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UNIT 1 COLONIAL SOCIETY 1

Issue 1. Is History True? 2

YES: Oscar Handlin, from *Truth in History* (The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1979) 4

NO: William H. McNeill, from “Mythistory, or Truth, Myth, History, and Historians,” *The American Historical Review* (February 1986) 13

Oscar Handlin insists that historical truth is absolute and knowable by historians who adopt the scientific method of research to discover factual evidence that provides both a chronology and context for their findings. William McNeill argues that historical truth is general and evolutionary and is discerned by different groups at different times and in different places in a subjective manner that has little to do with a scientifically absolute methodology.

Issue 2. Did the Chinese Discover America? 25

YES: Gavin Menzies, from *1421: The Year China Discovered America* (William Morrow, 2003) 27

NO: Robert Finlay, from “How Not to (Re)Write World History: Gavin Menzies and the Chinese Discovery of America,” *Journal of World History* (June 2004) 36

Gavin Menzies surmises that between 1421 and 1423 a Chinese fleet spent four months exploring the Pacific coastline of North America and leaving behind substantial evidence to support his contention that the Chinese discovered America long before the arrival of European explorers. Robert Finlay accuses Menzies of ignoring the basic rules of historical study and logic to concoct an implausible interpretation of Chinese discovery based upon a misreading of Chinese imperial policy, misrepresentation of sources, and conjecture that has no evidentiary base.

Issue 3. Was Disease the Key Factor in the Depopulation of Native Americans in the Americas? 46

YES: Colin G. Calloway, from *New Worlds for All: Indians, Europeans, and the Remaking of Early America* (The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997) 48

NO: David S. Jones, from “Virgin Soils Revisited,” *William & Mary Quarterly* (October 2003) 56

Colin Calloway says that while Native Americans confronted numerous diseases in the Americas, traditional Indian healing practices failed to

offer much protection from the diseases that were introduced by Europeans beginning in the late-fifteenth century and which decimated the indigenous peoples. David Jones recognizes the disastrous impact of European diseases on Native Americans, but he insists that Indian depopulation was also a consequence of the forces of poverty, malnutrition, environmental.

Issue 4. Was the Salem Witchcraft Hysteria Caused by a Fear of Women? 66

YES: Carol F. Karlsen, from *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman: Witchcraft in Colonial New England* (W. W. Norton, 1987) 68

NO: Laurie Winn Carlson, from *A Fever in Salem* (Ivan R. Dee, 1999) 78

Carol Karlsen contends that the belief that woman was evil existed implicitly at the core of Puritan culture and explains why alleged witches, as threats to the desired order of society, were generally seen as women. Laurie Winn Carlson believes that the witchcraft hysteria in Salem was the product of people's responses to physical and neurological behaviors resulting from an unrecognized epidemic of encephalitis.

Issue 5. Was There a Great Awakening in Mid-Eighteenth Century America? 90

YES: Thomas S. Kidd, from *The Great Awakening: The Roots of Evangelical Christianity in Colonial America* (Yale University Press, 2007) 92

NO: Jon Butler, from "Enthusiasm Described and Decried: The Great Awakening as Interpretative Fiction," *Journal of American History* (September 1982) 101

Thomas Kidd insists that preachers such as George Whitefield engineered a powerful series of revivals in the mid-eighteenth century that influenced all of the British North American colonies and gave birth to a spirit of evangelicalism that initiated a major alteration of global christian history. Jon Butler claims that to describe the religious revival activities of the eighteenth century as the "Great Awakening" is to seriously exaggerate their extent, nature, and impact on pre-revolutionary American society and politics.

UNIT 2 REVOLUTION AND THE NEW NATION 115

Issue 6. Was the American Revolution Largely a Product of Market-Driven Consumer Forces? 116

YES: T. H. Breen, from *The Marketplace of Revolution: How Consumer Politics Shaped America's Independence* (Oxford University Press, 2004) 118

NO: Carl N. Degler, from *Out of Our Past: The Forces that Shaped Modern America*, 2nd ed. (Harper Collins Publishers, 1959, 1970) 127

Professor T. H. Breen maintains that “the colonists shared experiences as consumers provided them with the cultural resources needed to develop a bold new form of political protest”—the non-importation agreements which provided link to the break with England. Professor Carl N. Degler argues that the American Revolution was a political rebellion led by a group of reluctant revolutionaries who opposed Parliament’s attempt to impose taxes without the consent of the colonists.

