

# History of the United States

Engelsk



Navn: \_\_\_\_\_

Klasse: \_\_\_\_\_

## Indholdsfortegnelse

Native Americans _____	2 - 4
Thanksgiving _____	5
The Colonisation of America _____	6 - 7
The American States _____	8 - 10
The War of Independence and The Civil War _____	11 - 12
Immigration _____	13 - 15
What is your idea of an American? _____	16 - 17

## Native Americans

The original Americans are often called Native Americans, but they also call themselves indigenous people, Native Indians, Indians or First Americans. People who are not Native Americans should avoid using the term Indian as it is often considered offensive.

The USA as we know it today is a very young country; it is about 250 years old. That is not much when compared to most other countries that are hundreds or even thousands of years old. Before the Europeans arrived on the continent, it was the home of the Native Americans, who had lived there for 15,000 years.

In 1492, the Europeans discovered the continent they later named America. From then on, Europeans would travel to this new land and settle there. The Native Americans had not previously been exposed to the diseases the Europeans brought with them. Therefore many Native Americans died of measles and smallpox.

The Europeans saw the new land as an opportunity to start farming. The Native Americans lost most of the land that they used for hunting, and the Europeans killed many of the animals that the Native Americans needed for survival. Over time, the Native Americans were forced to give up most of their land, many of them died, and the Europeans kept coming in their millions. Today there are over 300 million people in the USA, but only about 1.4% of them are Native Americans.

### Gloser

native - indfødt

indigenous - oprindelig

avoid - undgå

offensive - stødende

settle - bosætte sig

expose to - udsætte for

measles - mæslinger

smallpox - kopper

survival - overlevelse

forced - tvunget

in their millions - i millionvis

## Tribes

Native Americans lived in tribes, and some of them still do. A tribe is a kind of community and it was the original way to view people before there were states. Some Native Americans live in Indian Reservations, which are areas governed by a Native American tribal government. In 2026, the U.S. government recognized 574 American Indian tribes and Alaska Native entities.

The Navajo tribe is one of the largest Native American tribes in the U.S. with roughly 300,000 members. In the Navajo language, they call themselves "Diné" ("The People").

In 1860, the U.S. army forced 8,000 Navajos to march *the Long Walk* of around 250-450 miles to internment camps. Thousands died from starvation and disease. After four years of difficult negotiations they were allowed to return to their homeland. The Navajos and the U.S. government both signed the 1868 treaty, recognizing the sovereignty of the Navajo people and creating the Navajo Reservation.

Many Native Americans are still deeply affected by generations of forced assimilation, discrimination and abuse.



### Gloser

tribe - *stamme*  
reservation - *reservat*  
recognize - *anerkende*  
entity - *enhed*

internment camp - *interneringslejr*  
starvation - *sult*  
negotiation - *forhandling*  
treaty - *traktat*

sovereignty - *selvstændighed*  
affected - *påvirket*  
assimilation - *kulturel tilpasning*  
abuse - *mishandling*



Answer the questions about the text about Native Americans.

## What should you avoid calling Native Americans?

- Indigenous people
- Indians
- First Americans

## How long have the Native Americans lived in America?

- 150 years
- 1,500 years
- 15,000 years

## Which diseases did the Europeans bring with them?

- The flu and the cold
- Hoof-and-mouth disease and tuberculosis
- Measles and smallpox

## What is a tribe?

- It is a nationality
- It is a kind of community
- It is a kind of town

## What was the Long Walk?

- A Navajo ceremonial march
- A voluntary journey to a new area
- A forced march of the Navajo people

## How old is the USA?

- about 250 years old
- about 350 years old
- about 450 years old

## When was America discovered by the Europeans?

- 1776
- 1492
- 1860

## What percentage of Americans are Native Americans?

- 1.4%
- 4%
- 14%

## What does "Diné" mean in the Navajo language?

- The People
- The Warriors
- The Survivors

## What did they 1868 treaty declare?

- That the Navajo had sovereignty
- That the Navajo would get compensation
- That discrimination against the Navajo was illegal



Read the text below. Use the words in brackets and write the correct form of the word in the box, as shown in the example.

