America 1920-1973
Opportunity and Inequality
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Introduction to the
Oxford AQA GCSE History series

The Oxford AQA GCSE History series has been specially written by an expert team of teachers and historians with examining experience to match each part of your AQA course. The chapters which follow are laid out according to the content of the AQA specification. Written in an interesting and engaging style, each of the eye-catching double-pages is clearly organised to provide you with a logical route through the historical content.

There is a lively mix of visual Sources and Interpretations to enhance and challenge your learning and understanding of the history. Extensive use of photographs, diagrams, cartoons, charts and maps allows you to practise using a variety of sources as evidence.

The Work activities and Practice Questions have been written to help you check your understanding of the content, develop your skills as a historian, and help you prepare not just for GCSE examinations, but for any future studies. You can develop your knowledge and practise examination skills further through the interactive activities, history skills animations, practice questions, revision checklists and more on Kerboodle*

**America 1920–1973: Opportunity and Inequality**

This book guides you through one of AQA’s Period studies, America 1920–1973: Opportunity and Inequality. Period studies are national in their focus, and this book focuses specifically on the development of America during a turbulent half century of change. This was a period when some Americans had the opportunity to reach new heights of prosperity while others struggled against poverty and inequality. You will also look at the impact of key individuals and groups who shaped change, and the ideas and beliefs that influenced them.

Understanding history requires not just knowledge, but also a good grasp of concepts such as causation, consequence and change. This book is designed to help you think historically, and features historical Interpretations. These interpretations will encourage you to reflect on the different ways in which the past may be seen by historians.

We hope you’ll enjoy your study of America —

*Jon Clarke
Series Consultant
Aaron Wilkes
Series Editor

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**Key Words**

The important phrases and terms are highlighted and defined in the glossary. Learn what they mean — and how to spell and use them correctly.

**Timeline**

A short list of dates identifying key events to help you understand chronological developments.

**Key Biography**

Details of a key person to help you understand the individuals who have helped shape history.

**Objectives**

Written for the new AQA specification, the features in this book include:

**Work**

The activities and questions aim to develop your knowledge, understanding and key history skills. They are designed to be progressive in terms of difficulty, and to get you to think about the topic, become familiar with the history, and apply what you have learned.

**Sources**

Introduce you to material that is primary or contemporary to the period, and Interpretations provide you with different people’s perspectives on the past.

**Practice Question**

These are focused questions to help you practise your history skills, including evaluating sources or interpretations, and essay writing. They give you an idea of the types of questions you might get in an examination.

**Study Tip**

These are hints to highlight key parts of Practice Questions and will help you answer the questions.

**Fact**

Fascinating references, facts or anecdotes that will make you think and add to your knowledge and understanding.

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*Kerboodle is not approved by AQA.
This book focuses on the development of America during one of the most turbulent periods of change in its history. It will explore an age of extremes, when some Americans lived the ‘American Dream’ and reached new heights of wealth and happiness, while others struggled with the nightmare of poverty, intolerance and discrimination. This book aims to examine all aspects of life in America between 1920 and 1973 – political, economic, social and cultural – as well as assessing the role of key individuals and groups in shaping change.

Timeline

America 1920–1973: Opportunity and Inequality

May 1921
A limit is set on the number of immigrants allowed into America

January 1920
Prohibition is introduced

August 1927
Sacco and Vanzetti are executed

October 1927
The first ever ‘talking film’ is released – The Jazz Singer

November 1924
The Ford Motor Company sells its 10 millionth Model T

October 1929
The US stock market on Wall Street, New York ‘crashes’, kickstarting the Depression

December 1932
Democratic Franklin D Roosevelt (FDR) defeats President Hoover in the presidential election

March 1933
FDR’s New Deal begins

December 1933
Prohibition ends

April 1945
President Roosevelt dies suddenly. Vice-President Harry S Truman succeeds him

November 1945
The US drops two nuclear bombs on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, ending the Second World War

October 1941
Pearl Harbor is attacked by Japanese forces; the US declares war on Japan, officially entering the Second World War

December 1941

November 1952
General Dwight D Eisenhower becomes the new US president

December 1955
Rosa Parks refuses to give up her seat on the bus to a white man

November 1954
Racial segregation in schools is declared illegal by the US Supreme Court in the ‘Brown v the Board of Education of Topeka’ case