Issue 7. Were the Founding Fathers Democratic Reformers? 137

YES: **John P. Roche**, from “The Founding Fathers: A Reform Caucus in Action,” *American Political Science Review* (December 1961) 139

NO: **Howard Zinn**, from *A People’s History of the United States* (Harper Collins, 1999) 151

Political scientist John P. Roche asserts that the Founding Fathers were not only revolutionaries but also superb democratic politicians who created a constitution that supported the needs of the nation and at the same time was acceptable to the people. According to radical historian Howard Zinn, the Founding Fathers were an elite group of northern money interests and southern slaveholders who used Shay’s Rebellion in Massachusetts as a pretext to create a strong central government, which protected the property rights of the rich to the exclusion of slaves, Indians, and non-property-holding whites.

Issue 8. Was Alexander Hamilton an Economic Genius? 165

YES: **John Steele Gordon**, from *An Empire of Wealth: The Epic History of American Economic Power* (Harper Collins, 2004) 167

NO: **Carey Roberts**, from “Alexander Hamilton and the 1790s Economy: A Reappraisal,” in Douglas Ambrose and Robert W. T. Martin, eds., *The Many Faces of Alexander Hamilton: The Life and Legacy of America’s Most Elusive Founding Father* (New York University Press, 2006) 176

Historian John Steele Gordon claims that Hamilton’s policies for funding and assuming the debts of the confederation and state governments and for establishing a privately controlled Bank of the United States laid the foundation for the rich and powerful national economy we enjoy today. Professor Carey Roberts argues that in the 1790s Hamilton’s financial policies undermined popular faith in the Federalist Party and diminished confidence in the federal government.

Issue 9. Did Andrew Jackson’s Removal Policy Benefit Native Americans? 190

YES: **Robert V. Remini**, from *Andrew Jackson and His Indian Wars* (Viking Penguin, 2001) 192

NO: **Alfred A. Cave**, from “Abuse of Power: Andrew Jackson and the Indian Removal Act of 1830,” *The Historian* (Winter 2003) 201

Robert V. Remini insists that President Andrew Jackson demonstrated a genuine concern for the welfare of Native Americans by proposing a voluntary program that would remove the Five Civilized Tribes west of the Mississippi River, where they could avoid dangerous conflict with white settlers and preserve their heritage and culture. Alfred A. Cave accuses Andrew Jackson of abusing his power as president by failing to adhere to the letter of the Indian Removal Act by transforming a voluntary program into a coercive one and by ignoring the provisions in his own removal treaties that promised protection to the various southern tribes.

Issue 10. Did the Industrial Revolution Provide More Economic Opportunities for Women in the 1830s? 211

YES: Nancy F. Cott, from *The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780–1835* (Yale University Press, 1977, 1997) 213

NO: Gerda Lerner, from "The Lady and the Mill Girl: Changes in the Status of Women in the Age of Jackson," *American Studies Journal* (Spring 1969) 224

According to Nancy F. Cott, when merchant capitalism reached its mature phase in the 1830s, the roles of the middle-class family became more clearly defined, and new economic opportunities opened for women within a limited sphere outside the home. According to Gerda Lerner, while Jacksonian democracy provided political and economic opportunities for men, both the "lady" and the "mill girl" were equally disenfranchised and isolated from vital centers of economic opportunity.

UNIT 3 ANTEBELLUM AMERICA 239

Issue 11. Was Antebellum Temperance Reform Motivated Primarily by Religious Moralism? 240

YES: Mark Edward Lender and James Kirby Martin, from *Drinking in America: A History* (The Free Press, 1982) 242

NO: John J. Rumbarger, from *Profits, Power, and Prohibition: Alcohol Reform and the Industrializing of America, 1800–1930* (State University of New York Press, 1989) 252

Mark Edward Lender and James Kirby Martin argue that the impetus for the temperance movement in the first half of the nineteenth century was grounded deeply in Protestant denominations whose clergy and lay leaders supported reforms that would create a social-moral order that was best for the public welfare. John J. Rumbarger concludes that nineteenth-century temperance reform was the product of a pro-capitalist market economy whose entrepreneurial elite led the way toward abstinence and prohibition campaigns in order to guarantee the availability of a more productive work force.

Issue 12. Was the Mexican War an Exercise in American Imperialism? 263

YES: Walter Nugent, from *Habits of Empire: A History of American Expansion* (Alfred A. Knopf, 2008) 265

NO: Norman A. Graebner, from “The Mexican War: A Study in Causation,” *Pacific Historical Review* (August 1980) 278

Professor Walter Nugent argues that President James K. Polk was a narrow-minded, ignorant but not stupid individual with one big idea: Use the power of the presidency to force Mexico to cede California and the current Southwest to the United States. Professor of diplomatic history Norman A. Graebner argues that President James Polk pursued an aggressive policy that he believed would force Mexico to sell New Mexico and California to the United States and to recognize the annexation of Texas without starting a war.

