American History Timeline

Foundational Literary Period 1607-1800	1607 – First successful settlement established in Jamestown, VA, with about 700 people.
	1619 – First slave ship lands in America
	1620 – Mayflower lands at Plymouth Rock
	1630 – The Great Migration of Puritans from England to New England begins.
	1635 – Roger Williams banished from Massachusetts Bay Colony after criticizing Puritan Doctrine and established a colony in Providence, RI, marking the first real stance on the separation of church and state.
	1690 – Slavery exists in all English colonies in North America.
	1692 – 20 people and two dogs are executed during the Salem Witch Trials in MA.
	1700 – About 250,000 European settlers now live in America; a smallpox epidemic breaks out in Boston in 172.
	1740-1745 – The Great Awakening – Jonathan Edwards' attempt to revive Puritanism as it was dying out.
	1775-1781 – American Revolutionary War, during which, in 1776, the Second Continental Congress adopted the Declaration of Independence.
	1789 – George Washington was elected president.
	1790 – The first census was taken and set the American population at 3.9 million.
	1791 – The Bill of Rights (the first ten amendments) were added to the Constitution.
	1800 – The Library of Congress was established and Washington DC was named the capital of the United States. The population grew to about 5.3 million.

Romanticism 1800-1860	1803 – The Louisiana Purchase is negotiated, which more than doubles US territory.
	1812 – The War of 1812 was sparked over trade and maritime rights. Two years later, borne out of the effects of this war, Francis Scott Key wrote “The Star-Spangled Banner,” which didn’t become the official national anthem until 1931 under President Hoover.
	1820 – Missouri was admitted as a slave state, and Maine was added as a free state.
	1830 – The Underground Railroad was organized to help fugitive slaves find safe passage to freedom.
	1845 – The modern game of baseball was created. That same year, America goes to war with Mexico over Texas.
	1848 – Women organized the first woman's rights convention in the US. Women wouldn’t win the right to vote for another 70 years. That same year, the Gold Rush started out west.
	1858 – Abraham Lincoln (R) and Stephen Douglas (D) stage a series of seven debates (largely about slavery) as candidates for the Illinois seat in the US Senate. Douglas won the seat, but Lincoln gained tremendous respect for his views and abilities, which positioned him well to win the presidency in 1861.

Realism & Naturalism 1860-1914	1861-1865 – the Civil War
	1862 – The Homestead Act
	1863 – President Lincoln gave the Gettysburg Address.
	1865 – 13th Amendment was ratified, outlawing slavery (note the caveat on the amendment: “except as punishment for a crime.”
	1869 – First transcontinental railroad was completed.
	1871 – Indian Appropriation Act
	1876 – Alexander Graham Bell patented the first telephone.
	1878 – Thomas Edison patented the first phonograph.
	1881 – Clara Barton created the Red Cross.
	1886 – The Statue of Liberty, a gift from France, was dedicated.
	1890 – The Battle at Wounded Knee; The US, in an attempt to seize more land, massacred more than 200 Lakota tribe members in South Dakota. Congress passed a resolution expressing regret over this event in 1990, one hundred years later.
	1898 – US annexed Hawaii, making it a territory.
	1905 – Albert Einstein formulated his Theory of Relativity. (He was German but became an American citizen in 1940.)
	1912 – The Titanic sank.
	1913 – Henry Ford introduced the conveyor-belt technology needed to mass produce automobiles.
	1914 – WWI began. (The US didn’t get directly involved until 1917.)

Modernism 1914-1945	1914 – The Panama Canal opened (it began construction in 1881).
	1917 – The US joined WWI.
	1919 – WWI ended with the Treaty of Versailles.
	1920 – The Harlem Renaissance was underway, the first US commercial radio broadcast was aired, and the 18th Amendment was ratified, starting Prohibition. Finally, the 19th Amendment was ratified, giving women the right to vote.
	1927 – Sound in film!
	1929 – The stock market crashed, starting the Great Depression.
	1933 – Franklin D. Roosevelt was elected president and signed the New Deal into law. (The 18th Amendment was repealed.)
	1933 – Adolf Hitler rose to power in Germany.
	1939 – Amelia Earhart disappeared while flying around the world, the first commercial television broadcast aired in the US, and Germany invaded Poland, starting WWII in Europe.
	1941 – Japan bombed Pearl Harbor, and the US joined WWII.
	1945 – WWII ended when the US dropped two atomic bombs, one on Hiroshima and one on Nagasaki.

Postmodernism 1945-Today **The Digital Age** (1990s-Today)	1954 – Brown vs. Board of Education (segregation in schools is deemed unconstitutional).
	1957 – The Soviet Union launched Sputnik, the first artificial satellite, which kicked off the Space Race between us and them.
	1963 – Martin Luther King, Jr., delivered his "I Have a Dream Speech." President John F. Kennedy is assassinated.
	1964 – The Civil Rights Act was written into law.
	1965 – US involvement in the Vietnam War escalated; The anti-war movement began and would be at its highest in the mid-1970s. (This was a huge cultural shift.)
	1987 – President Ronald Reagan made a public appeal to Mikhail Gorbachev (leader of the Soviet Union) to tear down the Berlin Wall, which happened in 1989.
	1990 – The Gulf Wars against Saddam Hussein and Iraq began. This was a shift in who we considered our most risky "enemies."
	1993 – First attack on the World Trade Center in NYC.
	1995 – Oklahoma City Bombing
	1999/2000 – Y2K
	2001 – 9/11
	2004-2021 – War on Terror (Afghanistan)
	2005 – YouTube was launched by three PayPal engineers. It was purchased by Google the following year for $1.65 billion.
	2008 – Barack Obama, the first African American president, was elected, 44 years after the Civil Rights Act.
	2008-2009 – The Great Recession, the country's most severe financial crisis since the Great Depression.
	2010 – The Affordable Care Act passed.
	2020-2022 – COVID-19 Pandemic.