## Thanksgiving

The (*three*) third Thursday of November is a national holiday in the U.S., namely Thanksgiving.

You have probably (*hear*) \_\_\_\_\_ of it and seen in American movies. It is a day for family, being thankful and (*eat*) \_\_\_\_\_ lots of turkey, mashed potatoes and pumpkin pie. The origins of Thanksgiving is well-known to most Americans as it is something children are taught about in school in history class. As the story goes, the (*friend*) \_\_\_\_\_ Native Americans helped the Pilgrim settlers adapt to life in what they referred to as the 'New World'. The two groups then came together for an great harvest meal in the autumn of 1621 where they feasted on turkey and began a life of coexisting (*peaceful*) \_\_\_\_\_.

The truth of the first Thanksgiving is quite (*difference*) \_\_\_\_\_, however. For one thing, there may not even have (*be*) \_\_\_\_\_ turkey on the menu. Rather, the Wampanoag tribe would have (*bring*) \_\_\_\_\_ deer and seafood to the table. The actual date is also being disputed. Some identify the first (*truth*) \_\_\_\_\_ Thanksgiving as a day of feasting that Governor John Winthrop held for his soldiers in 1637 to celebrate their efforts. The reason? They had (*successful*) \_\_\_\_\_ killed more than 400 Pequot men, women and children in a brutal attack. Not (*exact*) \_\_\_\_\_ the stuff of children's stories.





Read the text about the colonization of the U.S.

## The Colonisation of America

Many history books still say that America was discovered by Christopher Columbus in 1492, but is it even possible to discover a continent that already has people living on it? As it turns out, Columbus wasn't even the first European to sail to North America. Archaeologists have found remains of a Viking settlement on the Canadian island of Newfoundland from the 1100s, making Columbus' "discovery" less significant.

However, Columbus Day, the anniversary of Christopher Columbus' arrival in America on 12 October 1492, is still celebrated as a national holiday in the U.S. where many schools and businesses are closed. The different states in the USA all celebrate Columbus Day differently. Some states have big parades and events. Other states do not mark the day. In recent years, Indigenous Peoples' Day has become an alternative to Columbus Day, focusing on celebrating Native American culture and remembering the harm caused by the European colonization of America. Across Latin America, October 12 used to be a celebration of the Spanish colonization, but the day now more often celebrates the indigenous cultures and the mix of indigenous and Spanish culture that characterizes the Spanish-speaking countries.

In 2021, Indigenous Peoples' Day was formally recognized and commemorated by President Joe Biden on the 12th of October during all of his presidency. When Donald Trump returned to the presidency in 2025, he did not commemorate the holiday, but focused instead on Columbus Day alone, claiming that the left (the Democrats) used Indigenous Peoples' Day to erase American history.

### Gloser

archeologist - *arkæolog*  
remains - *rester*  
settlement - *bosættelse*

the 1100s - *1100-tallet*  
anniversary - *årsdag*  
remembrance - *minde*

recognize - *anerkende*  
commemorate - *fejre mindet om*  
erase - *slette*



Using internet sources, write a short text (around 300 words) about the Viking settlement on Newfoundland and why the Scandinavian Vikings did not stay in Canada for very long.

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What are your thoughts on the different ways that Biden and Trump reacted to Indigenous Peoples' Day, and what do you think it says about the two political parties that they represent (the Republicans and the Democrats)?

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Read the text about the American states on the following pages.

## The American States

The United States of America is one big republic. When it was established in 1776, there were only 13 states. But the republic kept growing, and today there are 50 states.

48 of the states are connected and form the central part of North America. The state of Alaska is northwest of Canada, and the state of Hawaii is a group of islands in the Pacific Ocean.

### Alaska

Alaska became the 49th state in 1959. It is the largest state in the U.S. and its area is more than that of Texas, California and Montana combined. The state has a varied climate with temperate rainforests, icefields, volcanoes as well as national forests and parks. The Native American population constitutes 22% of the total population, making it the state with the highest proportion of Native Americans in the U.S. Indigenous peoples such as the Tlingit people and the Haida people lived in Alaska for thousands of years before Russian settlers arrived in the 17th century.