Issue 13. Was John Brown an Irrational Terrorist? 289

YES: James N. Gilbert, from “A Behavioral Analysis of John Brown: Martyr or Terrorist?” in Peggy A. Russo and Paul Finkelman, eds., *Terrible Swift Sword: The Legacy of John Brown* (Ohio University Press, 2005) 291

NO: Scott John Hammond, from “John Brown as Founder: America’s Violent Confrontation with Its First Principles,” in Peggy A. Russo and Paul Finkelman, eds., *Terrible Swift Sword: The Legacy of John Brown* (Ohio University Press, 2005) 297

James N. Gilbert says that John Brown’s actions conform to a modern definition of terrorist behavior in that Brown considered the United States incapable of reforming itself by abolishing slavery, believed that only violence would accomplish that goal, and justified his actions by proclaiming adherence to a “higher” power. Scott John Hammond insists that John Brown’s commitment to higher moral and political goals conformed to the basic principles of human freedom and political and legal quality that formed the heart of the creed articulated by the founders of the American nation.

UNIT 4 CONFLICT AND RESOLUTION 309

Issue 14. Was Slavery the Key Issue in the Sectional Conflict Leading to the Civil War? 310

YES: Charles B. Dew, from *Apostles of Disunion: Southern Secession Commissioners and the Causes of the Civil War* (University of Virginia Press, 2001) 312

NO: Marc Egnal, from “Rethinking the Secession of the Lower South: The Clash of Two Groups,” *Civil War History* 50 (September 2004): 261–90 320

Charles B. Dew uses the speeches and public letters of 41 white southerners who, as commissioners in 1860 and 1861, attempted to secure support for secession by appealing to their audiences’ commitment to the preservation of slavery and of white supremacy. Marc Egnal argues that the decision of Lower South states to secede from the Union was determined by an economically based struggle between residents with strong ties to the North and Upper South who embraced an entrepreneurial outlook, on one hand, and those who were largely isolated from the North and who opposed the implementation of a diversified economy, on the other hand.

Issue 15. Is Robert E. Lee Overrated as a General? 330

YES: Alan T. Nolan, from *“Rally, Once Again!” Selected Civil War Writings of Alan T. Nolan* (Madison House, 2000) 332

NO: Gary W. Gallagher, from “Another Look at the Generalship of R. E. Lee,” in Gary W. Gallagher, ed., *Lee the Soldier* (University of Nebraska Press, 1996) 342

Attorney Alan T. Nolan argues that General Robert E. Lee was a flawed grand strategist whose offensive operations produced heavy casualties in an unnecessarily prolonged war that the South could not win. According to professor of American history Gary W. Gallagher, General Lee was the most revered and unifying figure in the Confederacy, and he “formulated a national strategy predicated on the probability of success in Virginia and the value of battlefield victories.”

Issue 16. Was Abraham Lincoln America’s Greatest President? 354

YES: Phillip Shaw Paludan, from *The Presidency of Abraham Lincoln* (University Press of Kansas, 1994) 356

NO: M. E. Bradford, from *Remembering Who We Are: Observations of a Southern Conservative* (University of Georgia Press, 1985) 363

Phillip Shaw Paludan contends that Abraham Lincoln’s greatness exceeds that of all other American presidents because Lincoln, in the face of unparalleled challenges associated with the Civil War, succeeded in preserving the Union and freeing the slaves. M. E. Bradford characterizes Lincoln as a cynical politician whose abuse of authority as president and commander-in-chief during the Civil War marked a serious departure from the republican goals of the Founding Fathers and established the prototype for the “imperial presidency” of the twentieth century.

Issue 17. Did Reconstruction Fail as a Result of Racism? 374

YES: George M. Fredrickson, from *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817–1914* (Harper & Row, 1971) 376

NO: Heather Cox Richardson, from *The Death of Reconstruction: Race, Labor, and Politics in the Post-Civil War North, 1865–1901* (Harvard University Press, 2001) 384

George M. Fredrickson concludes that racism, in the form of the doctrine of white supremacy, colored the thinking not only of southern whites but of most white northerners as well and produced only half-hearted efforts by the Radical Republicans in the postwar period to sustain a commitment to black equality. Heather Cox Richardson argues that the failure of Radical Reconstruction was primarily a consequence of a national commitment to a free-labor ideology that opposed an expanding central government that legislated rights to African Americans that other citizens had acquired through hard work.