Very Short Introductions online

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**Introduction: mass immigration, past and present**

David A. Gerber

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The United States is a nation of diverse peoples bound together through an allegiance to the constitution. The Introduction looks at where the people of the United States have come from and how they have come together, whether through conquest, colonialism, the slave trade, the acquisition of territories, or voluntary migration. The United States did not become a nation by accident, but by choice. Since its founding in 1789, the United States has experienced almost constant immigration. There have been three notable waves: in the 1840s and 1850s, from the 1890s to World War I, and after 1965. There are many issues that Americans have to confront that relate to immigration.

**4. Comme disait M. de Tocqueville**

Bernard Crick

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How can democracy be prevented from degenerating into despotism? ‘Comme disait M. de Tocqueville’ details Alexis de Tocqueville's investigation into democracy in America, and his attempts to persuade people of the inevitability of democracy. De Tocqueville considered there to be a tension between liberty and majority rule and asked how to uphold the principle of equality. He developed the idea of pluralism to describe the interplay between intermediary groups, the state and individual rights. For de Tocqueville, toleration and the rule of law must protect the liberties of individuals for democracy to be sustainable.

**3. Making the first American West**

Stephen Aron

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‘Making the first American West’ outlines the “First West”, a vast territory beyond the Appalachian Mountains that remained the focus of intense rivalries between French,
Spanish, and British empire-builders in the decades before and after the Revolution. Their expansionist schemes were entangled with the counter-colonial aspirations and determined occupations of diverse Indian inhabitants. In the wake of the Louisiana Purchase, which gave the United States a farther West, and the War of 1812, which brought a further withdrawal of imperial rivals, Indians' options narrowed. By the 1820s, the inclusive relations that had characterized the lands between the Appalachians and the Mississippi had largely given way to exclusive American occupations.

6. The watering of the West
Stephen Aron

The watering of the West' describes the 1902 Reclamation Act (or Newlands Act) that established a National Bureau of Reclamation charged with constructing dams and irrigation projects in the western United States to reclaim the region from arid nature, open new lands for farmers, and restore the American dream for generations to come. The watering of the West required belief in new “scientific” propositions—many dubious—and entailed assigning added responsibilities to experts, often employed by the federal government, who took charge over not only the manipulation of western waters, but also the management of western lands and the regulation of other natural resources. This made westerners ever more dependent on federal stewardship and federal expenditures—and ever more resentful of federal oversight.

1. Equality
Allen C. Guelzo

‘Equality’ describes the arrival of Abraham Lincoln's forebears in the New World and their search for independence and prosperity. The notion that people were born into permanent borders of social rank was collapsed by the seventeenth-century scientific revolution and began to be replaced with the notion of equality. Around the time of Abraham Lincoln's birth, Kentucky farming was increasingly being dominated by large-scale plantations that used slave labour. However, was in New Orleans that Lincoln saw slavery in the mass. In 1834 Lincoln offered himself as a candidate in the legislative elections and he earned his first victory in politics.

Lincoln: A Very Short Introduction
Allen C. Guelzo
Lincoln: A Very Short Introduction explores the problems that confronted Lincoln and liberal democracy — equality, opportunity, the rule of law, slavery, freedom, and reconciliation. These problems and Lincoln's responses to them are set against the larger world of American and trans-Atlantic liberal democracy in the nineteenth century. Lincoln is shown to be an Enlightenment figure, who struggled to create a common ground between a people focused on individual rights and a society eager to establish a certain moral, philosophical, and intellectual bedrock. Lincoln insisted that liberal democracy had a higher purpose, which was the realization of a morally right political order.

2. Revolutionary moments
Colin Ward

Revolutions throughout history have produced anarchists. ‘Revolutionary moments’ looks back at periods of revolutionary activity during the past four centuries including the English Civil War, the French Revolution, the European revolutions of 1848, events in Mexico at the turn of the 20th century, the Russian Revolution, Italian Unification, the Spanish Civil War, and decades later, a new surge of popular uprisings in defiance of Stalin's regime. Looking even further back, there were antecedents of anarchism in the past, in the slave riots of the Roman Empire and in all subsequent revolutionary upheavals of the oppressed.

