in which *Friends* brought together Americans following 9/11 and throughout its 10 seasons. Although on the surface, the show is just about 6 friends in New York, the shows' enduring popularity highlights how its themes transcend generations and will forever hold a piece of the American pop culture fabric.

YOUR TASK!

Directions: Pick topics you are curious about, research them, and then write about them. Choose several major events/topics from the last 50 years of American History---How many topics you choose depends on what grade you want for this assignment (see scoring Rubric below)

****Do NOT simply copy and paste from another source. These are to be written by YOU, not Wikipedia!****

For each event, do research and answer these questions:

- 1) The basics: **What** happened, **Who** did it involve, **When** and **Where** did it happen?
- 2) **Why** was this historically significant, important and/or influential?
- 3) **How** does this event connect to our country's **founding ideals**? *Democracy, Opportunity, Liberty, Equality, Individual Rights, etc.?*
- 4) **Connections:** How does this event connect to another event/unit/topic we've studied in class? Why is this significant today? How does this connect to your own life?

TOPIC CHOICES:

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Kennedy assassination | <input type="checkbox"/> Terrorist attack on 9/11/2001 | <input type="checkbox"/> The Challenger explosion |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Man on the Moon | <input type="checkbox"/> Great Recession | <input type="checkbox"/> Miracle on Ice |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Reaganomics | <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental Issues from 1960s-2000s | <input type="checkbox"/> Watergate Scandal |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fall of the Berlin Wall | <input type="checkbox"/> "Who shot JR?" | <input type="checkbox"/> Obama Presidency |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Iran-Contra Affair | <input type="checkbox"/> Operation Desert Storm | <input type="checkbox"/> Iran Hostage Crisis |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cuban Missile Crisis | <input type="checkbox"/> War on Terror | <input type="checkbox"/> Kent State University Shooting |
| <input type="checkbox"/> LA Riots / Rodney King | <input type="checkbox"/> East Coast v. West Coast rap feud | <input type="checkbox"/> The Pentagon Papers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Oklahoma City bombing | <input type="checkbox"/> HIV/AIDS epidemic | <input type="checkbox"/> Roe v. Wade |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clinton-Lewinsky affair | <input type="checkbox"/> OJ Simpson trial | <input type="checkbox"/> John Lennon killed |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Columbine school shooting | <input type="checkbox"/> Internet revolution | <input type="checkbox"/> MTV launches |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2000 Presidential Election dispute | | <input type="checkbox"/> 1989 Exxon Valdez Oil Spill |

RUBRIC: You'll be graded on effort, the quality and quantity of your work. Select however many topics you'd like to research that will make you feel comfortable with your grade on this assignment.

DUE: Friday, June 5th via CANVAS. *As soon as you complete this assignment, feel free to turn it in early!*

Number of Topic Write-Ups	GRADE
10	A+
9	A
8	A-
7	B+
6	B
5	B-
4	C+
3	C
2	C-