

The Artios Home Companion Series

Unit 27: Toward a New Millennium

Teacher Overview

The last decade of the 20th century was marked with dizzying change for the United States. With the Soviet Union out of the picture, American diplomats sought to create a “new world order” based on democracy, free-market capitalism, and the Western lifestyle.

Challenges from abroad did not disappear with the end of the Cold War. The invasion of Kuwait by Saddam Hussein’s Iraq threatened a major percentage of the world’s oil reserves. In the largest American military operation since the Vietnam War, the United States led a multinational force in the liberation of Kuwait.

The collapse of the Cold War in Yugoslavia allowed centuries of hatred between rival ethnic groups to bubble to the surface. The term “ethnic cleansing” was applied to the process of removing an entire nationality out of a particular territory by threats, violence, or genocide. The United States contributed blue-helmet peacekeeping troops to Bosnia to end ethnic cleansing and committed air support to Kosovar Albanians who faced the same fate.

American troops were used to provide food to starving civilians in war-torn Somalia, to restore a democratically elected president to Haiti, and to bomb suspected terrorist bases in Sudan and Afghanistan.

Americans began to think of themselves as the peacekeepers of the world.

As both parties moved to the center to claim the largest numbers of American voters, bitter partisanship emerged. Voters punished the Republicans for economic woes by voting against George Bush in 1992. After two years of Bill Clinton, voters punished him by turning the House and the Senate over to the Republicans. A bitter partisan struggle emerged in 1998 over the sex scandals involving Clinton, leading to an impeachment vote largely along party lines. Although disgusted with Clinton’s behavior, voters punished overzealous Republicans by trimming their majority in Congress in 1998.

The 1990s marked a revolution in communications. Individual use of the Internet mushroomed from a handful of scientists and professors at the beginning of the decade to becoming widespread by the year 2000. Companies re-gearred their methods for online commerce. Electronic mail became a common new form of communication between relatives, friends, and colleagues. Satellite dish networks challenged cable companies for business in telecommunications.

The United States entered the 21st century as the leading users of Internet and satellite technology. These devices opened new windows of opportunity to spread American culture across the globe. Vietnamese in Hanoi were wearing Tommy Hilfiger shirts, Russians were downing Big Macs in Moscow, and Nike sneakers were being made in sweatshops around the world. American products and culture were being spread around faster than a computer virus.

The 20th century had been dubbed by many as “the American century.” Will the 21st century also be an American century? Or will the United States be eclipsed by new superpowers like China or the European Union? Only time will reveal the answers.



A minor glitch in computer programming, nicknamed "The Y2K Bug" threatened to crash computers as the calendar ticked from December 31, 1999 to January 1, 2000. In the end, the new millennium mostly came and went without so much as a virtual bug bite. Used with permission of the *Roanoke Times*, Robert Lunsford, artist.

Reading and Assignments

In this unit, students will:

- Complete five lessons in which they will learn about **the presidencies of George H.W. Bush, Bill Clinton, and the advancement toward the 21st century**, journaling and answering discussion questions as they read.
- Visit www.ArtiosHCS.com for additional resources.

Leading Ideas

Honesty is a character quality to be desired.

The Lord detests differing weights, and dishonest scales do not please Him.

— Proverbs 20:23

The Bible provides the ethics upon which to judge people and nations.

— Exodus 20:1-17

God is sovereign over the affairs of men.

From one man He made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and He marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands.

— Acts 17:26

Key People, Places, and Events

President Saddam Hussein
 General Norman Schwarzkopf
 President Bill Clinton
 First Lady Hillary Clinton
 Speaker Newt Gingrich
 Dayton Accord
 cyberspace

President George H.W. Bush
 General Colin Powell
 Pat Buchanan
 Defense of Marriage Act
 Contract with America
 Information Revolution
 World Wide Web

Operation Desert Shield
 Operation Desert Storm
 Ross Perot
 Welfare Reform Acts
 President Yasser Arafat
 Internet

Lesson One

History Overview and Assignments Operation Desert Storm

Challenges from abroad did not disappear with the end of the Cold War. The invasion of Kuwait by Saddam Hussein's Iraq threatened a major percentage of the world's oil reserves. In the largest American military operation since the Vietnam War, the United States led a multinational force in the liberation of Kuwait.



