

HL option 2: History of the Americas

Three sections must be selected for study. Only people and events named in the guide will be named in examination questions.



Figure 5
Americas map

1: Indigenous societies and cultures in the Americas (c750–1500)

This section focuses on indigenous societies and cultures in pre-Columbian Americas, with an emphasis on the political, economic, social and cultural aspects of these societies. The indigenous peoples of the Americas adopted different forms of organization in the north and the south. For the last three bullets of this section, a case-study approach should be used, based on any **two** indigenous societies. This section allows for both specific knowledge of indigenous peoples, and a comparison of their cultures and development.

- Types of political organization: non-sedentary, semi-sedentary, confederations and empires; the role of local and state authorities
- The role of warfare in maintaining and expanding political organization
- Economic and social structures: role and nature of the tribute; landholding; agricultural production; systems of exchange; nature of the tribute in societies without money
- Religion: polytheistic beliefs; relationship between religious and political powers; relationship between man and nature
- Culture: written and unwritten language; contributions to scientific development and the arts

2: European explorations and conquests in the Americas (c1492–c1600)

This section focuses on Spanish, Portuguese, French and British exploration and conquest in the Americas. It examines European exploration and conquest in Latin America, focusing particularly on Spanish and Portuguese contact with indigenous societies, as well as French and British exploration and occupation in North America. The emphasis of this section is on contact, interaction and consequences of exploration and conquest for the indigenous populations.

- Exploration and conquest in North America: Columbus; conquest of the Caribbean; French and British exploration and occupation in North America
- Exploration and conquest in Latin America: Cortés and the conquest of the Aztecs; reasons for Spanish success and Aztec defeat; Pizarro and the conquest of the Incas; later defeat of Manco Inca; reasons for Spanish success and Inca defeat
- Economic impact of exploration and conquest: exploitation of resources; acquisition of gold and silver; fur trade; tobacco trade; the “Columbian Exchange”
- Treatment of indigenous populations; Law of Burgos (1512), New Laws of the Indies (1542); assimilation; eradication; social stratification; use of indigenous labour; women; multiracial issues
- European rivalries; Treaty of Tordesillas (1494); conflicting land claims based upon exploration; impact of conflicting claims

3: Colonial government in the New World (1500–1800)

This section focuses on the challenges and problems of colonial governments in the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries in the New World. It also looks at government attempts to resolve these problems, and the resistance they encountered. Political and economic structures of the colonial governments are also examined. This structure allows for a comparative approach.

- Political organization in Spanish and Portuguese America: viceroyalty system, captaincy system; Habsburg and early Bourbon rule; the Braganza rule
- Political organization in British and French North America: corporate, royal and proprietary; charters
- Colonial American economies; *encomienda*, *yanacónaje* and Mita; plantations; organization of trade; mercantilism; role of gold, silver and sugar
- Bourbon reforms and Pombaline reforms: reasons, nature and impact

- Limits of state power and resistance to authority
- Anglo-French rivalry in North America to 1763; Anglo-French relationships and alliances with indigenous peoples; French and Indian Wars

4: Religion in the New World (1500–1800)

This section focuses on the role of religion in the New World. It explores the development and influence of the Catholic church in Spanish and Portuguese America through the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries, including the role of religious orders. For the British North-American colonies, this section examines how religion influenced the development through the 17th and 18th centuries. This section also discusses the role of the church and religious orders in New France. This structure allows for a comparative study of the role of religion in the various jurisdictions of colonial America.

- The aims of the Catholic church in Spanish and Portuguese America; its influence; resistance of indigenous populations to Christianization
- Jesuits, Franciscans and Dominicans in Spanish and Portuguese America: economic and political organization; relations with indigenous populations; challenges to government authority
- Indigenous religions and Christianity; syncretism
- Religious tolerance and intolerance in British North America: Puritans, Quakers, Anglicans and Catholics
- The Great Awakening c1720–c1760; social and political impact
- Religion in New France: Black Robes, Jesuits and Recollects

5: Slavery and the New World (1500–1800)

This section focuses on slavery in the New World. It explores the origins of slavery in the Americas and the role of the colonial powers in the Atlantic slave trade. It explores the Middle Passage, slave resistance and opposition to the slave trade in British North America, led by the Quakers. This study of slavery allows for a comparative approach across the Americas.

- Reasons for, and origins of, slavery
- Role of the colonial powers in the establishment and expansion of slavery; *asiento* system
- Economic and social impact of slavery
- Living and working conditions: the Middle Passage; social structures on plantations in the West Indies, Brazil and the southern colonies
- Slave resistance and slave rebellions
- Opposition to the slave trade and slavery: Quakers and other early abolitionists

6: Independence movements (1763–1830)

This section focuses on the various forces that contributed to the rise of the independence movements, the similar and different paths that the movements followed, and the immediate effects of independence in the region. It explores the political, intellectual and military contributions of their leaders, and the sometimes contradictory views that shaped the emergence of the new nations.

