

U.S. History/English 302
Research Paper
Topic List

*The following is a list of possible research paper topics. A research paper is **not** a report. Instead, it must deal with a specific issue, and should prove a specific thesis. The following topics provide ideas for the focus of a paper, but they are not thesis statements. Remember to be as specific as possible when writing your thesis.*

*** Denotes topics that may be more challenging to research and/or organize.**

1. ***Native American religion:** What was its relationship to the environment?
2. **Native Americans:** What was the impact of European colonization on Native Americans?
3. **The lost colony of Roanoke:** What are the theories to explain its disappearance?
4. ***Salem Witch Trials:** What were the possible causes?
5. **Women in Colonial America:** What was the role of women? Address the concept of the “republican mother” and its impact on the movement toward revolution.
6. **American Revolution:** What were the key causes? What was the role of Thomas Paine’s *Common Sense* in promoting the movement for independence?
7. **American Revolution:** What factors contributed to an American victory?
8. **The United States Constitution:** How did it remedy the **weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation**?
9. **The United States Constitution:** Did the **framers** really represent the American people? (Aristocracy or Democracy?)
10. **Federalists vs. Anti-federalists:** What were the main arguments prior to ratification of the Constitution? What was the outcome of the debate?
11. ***The Whiskey Rebellion of 1794:** What were the causes and effects?
12. **Marbury v. Madison:** What was the impact of this case on the American judicial system?
13. **Cotton gin:** What was its impact on the American economy and the use of slaves labor on plantations in the South?
14. ***Utopian colonies:** What were their goals and methods? Why did they fail? (e.g.: Amana colony, Brook Farm, Oneida colony, Bishop Hill)
15. **Indian Removal Act:** What were the reasons for its passage? What was the impact of the Trail of Tears that resulted?
16. **Mexican War:** What were the causes and/or effects? Did the U.S. provoke the war?
17. **Manifest Destiny:** What were the causes of westward expansion?
18. **Oregon Trail:** Why was the motivation to move to the West so strong that people were willing to take enormous risks?
19. **Mormons:** Why did they encounter opposition in Illinois? What motivated their migration to Utah? What has been their impact on western development and American society?
20. **Gold Rush:** What was its impact on the development of California?
21. **Slavery:** What was its impact on the economy of the South? What were its effects on African American families?
22. **Lincoln-Douglas debates:** Compare and contrast the views of each regarding slavery and governmental power. What was the impact of the debates?
23. **Abolitionist movement** in the United States: Who were the key leaders, and what were their contributions? What was the impact on the tensions leading to the Civil War?
24. **The Underground Railroad:** What were the methods used? What was the impact?
25. **Pre-Civil War conflicts over slavery:** What were the causes and effects of **John Brown’s raid on Harpers Ferry**?

26. **Pre-Civil War conflicts over slavery:** What were the causes and effects of the Nat Turner Rebellion?
27. **Dred Scott decision:** What was its impact on the slavery issue?
28. **Civil War:** What were the **key issues that caused conflict** between North and South? (Remember that there were many sectional differences in addition to slavery.)
29. **Civil War:** What were the **strengths and weaknesses of the North and the South**, and how did these factors contribute to the outcome of the war? (Especially focus on economic factors.)
30. **Civil War:** Why did Lincoln issue the **Emancipation Proclamation**? How did it influence the decision of European nations not to recognize the Confederacy?
31. **Women in the Civil War:** How did they contribute?
32. **African American soldiers in the Civil War:** How did they contribute? What kind of discrimination did they face in the Union army?
33. **Abraham Lincoln's assassination:** What did Booth and his co-conspirators hope to achieve? How did Lincoln's assassination impact the reconstruction of the nation after the Civil War? *Was Mary Surratt actually a part of the conspiracy?
34. ***African Americans after the Civil War:** How were they affected by Reconstruction policies? How were they affected after the return of white supremacy? Discuss social, legal, and economic factors.
35. ***New York draft riots during the Civil War:** What were the causes? What were the effects?
36. **Transcontinental railroad:** What was its impact on westward expansion?
37. ***Legend vs. reality in the West:** Focus on myths and realities surrounding a particular figure (e.g.: Buffalo Bill, Wyatt Earp, George Custer, etc.)
38. **Native American conflicts in the West:** Specify tribe(s) and conflict. (e.g.: The Battle of the Little Bighorn, Wounded Knee Massacre, etc.); What were the causes and effects?
39. **United States and Native American policy:** What was the impact of the Dawes Act and/or other pieces of legislation? What was the impact of the reservation policy?
40. **Electric power and related inventors:** Analyze the impact of the harnessing of electric power and/or discuss the competition among the inventors who played a role (e.g.: Edison, Tesla, Westinghouse)
41. **Inventors/inventions of the 19th Century:** Choose a significant inventor or invention and examine the challenges of developing the item or the impact of the invention on the American society/economy.
42. **Wealthy industrialists in the late 1800s:** "Robber Barons" or "Captains of Industry"?
43. **The Gilded Age:** Discuss the origin of the term and why it is an appropriate metaphor for the United States in the late 1800s.
44. **Labor unions in the 1800s:** What economic, social, and philosophical factors contributed to their formation?
45. **Labor conflicts/strikes in the late 1800s:** What was the federal government's attitude toward organized labor, and how and when did it change?
46. **Haymarket Riot:** What were the causes and effects?
47. **Pullman Strike:** What were the causes and effects?
48. **Immigration in the late 1800s:** What were the difficulties faced by immigrants, and how did they adjust to life in America?
48. **Immigration in the late 1800s:** Discuss the "melting pot" vs. "salad bowl" metaphors.
49. **Chinese immigrants:** Why did they come to the U.S.? What discrimination did they face? (Chinese Exclusion Act)
50. **The Great Chicago Fire of 1871:** Why was it so severe? What was the impact on the city (especially architecture)?