In the 1988 election, George Bush and his running mate Dan Quayle won 54% of the popular vote and 426 of the 538 electoral votes, soundly beating Democrat Michael Dukakis.

Key People, Places, and Events

President Saddam Hussein
President George H.W. Bush
Operation Desert Shield
Operation Desert Storm
General Norman Schwarzkopf
General Colin Powell

Reading and Assignments

- Review the discussion questions then read the article:
Operation Desert Storm.
- Narrate about today's reading using the appropriate notebook page. Be sure to answer the discussion questions and include key people, events, and dates within the narration.
- Visit www.ArtiosHCS.com for additional resources.

Discussion Questions

1. Why was the government of Kuwait so important to the United States and the rest of the world?
2. Describe Operation Desert Shield.
3. How did Iraq respond to Desert Shield?
4. How long did the ground war portion of Desert Shield last?
5. What was the challenge faced by the United States and its allies once the military objectives were complete?
6. How did they respond to that challenge?
7. What effect did television have on the Persian Gulf War?

U.S. History Online Textbook

source: ushistory.org

Operation Desert Storm

The first major foreign crisis for the United States after the end of the Cold War presented itself in August 1990. Saddam Hussein, the dictator of Iraq, ordered his army across the border into tiny Kuwait. This was no ordinary act of aggression. Iraq's army was well equipped. The United States had provided massive military aid to Iraq during their eight-year war with Iran, giving them the fourth largest army in the world.

Kuwait was a major supplier of oil to the United States. The Iraqi takeover also posed an immediate threat to neighboring Saudi Arabia, another major exporter of oil. If Saudi Arabia fell to Saddam, Iraq would control one-fifth of the world's oil supply. All eyes were on the White House, waiting for a response. President Bush, who had succeeded President Reagan, declared: "This will not stand."

In the last months of 1990, the United States participated in the defense of Saudi Arabia in a deployment known as Operation Desert Shield. Over 500,000 American troops were placed in Saudi Arabia in case of an Iraqi attack on the Saudis. The U.S. further sought multilateral support in the United Nations Security Council. Traditionally, Iraq was an ally of the Soviet Union, who held a veto power over any potential UN military action. Looking westward for support for their dramatic internal changes, the USSR did not block the American plan. The UN condemned Iraq and overwhelmingly passed a resolution sanctioning the use of military

force to remove Iraqi forces from Kuwait if they did not withdraw by January 15, 1991.

Bush, remembering the lessons of Vietnam, sought public support as well. Although there were scant opponents of the conflict, the vast majority of Americans and a narrow majority of the Congress supported the president's actions. When all the forces were in place, the United States issued an ultimatum to Saddam Hussein: leave Kuwait or face a full attack by the multinational force.

The line had been drawn in the sand.

January 15 came and went with no response from the Iraqis. The next night Desert Shield became Desert Storm, and the liberation of Kuwait was launched. Bombing sorties pummeled Iraq's military targets for the next several weeks. On many days there were over 2,500 such missions. Iraq responded by launching Scud missiles at American military barracks in Saudi Arabia and Israel. Attacking Israel was a stratagem to persuade all the neighboring Arab nations to join the Iraqi cause. After intense diplomatic pressure and negotiation, the Arab nations remained in opposition to Iraq.

On February 24, the ground war began. Although the bombing lasted for weeks, American ground troops declared Kuwait liberated just 100 hours after the ground attack was initiated. American foot soldiers moved through Kuwait and entered southern Iraq. This posed a dilemma for the United States. The military objectives were complete, but Saddam, the perpetrator of

the invasion of Kuwait, was still ruling Iraq from Baghdad. President Bush feared that the allies would not support the occupation of Baghdad. Concerns were raised that if Saddam's regime were toppled, the entire nation could disintegrate in a civil war. Soon Iraq agreed to terms for a ceasefire, and the conflict subsided.