- Independence movements in the Americas: political, economic, social and religious causes; the influence of Enlightenment ideas; the role of foreign intervention; conflicts and issues leading to war
- Political, intellectual and military contributions of leaders to the process of independence: Washington, Bolivar and San Martin
- United States: processes leading to the Declaration of Independence; influence of ideas; nature of the declaration; military campaigns/battles and their impact on the outcome

- Latin America: characteristics of the independence processes; reasons for the similarities and differences in **two** Latin American countries; military campaigns/battles and their impact on the outcome
- Attitude of the United States towards Latin American independence; nature of, and reasons for, the Monroe Doctrine
- Impact of independence on the economies and societies of the Americas: economic cost of the wars of independence; the establishment of new trade relations; impact on different social groups—specifically indigenous peoples, African Americans, Creoles

7: Nation-building and challenges (c1780–c1870)

This section focuses on the challenges and problems that came with independence. It explores the ways in which, and the reasons why, the countries of the region attempted to build their nations. Independent and new nations emerged; the colonial empires, with few exceptions, were gone; New World links were forged yet the colonial legacy remained. The task of building new nations opened the doors to novel ways of political and economic thinking and to the redefining of concepts such as nation and state.

- United States: Articles of Confederation; the 1787 Constitution: philosophical underpinnings; major compromises and changes in the US political system
- Latin America: challenges to the establishment of political systems; the nature of *caudillo* rule, and regional conditions leading to its establishment; the policies and impact of *caudillo* rule in **one** country
- War of 1812: causes and impact on British North America and the United States
- Mexican–American War (1846–1848): causes and effects on the region
- Canada: causes and effects of 1837 rebellions; the Durham report and its implications; challenges to the Confederation; the British North America Act of 1867—compromises, unresolved issues, regionalism, effects

8: United States' Civil War: Causes, course and effects (1840–1877)

This section focuses on the United States' Civil War between the North and the South (1861–1865), which is often perceived as the great watershed in the history of the United States. It transformed the country forever, but the war created a new set of problems: how would the country be reunited? How would the South rebuild its society and economy? How would the four million freed former slaves fit into society?

- Slavery: cotton economy and slavery; conditions of enslavement; adaptation and resistance; abolitionist debate—ideological, legal, religious and economic arguments for and against slavery, and their impact
- Origins of the Civil War: the Nullification Crisis; states' rights; sectionalism; slavery; political issues; economic differences between the North and South
- Reasons for, and effects of, westward expansion and the sectional debates; the crises of the 1850s; compromise of 1850; political developments, including the Lincoln–Douglas debates and the presidential election of 1860
- Union versus Confederate: strengths and weaknesses; economic resources; role and significance of leaders during the Civil War; role of Lincoln; significant military battles/campaigns
- Factors affecting the outcome of the Civil War; the role of foreign relations; the Emancipation Proclamation (1863) and participation of African Americans in the Civil War
- Reconstruction: presidential and congressional plans; methods of southern resistance; economic, social and political successes and failures
- African Americans in the New South: legal issues; the black codes; Jim Crow laws

9: The development of modern nations (1865–1929)

This section, covering the period between the late 19th century and the early 20th century, saw forces that transformed the countries of the region. These forces are generally seen as part of “modernization”, a process that involved the progressive transformation of the economic, political and social structures of the countries of the region. With respect to the first four bullets, a case-study approach should be adopted, using **two** countries from the region as examples.

- Causes and consequences of railroad construction; industrial growth, urbanization and economic modernization; the development of international and inter-American trade; neocolonialism and dependency
- Causes and consequences of immigration; emigration and internal migration, including the impact upon, and experience of, indigenous peoples
- Development and impact of ideological trends, including progressivism, Manifest Destiny, liberalism, nationalism, positivism, social Darwinism, “indigenismo” and nativism
- Social and cultural changes: developments in the arts; changes in the role of women
- Influence of leaders in the transition to the modern era: political and economic aims; the successes and failures of Theodore Roosevelt, Wilfrid Laurier and any **one** Latin American leader
- Social, economic and legal conditions of African Americans between 1865 and 1929; Plessy versus Ferguson, the Great Migration and the Harlem Renaissance; the search for civil rights and the ideas, aims and tactics of Booker T Washington, WEB Du Bois and Marcus Garvey

10: Emergence of the Americas in global affairs (1880–1929)

This section focuses on the impact of modernization in the region on foreign policy, including an exploration of the involvement of the region in the First World War. Modernization shaped the new nations, and its effects created the basis for a major shift in the foreign policies of the region. By the end of the 19th century, for example, the United States played a more active role in world affairs and in the affairs of Latin America in particular, thus transforming inter-American relations. When the First World War ended, its impact was felt in the economic, social and foreign policies of the participating countries.