### Hawaii

Hawaii became the 50th U.S. state in 1959. It is the only U.S. state made up entirely of islands. The 132 islands and islets were formed by volcanoes as the lava cooled and built up over time. Today, there are eight main islands, the biggest of which is the island of Hawaii known as the Big Island.

#### Gloser

establish - *grundlægge*  
temperate - *tempereret*

constitute - *udgøre*  
indigenous - *oprindelig*

settler - *bosætter*  
islets - *småøer*

Hawaii is also the only state whose majority are not descended from Europe. The first people to live in Hawaii are believed to have come from Polynesia more than 1,500 years ago. Today, the majority of inhabitants are of Asian descent but there are also people with mixed ancestry from many different countries.

## Puerto Rico

Puerto Rico is a special example as it is a U.S. territory, not a state. Puerto Ricans are U.S. citizens but have restricted self-government and voting rights. This Caribbean island was home to the Taíno indigenous people when it was colonized by Spain in 1493. After 400 years of Spanish rule, it became a U.S. territory in 1898. Today, Puerto Rican culture blends Taíno, Spanish, African, and American influences, creating a rich heritage of music, food, and traditions while maintaining Spanish as the main language.

There are five inhabited U.S. territories: Puerto Rico, American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

### Gloser

descend from - *nedstamme fra*  
ancestry - *slægt, afstamning*

rule - *styre*  
heritage - *arv*

main language - *hovedsprog*  
inhabited - *beboet*



Work together in pairs and complete the assignments below.

Choose a U.S. state each and prepare a short presentation (approx. 5 minutes) to present to your partner.

Include information about at least three of these facts in your presentation:

- population
- history
- nature
- culture
- language



Choose one of the five inhabited U.S. territories to research further:

- Puerto Rico
- American Samoa
- Guam
- The Northern Mariana Islands
- The U.S. Virgin Islands.

Include information about at least three of these facts in your presentation:

- location and population
- connection to the United States
- language
- history
- culture



Read the text and answer the questions on the next page.

## The U.S. War of Independence

The American War of Independence (1775-1783) began when 13 British colonies rebelled against British rule over “taxation without representation.” The colonists resented paying taxes without a voice in government, and protested in events like the 1773 Boston Tea Party. Led by George Washington, the Continental Army fought British soldiers. The 1776 Declaration of Independence proclaimed freedom, and with French help, America won in 1783 to become an independent nation.



## The Civil War

The Civil War (1861-1865) was America’s deadliest war, fought out between Northern Union states and Southern Confederacy states. The main cause was slavery—Southern plantations depended on enslaved workers while the North wanted abolition. When Lincoln became president in 1860, Southern states seceded the USA. The war began at Fort Sumter in 1861. Lincoln’s 1863 Emancipation Proclamation freed slaves in rebel states. The Union won in 1865, and slavery was abolished permanently.

## A nation divided

The U.S. remains divided with different political and ethical views. Racism is still widespread—the belief that some humans are superior based on skin color, nationality, or ethnicity. This traces back to European colonization and was used to justify violence, discrimination, and segregation against Native Americans, African Americans, and other people of color.

### Glosser

taxation - *beskatning*  
the Confederacy -  
*Konføderationen*  
plantation - *plantage*  
abolition - *afskaffelse*

secede - *trække sig ud af*  
emancipation - *frigørelse*  
proclamation - *erklæring*  
abolish - *afskaffe*  
divided - *delt, splittet*

widespread - *udbredt*  
superior - *overlegen*  
trace back - *spore tilbage*  
justify - *retfærdiggøre*  
segregation - *adskillelse*



Read the text and answer the questions on the next page.

## When did the American War of Independence take place?

- 1765-1783
- 1775-1783
- 1785-1793

## Who led the continental army?

- Thomas Jefferson
- Benjamin Franklin
- George Washington

## What was the main cause of the Civil War?

- Economic differences between states
- States' rights
- Slavery

## Where did the first battle of the Civil War take place?

- Gettysburg
- Fort Sumter
- Washington, D.C.