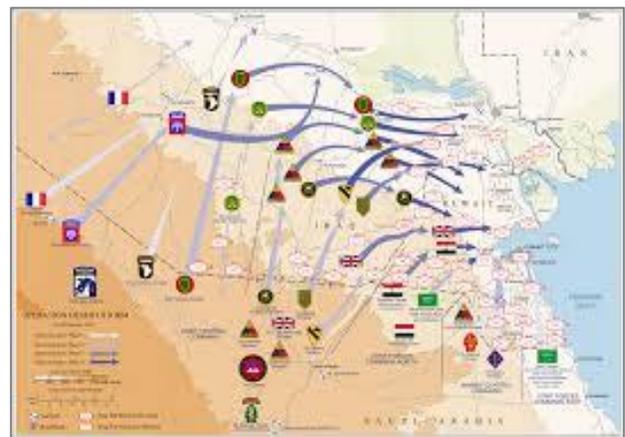


This map shows the initial air attacks of Desert Storm made by the allied forces early in the morning on January 17, 1991.

Iraq did not leave Kuwait untouched. Millions of dollars of valuables were plundered by the occupying troops. As Iraq retreated, they detonated explosives at many of Kuwait's oil wells. The disaster to the environment grew as Iraq dumped oil into the Persian Gulf. The costs were enormous, and casualty figures staggering. Although estimates range in the hundreds of thousands of Iraqi deaths, only 148 Americans were killed in the battle. This

was primarily because of the technological advances of the United States.

The Persian Gulf War was a television event. CNN broadcast round-the-clock coverage of unfolding events. Americans saw footage from cameras placed on smart bombs as they struck Iraqi targets. The stealth fighter jet, designed to avoid radar detection, was put into use for the first time. General Norman Schwarzkopf and General Colin Powell became household names as citizens watched their direction of the conflict.



Ground troop movements 24–28 February 1991 during Operation Desert Storm

The United States passed its first test of the post-Cold War world. Skillful diplomacy proved that the United Nations could be used as an instrument of force when necessary. Although Moscow did not contribute troops to the operation, they gave tacit approval for the attack. The potential for multinational cooperation was demonstrated. The largest American military operation since Vietnam was completed with smashing success. Most Americans felt confident in their military and technological edge once more. President Bush promptly declared that the “new world order” had begun.

Lesson Two

History Overview and Assignments A Baby Boomer in the White House

As both parties moved to the center to claim the largest numbers of American voters, bitter partisanship emerged between the Republicans and Democrats. Voters punished the Republicans for economic woes by voting against George Bush in 1992 and electing Bill Clinton. Clinton's victory marked an end to the domination of politics by the World War II generation. Americans who had come of age during the turbulent sixties and seventies now had a representative in the White House.



Despite allegations of smoking marijuana, having extramarital affairs, and dodging the draft, Bill Clinton came out of his 1992 presidential campaign victorious.

Reading and Assignments

- Review the discussion then read the article:
A Baby Boomer in the White House.
- Narrate about today's reading using the appropriate notebook page. Be sure to answer the discussion questions and include key people, events, and dates within the narration.
- Visit www.ArtiosHCS.com for additional resources.

Key People, Places, and Events

President George H.W. Bush
President Bill Clinton
Pat Buchanan
Ross Perot

Discussion Questions

1. What issue battered away at the popularity and voter support of President George H.W. Bush?
2. Describe some of the differences between President Bush and President Clinton.
3. What scandals became public during President Clinton's campaign for the presidency?

U.S. History Online Textbook

source: ushistory.org

A Baby Boomer in the White House

Popularity is fleeting.

President Bush enjoyed an approval rating in March 1991 of ninety-one percent for his handling of Operation Desert Storm. As the presidential race for 1992 began to unfold, many potential candidates were scared to challenge him and looked to 1996 as a better opportunity.

But the recession that battered the American economy would not go away. Nearly half of the nation's savings and loan banks failed, due partly to reckless investing coupled with the disappearance of inflation, and partly to the collapse of real estate values in the oil-producing states because of declining oil prices. Government underwriting of these bad loans required exorbitant payment, reaching to the level of \$3,000 per taxpayer. The public demanded answers, and suspicions were launched that political favors had kept the failing S&L's open far longer than they should have been.

As growth remained low and unemployment persisted, some of the shine began to wear off the president. No sitting president had been re-elected during an economic slump since James Monroe's second term in 1820, and the greatest blow to Bush's popularity was his agreement to a budget deal which increased taxes—which he had promised to avoid doing.

Enter Bill Clinton.

George Bush and Bill Clinton could hardly have been more different. Bush was a hero of World War II and had extensive Washington experience, including heading

the CIA, Ambassador to the United Nations, and eight years as vice president.