August 1955
North Vietnamese boats attack two US warships, sparking an escalation of the conflict in Vietnam

August 1964

January 1963
President John F Kennedy is assassinated; he is succeeded by Lyndon B Johnson

June 1964
The Civil Rights Act is passed, banning discrimination in jobs, voting and housing

August 1963
A civil rights march to Washington DC sees Martin Luther King deliver his famous ‘I have a dream’ speech

November 1963

January 1973
The US Supreme Court rules in ‘Roe v Wade’ case that women have a right to an abortion

1920
1930
1940
1950
1960
1970
1973
What was the feminist movement?

Look at Source A. Such adverts appeared in the press and on billboards. A woman's role was seen as that of housewife and mother. However, growing numbers of women in the late 1950s and 1960s began to reject these views and a feminist movement developed to fight this attitude and work for more equal rights. How successful was this movement?

Objectives

- Define the term ‘feminist movement’.
- Explore the growth of the feminist movement.
- Assess the impact of the feminist movement.

Unequal rights

In 1960, President Kennedy (under pressure from Eleanor Roosevelt, wife of the late FDR) set up the Status Commission to report on women in the workplace. In 1963, it reported that:

- Women earned around 60 per cent less than men for the same job.
- 95 per cent of managers were men – the majority of work for women was part-time and with limited responsibility.
- Only 4 per cent of lawyers and 7 per cent of doctors were women.
- In some jobs (such as cabin crew on aeroplanes) women could legally be dismissed if they married.

The low status of women in the workplace shocked many people. In the same year a book, The Feminine Mystique by Betty Friedan, explained that women should have equal rights with men and that women should be able to pursue a fulfilling career. She wrote about the hundreds of female college students she had spoken to who felt depressed and undervalued because they had achieved excellent qualifications in school but had married and had children instead of developing their career. The book became a best-seller. In June 1963, Congress passed the Equal Pay Act, making it law that women and men receive equal pay for the same job.

The Impact of the Second World War

More and more women started to work during the Second World War – around 6 million worked in factories, for example. Being able to earn their own money (rather than having to rely on a husband) often gave them a new sense of independence. Many were unwilling to give this up after the war and gradually more and more women went out to work. By 1960, women made up around half the workforce.

The feminist movement

The black Civil Rights Movement led many people to believe that other rights, including women's rights, could be addressed. The Equal Pay Act was followed, in 1964, by the Civil Rights Act that banned discrimination in employment on the basis of race and sex. However, many women felt that there was still widespread discrimination against women, including unequal pay. In 1966, Friedan and others established the National Organization for Women (NOW) to demand complete equal rights for women in US law and a woman's right to make her own decisions with regards to reproduction (at the time abortion was illegal in all US states). A number of other women's groups soon emerged, including the Women's Campaign Fund, the North American Indian Women's Association and the National Black Feminist Organization. Collectively, these groups (all with broadly similar aims) were known as the ‘women’s movement’ or the ‘feminist movement’.

Within a few years, NOW had around 40,000 members. They wrote to politicians, organised large demonstrations and took to court companies that failed to pay women the same wages as men. However, NOW members were mainly middle-aged and middle-class, and groups of younger, more extreme women used a different approach to highlight their cause. They became known as the Women’s Liberation Movement or ‘Women’s Lib’.

Fact

As well as removing and burning bras, some women refused to wear make-up. In 1968, over 400 ‘Women’s Libbers’ (as the protesters were known) disrupted the Miss World beauty contest in Atlantic City by setting up litter bins (called ‘freedom trashcans’) and throwing in things like bras, curlers, tweezers, high heels and scrubbing brushes.

Key Words

- feminist movement

Work

1. What was the ‘feminist movement’?
2. How did each of the following help create the feminist movement:
   a. the Second World War
   b. the work of key individuals
   c. the Civil Rights Movement?
3. Look at Source B.
   a. What is happening in this picture?
   b. Why did some women remove their bras?
4. a. Look at Source A. What point is the advert making about women?
   b. In what ways did the rights of women change from the 1950s to 1973?
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