Napoleon: A Very Short Introduction
David A. Bell

Napoleon: A Very Short Introduction provides a concise and lively portrait of Napoleon Bonaparte’s character and career, situating him firmly in historical context. It emphasizes the astonishing sense of human possibility—for both good and ill—that Napoleon represented. By his late twenties, Napoleon was already one of the greatest generals in European history. At thirty, he had become absolute master of Europe’s most powerful country. In his early forties, he ruled a European empire more powerful than any since Rome, fighting wars that changed the shape of the continent and brought death to millions. Then everything collapsed, leading him to spend his last years in miserable exile in the South Atlantic.
Introduction

David A. Bell

The story of Napoleon’s life runs from his birth on Corsica in 1769 to his death in exile on Saint Helena in 1821, stretching beyond his death to include posthumous battles over his reputation. It is the story of a man with genuinely extraordinary personal qualities and involves some of the most dramatic events in history. The Introduction explains the story cannot be understood without placing Napoleon in the broader context of his age—both the historical changes that made him possible and the historical forces that he so powerfully grasped hold of. Napoleon’s entire story took place against the background of the French Revolution, which paved the way for his astonishing career.

2. Contentious people and factious parties in the Early Republic, 1789–1824

Donald T. Critchlow

The Founding Fathers feared political factions as a natural corruption of democrat government. None envisioned the rise of the severe factionalism that arose during George Washington's administration from 1789 to 1797. Divisions occurred over Secretary of the Treasury Alexander Hamilton's plans for the federal government to assume states’ debts, establish a national bank, raise taxes, and pursue a pro-British foreign policy. Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, believing Hamilton's proposals were unconstitutional, vehemently opposed the Hamiltonian program. ‘Contentious people and factious parties in the Early Republic, 1789–1824’ describes the opposing visions of the nation's future that were at the root of this factionalism and that led to the formation of political parties.

1. Waves of decolonization

Dane Kennedy

‘Waves of decolonization’ outlines three phases of decolonization, beginning with the first wave in the Americas in the late eighteenth century, which led to the creation of the United States. The second wave of decolonization was made possible by World War I with the collapse of the Russian, German, Habsburg, and Ottoman Empires. With the establishment of the League of Nations, the nation-state and the new notion of sovereignty it embodied became increasingly integral to the international order. These two waves of decolonization
were preludes to Third World decolonization and shared recurring themes: global wars between empires as catalysts of decolonization and violence as an integral element of the process of transition.

4. Taking the farther West
Stephen Aron

By the time the last Indian removals from the First West were being carried out in the early nineteenth century, the demands of Americans for lands farther west, within and beyond the borders of the Louisiana Purchase, were creating conflicts with existing occupants and rival claimants. Over time, these claims displaced prior arrangements between fur traders and Indians. They also led to war between the United States and Mexico. ‘Taking the farther West’ describes this United States expansion, the war with Mexico, and the subsequent discovery of gold in California, which precipitated an unprecedented number of people heading to the western end of the continent. The Gold Rush had devastating consequences for the native Californian Indians.

4. Legacies: What history has made of the founding fathers
R. B. Bernstein

“Legacies: What history has made of the founding fathers” shows that the founding fathers’ history has unfolded in two ways—one being their developing role in the American people’s historical memory, the other being their evolving place in history as interpreted by generations of historians. It also highlights how posterity has chosen individuals to revere or to chastise. The reputations of some founding fathers (George Washington and Benjamin Franklin) have remained consistently high; the reputations of others (Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton) have risen and fallen in historical cycles; others (John Adams, James Madison, and John Jay) have languished in neglect, only to be rediscovered and restored to the national pantheon.