Clinton was born after World War II and did not fight in Vietnam, so he faced constant charges of dodging the draft. He had no experience on the federal level of government; he was simply the popular governor of Arkansas. Throughout the campaign, scandal after scandal hit Clinton. Charges of adultery were addressed on television. When accused of smoking marijuana in the 1960s, Clinton confessed—but insisted that he did not inhale. Rumors of a real estate scandal called Whitewater surfaced from time to time. Clinton was no “Teflon” candidate, as Ronald Reagan had been called. Everything stuck to Clinton, but none of it seemed to matter in the end.

His campaign adviser posted a sign over his desk that read simply: “It's the economy, stupid.” With a charismatic smile and a soothing voice, Clinton hammered away at the recession, promising new ideas and a break with twelve years of Republicans in the White House.

Additional problems beset President Bush in 1992. In April, the city of Los Angeles erupted into a five day looting and burning rampage that killed more than 50 people and claimed damages nearing \$1 billion. The riot was touched off by the acquittal of five Los Angeles police officers for the beating of Rodney King during his arrest in 1991. A hidden camera showed the officers repeatedly beating King with nightsticks while he lay on the ground.

Despite the video evidence, the jury found the police officers not guilty of using excessive force. The announcement of the verdict released years of pent-up rage many African-Americans felt about the ongoing problem of police brutality.

Bush faced a challenge for his own party's nomination by Patrick Buchanan, a journalist and former Nixon aide. Buchanan voiced concern about immigration, free trade, abortion, and appealed to the social conservatives in the Republican Party. Although the president defeated Buchanan handily in the primaries, he was forced to spend resources in the effort.



In the October, 1992 presidential debate at Michigan State University, Ross Perot charmed America with his no-nonsense wit: *"I love the fact that people will listen to a guy with a bad accent and a poor presentation manner talking about flip charts for thirty minutes because they want the details. See, all the folks up there at the top said the attention span of the American people is no more than five minutes, they won't watch it. They're thirsty for it!"*

The most successful third party candidate since 1912 emerged in the form of Ross Perot, a Texas billionaire. Perot brought the problem of the nation's growing national debt to the campaign. Millions watched his self-funded 30-minute primetime campaign commercials that attacked both Republicans and Democrats for reckless spending and immense deficits.



Bill Clinton was the first president since Richard Nixon to win the White House with less than fifty percent of the popular vote.

Election Day belonged to Bill Clinton. Although he garnered only forty-three percent of the popular vote, he beat President Bush handily in the electoral tally. Bush earned thirty-eight percent of the vote, and Perot reached an impressive nineteen percent of American voters. Much of Clinton's support came from baby boomers. Clinton's victory marked an end to the domination of politics by the World War II generation. Americans who had come of age during the turbulent sixties and seventies now had a representative in the White House.

Lesson Three

History Overview and Assignments Republicans vs. Democrats

Voters punished the Republicans for economic woes by voting against George Bush in 1992. After two years of Bill Clinton, voters punished him by turning the House and the Senate over to the Republicans. A bitter partisan struggle emerged in 1998 over the scandals involving Clinton, leading to an impeachment vote largely along party lines. Although disgusted with Clinton's behavior, voters punished overzealous Republicans by trimming their majority in Congress in 1998.



President Bill Clinton, First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton and their daughter Chelsea wave to watchers at a parade down Pennsylvania Avenue on Inauguration Day, January 20, 1997.

Reading and Assignments

- Review the discussion questions then read the article: *Republicans vs. Democrats*.
- Narrate about today's reading using the appropriate notebook page. Be sure to answer the discussion questions and include key people, events, and dates within the narration.
- Be sure to visit www.ArtiosHCS.com for additional resources.

Key People, Places, and Events

President Bill Clinton
First Lady Hillary Clinton
Defense of Marriage Act
Welfare Reform Acts
Speaker Newt Gingrich
Contract with America
President Yasser Arafat
Dayton Accord

Discussion Questions

1. What was one of the first major initiatives begun by Clinton after becoming president?
2. Describe the Republicans' "Contract with America."
3. How did Clinton raise his popularity ratings?
4. How did the House and Senate respond to President Clinton's lying under oath in the Lewinsky scandal?
5. Do you think the Senate did the right thing in its response?