- United States’ expansionist foreign policies: political, economic, social and ideological reasons
- Spanish–American War (1898): causes and effects
- Impact of United States’ foreign policies: the Big Stick; Dollar Diplomacy; moral diplomacy
- United States and the First World War: from neutrality to involvement; reasons for US entry into the First World War; Wilson’s peace ideals and the struggle for ratification of the Treaty of Versailles in the United States; significance of the war for the United States’ hemispheric status
- Involvement of either Canada or **one** Latin American country in the First World War: nature of, and reasons for, involvement
- Impact of the First World War on any **two** countries of the Americas: economic, political, social and foreign policies

11: The Mexican Revolution (1884–1940)

This section focuses on the causes, course and impact of the Mexican Revolution in a country that had experienced a lengthy period of political stability and economic growth, but enormous social inequality. The socio-economic composition of revolutionary leadership was varied—as were the aims—and the revolution was prolonged and costly. The 1917 Constitution has been described as the most progressive constitution created at this time, and it had significant influence on the political developments of the country and the region. The revolution impacted greatly on the arts, arguably representing the earliest and most enduring attempt to overcome racial divisions and incorporate the Indian heritage into the national identity.

- Rule of Porfirio Diaz from 1884; political control; contribution to discontent
- Causes of the Mexican Revolution: social, economic and political
- The revolution and its leaders (1910–1917): ideologies, aims and methods of Madero, Villa, Zapata, Carranza; achievements and failures; the 1917 Constitution—nature and application
- Construction of the post-revolutionary state (1920–1940): Obregón, Calles and the Maximato; challenges; assessment of their impact in the post-revolutionary state
- Lázaro Cárdenas and the renewal of the revolution (1934–1940): aims, methods and achievements
- The role of foreign powers (especially the United States) in the outbreak and development of the Mexican Revolution; motivations, methods of intervention and contributions
- Impact of the revolution on women, the arts, education and music

12: The Great Depression and the Americas (mid 1920s–1939)

This section focuses on the causes and nature of the Great Depression as well as the different solutions adopted by governments in the region, and the impact on these societies. The Great Depression produced the most serious economic collapse in the history of the Americas. It affected every country in the region and brought about the need to rethink economic and political systems. The alternatives that were offered, and the adaptations that took place, marked a watershed in political and economic development in many countries in the region. With respect to the last three bullets, a case-study approach should be adopted, using **one** country from the region as an example. The chosen country should be identified in the introduction to the examination answers.

- The Great Depression: political and economic causes in the Americas
- Nature and efficacy of solutions in the United States: Hoover; Franklin D Roosevelt and the New Deal
- Critics of the New Deal; impact of the New Deal on US political and economic systems
- Nature and efficacy of solutions in Canada: Mackenzie King and RB Bennett
- Impact of the Great Depression on Latin America; political instability and challenges to democracy; economic and social challenges
- Latin American responses to the Great Depression: import substitution industrialization (ISI); social and economic policies; popular mobilization and repression
- Impact of the Great Depression on society: specifically the impact on women and minorities; impact of the Great Depression on the arts and culture

13: The Second World War and the Americas (1933–1945)

As the world order deteriorated in the late 1930s, resulting in the outbreak of war in Europe and Asia, the countries of the region reacted in different ways to the challenges presented. This section focuses on the changing policies of the countries in the region as a result of growing political and diplomatic tensions prior to, and during, the Second World War. It also examines the impact of the war upon the Americas.

- Hemispheric reactions to the events in Europe and Asia: inter-American diplomacy; cooperation and neutrality; Franklin D Roosevelt's Good Neighbour policy—its application and effects
- Involvement and participation of any **two** countries of the Americas in the Second World War
- Social impact of the Second World War; impact on women and minorities; conscription
- Treatment of Japanese Americans, Japanese Latin Americans and Japanese Canadians
- Reasons for, and significance of, US use of atomic weapons against Japan
- Economic and diplomatic effects of the Second World War in any **two** countries of the Americas

14: Political developments in Latin America (1945–1980)

This section focuses on domestic and political developments in Latin America after 1945. Most Latin American countries experienced social, economic and political changes and challenges. Political responses to these forces varied from country to country—from the continuation of democracy to “populist” movements to outright conflict, revolution and the establishment of authoritarian regimes in the 1960s and 1970s. Areas of study include: conditions for the rise to power of new leaders; economic and social policies; treatment of minorities.