2. Advancement
Allen C. Guelzo

‘Advancement’ describes how, in the aftermath of the War of 1812, the penetration of the markets promised a social and moral revolution equal to that of 1776, through the
cheapening of production, wage labour, steam-powered transportation, and inexpensive start-up costs. The old Jeffersonians looked darkly at mobility, because it threatened to disturb the stability and permanence upon which the independence of the yeoman rested. To Lincoln's generation, however, stability was merely another word for stagnation, for the repression of talent and imagination. Advancement was what was uppermost in the twenty-five-year-old Abraham Lincoln's mind when he sat for the first time in the Illinois state legislature in November 1834.

5. Debate
Allen C. Guelzo

‘Debate’ describes the debates between Lincoln and Stephen Douglas leading up to the legislative elections in 1858. Although Douglas was re-elected, Lincoln had come within an ace of upsetting the most famous and powerful Democrat in Congress. The great debates had been far from merely another political disappointment for Lincoln. By early 1859 he was beginning to get invitations to appear before Republican meetings as well as proposals from publishers to issue the debates as a book. Already, Northerners were beginning to speak of Lincoln as an ideal Republican candidate — not for the Senate, but for president of the United States.

1. The word and the deed
Bernard Crick

‘The word and the deed’ considers the shifting conceptions of democracy throughout history. Democracy's roots are European, starting from classical Greek civilization. Democracy can refer to an ideal or doctrine, a type of behaviour towards others, or to certain institutional or legal arrangements. Four broad usages of ‘democracy’ are identified throughout history, ranging from Plato’s attack on it as the rule of the poor and ignorant over the educated and knowledgeable, to ‘modern democracy’ where the power of the people is fused with the idea of legally guaranteed individual rights.

2. The journey from Westphalia to Philadelphia
Stella Z. Theodoulou and Ravi K. Roy
‘The journey from Westphalia to Philadelphia’ provides a historical overview of the Anglo-American administrative traditions that have shaped contemporary administrative systems. It discusses the foundations of the modern state and the emergence of popular sovereignty, which provides the roots for the political philosophy underpinning modern democratic administrative systems in countries such as Britain, the United States, France, and India. It also explains that ‘public’ administration, as distinct from other forms of civil administration, is interconnected with democratic governance. The origins of contemporary governance and administration are popularly attributed to the birth of the modern state that emerged with the Peace of Westphalia in 1648.

3. Independence

Robert J. Allison

By spring 1776 British authority had collapsed in the colonies. Congress appointed John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, Roger Sherman, and Robert Livingston to draft a declaration of independence. ‘Independence’ describes this declaration and reveals how complex declaring independence would be. Americans were redefining their relationship with the British Empire, but also the basis of government and the nature of their society. The declaration was adopted by Congress on July 4, 1776, but fighting continued. Richard Howe and Henry Clinton had been sent to achieve a political end—reconciliation—through military means, but George Washington was securing a military end—victory—through the political means of cultivating support from the people the army protected.

3. Indians in the East

Theda Perdue and Michael D. Green

As the American Revolution ended, Native peoples saw new challenges. Although the United States had just been created, the survival of the new nation relied on cooperation with the indigenous nations to continue and thrive. ‘Indians in the East’ looks at the early history of relations between the new Americans and Native Americans following the American Revolution, how the Indian tribes were treated, and specifically how Indians in the East were treated and driven from their homelands. Some Indians remained in the East, but they retained so little land that they seemed to be more of an annoyance than a threat to the whites.
The Indians in the West, as well as those of the East, went through dramatic change following European invasion of America which brought as well as disease and conflict, new technologies, opportunities for trade, and new ways to obtain power. The indigenous peoples had to deal with these challenges. ‘Indians in the West’ describes how the Indians of Western America reacted to the European invasion and settlement, including the effect of the introduction of horses to America in terms of economy and transport. Smallpox, conflict, and trade were sources of demographic change for the Native Americans of the West.