Adapted for High School from the book:

U.S. History Online Textbook

source: ushistory.org

Republicans vs. Democrats

It seemed like Bill Clinton had everything going for him. He defeated an incumbent president and became the first Democrat to win the White House since Jimmy Carter defeated Gerald Ford. He had a Democratic House and a Democratic Senate to work with him.

One of the first major initiatives he began was health care reform. Many Americans were concerned about spiraling medical costs. Medicare did not cover prescription drugs and paid only a portion of health care costs. Over 20 million Americans had no health insurance at all. Clinton assembled a task force to study the problem and assigned his wife Hillary to head the committee. More openly liberal than her husband, Hillary became the most politically active first lady since Eleanor Roosevelt.

Eventually Clinton presented to Congress a plan to limit costs and insure

each American citizen. The idea was attractive to many Americans at first, but when the tremendous tax burden and extent of governmental control demanded by the proposed plan was made known, the public reconsidered. Despite a "friendly" Democratic Congress, the Clintons' proposal was defeated.



Hillary Clinton's stoic stand-by-her-man attitude during the mounting drama of the Clinton-Lewinsky scandal proved a factor in her husband's popular support throughout the ordeal.

When the midterm Congressional elections took place in 1994, the

Republicans, led by Representative Newt Gingrich, signed a “Contract with America.” The contract was simply a list of ten promises each signatory pledged to pursue if the Republicans won—items such as term limits and federal budget balancing requirements. The public responded with astonishing support, and Republicans gained control of both houses for the first time since 1954. When the votes were counted, Republicans outscored Democrats in House seats 230-205. Gingrich was rewarded for his efforts by being named Speaker of the House.

But Bill Clinton was a political survivor, highly skilled in shaping public opinion. When Republicans warned they would not pass any budget that did not address the deficit, they were portrayed as mean-spirited zealots who wanted to end funds for school lunches. It was a classic standoff—Clinton versus Gingrich.

When neither party would blink, a partial shutdown of government services took place. The American public often decides the victors of such battles. Polls showed strong support for the president, and Clinton slowly saw his approval ratings rise. To bring these ratings even further up, he shifted from leftist positions back toward the more centrist stance which had gotten him elected, signing such legislation as the Defense of Marriage and Welfare Reform acts. By the time he ran for a second term in 1996, the economy was booming and the huge budget deficit had been controlled. Voters rewarded Clinton by re-electing him over the Republican candidate, Senate Majority Leader Robert Dole.

In January 1998, a scandal that nearly ended Clinton’s presidency unfolded in the press. It was reported that Clinton engaged

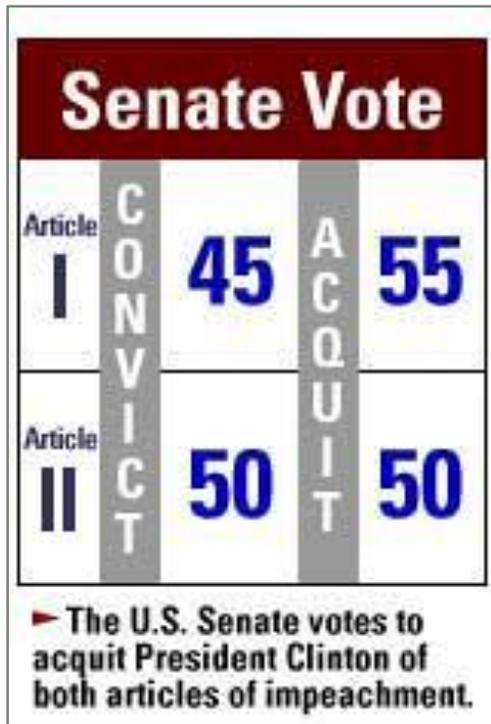
in a sexual relationship with a White House intern named Monica Lewinsky during his first term. Although Clinton originally denied the charges, overwhelming evidence was presented that Clinton and Lewinsky engaged in repeated sexual contact, even in the Oval Office.



Linda Tripp and Monica Lewinsky were the center targets of the media storm that raged during the events leading up to President Clinton’s impeachment.

Americans were outraged. An independent counsel named Kenneth Starr was appointed to gather evidence against Clinton. As the summer ended, Clinton admitted that many of the reports were true and that he was ashamed of his behavior. The House Judiciary Committee drew up articles of impeachment on four counts, including abuse of power and obstruction of justice. Across the nation, Americans debated whether or not Clinton’s actions constituted an impeachable offense.