## According to the text, why does the U.S. continue to be divided?

- Economic differences
- Differing political and ethical views
- Religious disagreements

## Why did the British colonies want independence?

- Lack of religious freedom
- Taxation without representation
- Forced military service

## What document declared the U.S. free in 1776?

- The Constitution
- The Emancipation Proclamation
- The Declaration of Independence

## Who was president during the Civil War?

- George Washington
- Abraham Lincoln
- Thomas Jefferson

## What did the Emancipation Proclamation do?

- Ended the Civil War
- Freed slaves in rebel states
- Granted voting rights to all citizens

## What can racism in the U.S. be traced back to?

- The Civil War
- European colonization
- Slavery



Read the text about U.S. immigration on the following pages.

## Immigration

From the mid-1800s and onward, millions of people from every corner of the world immigrated to America. The reasons why people left their native countries were various: war, poverty, famine, job opportunities, persecution, criminal backgrounds, and much more.

But all immigrants shared a common dream: They hoped for a better life in America.



Most European immigrants arrived in New York. Here they had to be processed at the immigration station on Ellis Island next to the Statue of Liberty. People arriving here were exhausted from the long sea journey across the Atlantic, but also excited about finally reaching their destination. At Ellis Island the immigrants waited in long lines for both health and paperwork inspections to determine if they were allowed to enter the country or not.

The busiest years on Ellis Island were from 1900-1914 with thousands of people coming through every day. At the station people were asked many questions, for example about their name, their occupation, and if they had enough money to start a new life.

### Gloser

native country - *hjemland*  
famine - *hungersnød*

persecution - *forfølgelse*  
exhausted - *udmattet*

determine - *afgøre*  
occupation - *beskæftigelse*

About 80% of the immigrants managed to pass through the station within a few hours, but the rest needed further examination and risked being detained on the island for several weeks. People with health problems, mental disorders, criminal backgrounds, or no education were often the ones who got detained, and some were simply sent back home again immediately.

The immigration station on Ellis Island operated from 1892 to 1954. The old buildings were later restored and turned into a museum where tourists in New York now have the opportunity to experience history at close hand. Today, more than 100 million Americans can trace their family back to the immigrants who arrived at Ellis Island many years ago.

Immigrants from Asian countries arrived mostly on the West Coast in San Francisco and Los Angeles. In 1848, gold was discovered in California, and this drew many people there to seek their fortune, both Americans and immigrants. The railroad expansion on the West Coast brought especially Chinese immigrants, who were promised jobs working on the railroad. On the West Coast, there weren't any immigration stations like the one on Ellis Island until 1910, so Asian immigrants entered the large American cities freely but with little to no knowledge or preparation for life in the U.S.

Whereas most European immigrants, especially Christian Protestants, were treated well in the U.S., Asian immigrants faced discrimination and couldn't even become American citizens despite the fact that many of them were invited to come to the U.S. to work. Like African American citizens, the Asian communities experienced segregation and persecution into the 1960s but managed to flourish all the same. Today, many large cities in the U.S. have Asian neighborhoods with names like Chinatown, Koreatown and Little Tokyo where their cultures are celebrated and encouraged.

## Gloser

detained - *tilbageholdt*  
restored - *restaureret*

expansion - *udbygning*  
segregation - *(race)-adskillelse*

persecution - *forfølgelse*  
flourish - *trives*



## How do you think life was for an immigrant?

Brainstorm all the things you can think of that relate to immigration, for example feelings, thoughts, dangers, experiences, atmospheres, etc.

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## Choose one of these scenarios and write a letter to a family member in your native country inspired by the words from your brainstorm.

### 1. Imagine that you are an immigrant arriving at Ellis Island in 1900.

Include descriptions of:

- the reason why you left your home
- the long sea journey to America
- the inspection at the immigration station
- what you are going to do after being permitted to stay in America.

### 2. Imagine that you are an immigrant arriving in San Francisco in 1848.

Include descriptions of:

- the reason why you left your home
- the long sea journey to America
- the challenges you face being an Asian immigrant in the U.S.
- what you are going to do after being permitted to stay in America.

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Draw an American person and answer the questions on the next page.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for drawing an American person.