51. **Urban political machines in the late 1800s:** What were the reasons for their development? Why were they successful? What is their legacy?
52. **The political cartoons of Thomas Nast:** What was their influence on public opinion? How did they contribute to the downfall of Boss Tweed?
53. **Settlement house movement of the late 1800s:** What prompted the development of the movement? What was its impact on urban neighborhoods? Specify area (e.g.: Chicago's Hull House)
54. **Child labor in the late 1800s/ early 1900s:** What was the impact on society? How were reforms made?
55. **Galveston hurricane of 1900:** What were the effects on the city? How did city government change after the hurricane?
56. **The San Francisco earthquake and fire of 1906:** What were the effects on the city, especially on the Chinese residents?
57. **Muckrakers:** What was the impact of this journalism on progressive reforms?
58. ***The Springfield Race Riot of 1908:** What were the causes and/or effects?
59. ***Imperialism in the late 19th and early 20th Century:** Was it justified? (Focus on one region.)
60. **Yellow journalism:** What was its role in causing the Spanish-American War? (Hearst and Pulitzer)
61. **Spanish-American War:** What were the causes and/or effects?
62. ***The automobile:** What was its impact on America's economy and society?
63. **World War I:** What were the reasons for U.S. involvement?
64. ***Anti-German sentiment in the United States during World War I:** What policies were developed as a result? What was the impact on German-Americans?
65. **Black Sox scandal:** What caused the players to participate? Was "Shoeless Joe" Jackson part of the conspiracy?
66. ***Women's suffrage movement:** Who were the founders and what methods did they use? What were their successes and/or failures?
67. **Red Scare of the 1920s:** What were the causes? What was the impact on immigrants and/or radicals? What was the role of A. Mitchell Palmer and/or J. Edgar Hoover?
68. **Sacco-Vanzetti case:** What role did discrimination play in the trial and verdict?
69. **Prohibition:** What were the causes? What was its impact on the development of organized crime?
70. ***Harlem Renaissance:** What were the causes? What were the effects?
71. **Mississippi River Flood of 1927:** How did it affect farmers? How did it impact racial issues in the South? What was the government response?
72. **Stock market crash of 1929:** What economic factors caused it?
73. ***The Bonus Army:** What prompted this protest? What was the outcome and impact?
74. **Dust Bowl of the 1930s:** What were the causes and/or effects?
75. ***Scottsboro Trial:** What was the impact of racism on the outcome?
76. ***New Deal:** What was its impact on the arts? What was its impact on farming? (Or choose another area)
77. **Lindbergh kidnapping:** Who kidnapped the Lindbergh baby? Was Bruno Hauptmann wrongfully convicted?
78. **Amelia Earhart:** What happened to Amelia Earhart?
79. **Tuskegee Airmen:** What obstacles did they face? How did they influence the struggle for African American rights?
80. **Pearl Harbor:** Could it have been predicted? Would the U.S. have entered World War II without it?
81. **World War II:** What was the impact of **propaganda** and its use in the United States?