- The Cuban Revolution: political, social and economic causes
- Rule of Fidel Castro: Cuban nationalism; political, economic, social and cultural policies; treatment of opposition; successes and failures; impact on the region
- Populist leaders in **two** countries: rise to power and legitimacy; ideology; social, economic and political policies; the treatment of opposition
- Democracy in crisis: reasons for the failure of elected leaders
- Rise of a military dictatorship in **one** country: reasons for their rise to power; economic and social policies; repression and treatment of opposition
- Guerrilla movements in **one** country: origins, rise and consequences
- Liberation theology in Latin America: origins, growth and impact

15: Political developments in the United States (1945–1980) and Canada (1945–1982)

This section explores the domestic concerns and political developments in the United States and Canada, with a specific focus on the domestic policies and achievements of particular leaders in each country. In the United States, there is also a focus on economic development and the changing composition of the main political parties. In Canada, there is an exploration of the separatism of the Quiet Revolution.

- Truman and the Fair Deal; division within Democratic Party; congressional opposition; domestic policies of Eisenhower
- Kennedy and the New Frontier; Johnson and the Great Society
- Nixon’s domestic policies; Watergate and possible impeachment; Ford’s domestic policies and pardon of Nixon; Carter’s domestic policies; changing composition and internal conflicts within the Democratic and Republican parties in the 1960s and 1970s, and the impact on elections
- Domestic policies of Canadian prime ministers: St Laurent, Diefenbaker; political stability and nationalism; social and political change under Pearson and Trudeau
- Causes and effects of the Quiet Revolution; rise of Quebec nationalism, the Front de Libération du Québec (FLQ) and the October Crisis of 1970

16: The Cold War and the Americas (1945–1981)

This section focuses on the development and impact of the Cold War on the region. Most of the second half of the 20th century was dominated by the global conflict of the Cold War. Within the Americas, some countries were closely allied to the United States and some took sides reluctantly. Many remained neutral or sought to avoid involvement in Cold War struggles. A few, influenced by the Cuban Revolution, instituted socialist governments. No nation, however, escaped the pressures of the Cold War, which had a significant impact on the domestic and foreign policies of the countries of the region.

- Truman: containment and its implications for the Americas; the rise of McCarthyism and its effects on domestic and foreign policies of the United States; social and cultural impact of the Cold War
- Korean War, the United States and the Americas: reasons for participation; military developments; diplomatic and political outcomes
- Eisenhower and Dulles: New Look and its application; characteristics and reasons for the policy; repercussions for the region

- United States' involvement in Vietnam: the reasons for, and nature of, the involvement at different stages; domestic effects and the end of the war; Canadian non-support of the war; Latin American protest against the war
- United States' foreign policies from Kennedy to Carter: the characteristics of, and reasons for, policies; implications for the region: Kennedy's Alliance for Progress; Nixon's covert operations and Chile; Carter's quest for human rights and the Panama Canal Treaty (1977)
- Cold War in either Canada or **one** Latin American country: reasons for foreign and domestic policies and their implementation

17: Civil rights and social movements in the Americas post-1945

This section examines the origins, nature, challenges and achievements of civil rights and social movements after 1945. Causes of some of these movements may be pre-1945. These movements represented the attempts to achieve equality for groups that were not recognized or accepted as full members of society, and they challenged established authority and attitudes.

- Indigenous peoples and civil rights in the Americas
- African Americans and the civil rights movement: origins, tactics and organizations; the US Supreme Court and legal challenges to segregation in education; ending of segregation in the south (1955–1980)
- Role of Dr Martin Luther King Jr in the civil rights movement; the rise of radical African American activism (1965–1968): Black Panthers; Black Power and Malcolm X; role of governments in civil rights movements in the Americas
- Feminist movements in the Americas; reasons for emergence; impact and significance
- Hispanic American movement in the United States; Cesar Chavez; immigration reform
- Youth culture and protests of the 1960s and 1970s: characteristics and manifestation of a counter-culture

18: The Americas (1980–2005)

This section focuses on changing trends in foreign and domestic policies in the Americas. In the latter decades of the 20th century, the region experienced significant political, social, cultural and economic changes. The section also considers the transitions to democracy in Latin America and the challenges encountered.

- The United States: domestic policies of presidents Reagan, GHW Bush and Clinton; challenges; effects on the United States; impact upon the hemisphere; continuities and changes in US foreign policy: Reagan, GHW Bush and Clinton; from bipolar to unilateral power; impact on the region
- Canadian domestic policies: Mulroney governments (1984–1993), collapse of the Progressive Conservative Party; Chrétien in power (1993–2003), Quebec and separatism
- Transition to democracy in **two** countries of Latin America: reasons for democratization; role of internal and external factors
- Post-transition challenges in **two** countries of Latin America: economic challenges and debt; justice and reconciliation; political parties and the role of the military
- Violent and non-violent movements in **two** countries of Latin America: causes, aims and impact; role of religion, including liberation theology
- Economic and political cooperation in the Americas: reasons for and impact
- Terrorism; 9/11 and response: domestic impact