82. **World War II:** What was the significance of the **Battle of Midway**?
83. **World War II:** What were the reasons for the success of the **D-Day invasion**?
84. **World War II:** What contributions were made by Americans on the home front?
85. **Japanese Internment:** Why did it occur? How did it affect Japanese-Americans?
86. **World War II:** What were the **contributions of women**? How did it affect **women's employment**?
87. **World War II:** What were the contributions of **African Americans**?
88. **Manhattan Project:** What were the reasons for/methods of secrecy?
89. **Bombing of Hiroshima/Nagasaki:** Was it necessary? Argue one side.
90. ***Cold War:** How and why did it originate? What were its effects on U.S. foreign policy? How have attitudes toward communism changed since it ended?
91. **Truman's containment policy:** How was it implemented by the Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan, and the Berlin Airlift?
92. ***Korean War:** What caused the **No Gun Ri massacre**, and why was it kept secret?
93. **McCarthyism:** What were its causes? What were its effects?
94. **Ethel and Julius Rosenberg:** Were they guilty of spying?
95. ***Baby Boom:** What was its impact on American society? (1950s-present)
96. ***Brown v. Board of Education* case:** What was its impact?
97. **Blacks in Baseball:** How did it affect/mirror the removal of other barriers for African Americans in society in general?
98. **U-2 incident:** What was the effect on U.S.-Soviet relations?
99. **JFK and the Cuban missile crisis:** What were the reasons for the U.S. response? Evaluate the consequences of JFK's actions.
100. **JFK and the Bay of Pigs invasion:** Why did the U.S. sponsor it? Why did it fail?
101. **JFK: Evaluate his presidency.** Was he an effective president, or simply a nostalgic hero?
102. **JFK's assassination:** Who was responsible? Were the Warren commission's findings accurate?
103. **Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s:** Evaluate the tactics and accomplishments.
104. **March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom of 1963:** What was its impact?
105. **Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination:** Was James Earl Ray responsible?
106. ***Social protest in the 1960s:** What forms did it take? What was its impact on American society?
107. ***Lyndon Johnson's Great Society:** What were its successes? What were its failures? What was the impact of this program on the creation of a welfare system in the United States?
108. **Vietnam War:** How did the **U.S. get involved**?
109. **My Lai Massacre:** What were the causes? Who was responsible?
110. ***Vietnam War:** What was the role of the **anti-war movement** in changing American opinions toward the war? How was public policy influenced? (Or, What was the **role of the media**?)
111. **Kent State shootings:** What were the contributing factors? Who was responsible?
112. ***Vietnam War: Why did the United States lose?** Evaluate goals, policies, decisions, and/or the role of geography and the nature of guerrilla warfare to analyze the failure.
113. **Vietnam War: What were the social consequences?** Analyze the **treatment of veterans** returning from the war.
114. **Agent Orange:** Evaluate its use during the Vietnam War and its effects.
115. **1968 Democratic Convention in Chicago:** What were the reasons for the protests, and why did violence erupt? Evaluate the city's response and the impact on public opinion.

116. **American Indian Movement (AIM) and the 1973 occupation of Wounded Knee:** What motivated the takeover? What was its impact on relations between Native Americans and the government?
117. ***Watts riot:** What were the causes? What were the effects on race relations in America?
118. **Iran Hostage situation (1979):** What were the causes? Evaluate President Carter's handling of the situation.
119. **Iran-Contra scandal:** Who was really responsible?
120. ***Affirmative action in education or the workplace:** Is it still necessary? Why or why not? Be sure to focus the historical implications.
121. ***African Americans in the military:** What significant contributions did they make? How have they overcome discrimination?
122. ***Women in the military:** What significant contributions did they make? How have they overcome discrimination? Should women serve in combat positions?
123. ***Women's rights:** How have changes in women's employment affected their role in society? Focus on one time period.
Oklahoma City Bombing: What motivated Timothy McVeigh to plan and carry out the attack?
124. ***Sept. 11, 2001 attacks:** How did the attacks affect American security policies? How did they impact U.S. foreign policy? How did they impact American views of Islam? Other narrow topics may be approved—see your teachers.
125. **Hurricane Katrina (2005):** What caused the flooding in New Orleans to be so severe? What was the impact of the government's response? How has the city/region changed since then? What was the political impact?
126. **Key people in American history:** chose an individual (i.e.: a President, First Lady, leader of a movement, etc.) and discuss that person's impact on the United States. Get help formulating your thesis so that you do not simply write a report.

❖ Check with your history teacher if you have an idea for a different topic. It must be approved by both history and English teachers!