The House decided that two articles of impeachment were in order, and in December 1998, Clinton joined Andrew Johnson as the only presidents to be impeached. In such proceedings, the Senate has the final word and acts as a judge and jury. Two-thirds of the senators must vote guilty to remove a president from office. Clinton survived this final vote to impeach, which unfolded along party lines.



During President Clinton’s impeachment trial, the Senate rejected Article I that dealt with whether the president perjured himself before the Grand Jury and split evenly on Article II, Clinton’s alleged obstruction of justice.

Clinton also stirred criticism in his handling of foreign affairs. After Somali warlords shot down U.S. helicopters aiding a U.N.-led peacekeeping effort and dragged the bodies of American soldiers through the streets, Clinton pulled out all American forces and placed restrictions on the deployment of troops to peacekeeping missions overseas. Terrorists around the world took note.

In Haiti, Clinton was successful in overturning a military overthrow of democratically elected president Jean-Bertrand Aristide, returning him to power in 1994. Little could be done, however, to address Haiti’s long history of poverty and

corruption, and Aristide was ousted in another coup in 2004.

During his second term, Clinton strove to find a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian Crisis by bringing Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) leader Yasser Arafat and Israeli leader Yitzhak Rabin to Washington to hammer out an agreement by which certain portions of Israeli-occupied territory was turned over to the Palestinians in exchange for guarantees of peace. The settlement brought some relief but proved largely unworkable, and Rabin was assassinated two years later.

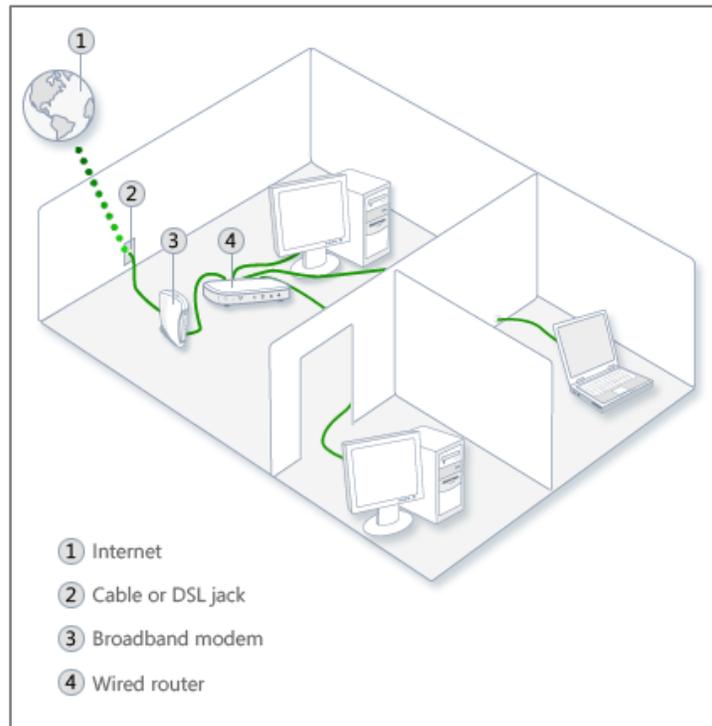
Clinton also initiated the Dayton Accords, which addressed Balkan ethnic conflicts by creating new political divisions and governmental frameworks in which power was distributed among Croats, Serbs, and Muslims. In response to continued ethnic clashes and brutal Serbian backlash, Clinton deployed American troops to assist U.N. and NATO forces in launching air strikes against the Yugoslavs to restore peace in Kosovo.

As the year 2000 approached, partisan politics were as toxic as ever. Republicans claimed that they fixed the economy and Clinton got the credit. Regardless of who gets the credit or blame, the 1990s were a decade of very steady economic growth. The crippling budget deficits of the 1980s were finally brought under control, and Americans enjoyed low inflation, low unemployment, low interest rates, and a booming stock market. Even the bad blood between the two parties could not change that.

Lesson Four

History Overview and Assignments Living in the Information Age

The 1990's marked a revolution in communications. Individual use of the Internet mushroomed from a handful of scientists and professors at the beginning of the decade to becoming widespread by the year 2000. Companies re-gearred their methods for online commerce. Electronic mail became a common new form of communications between relatives, friends, and colleagues. Satellite dish networks challenged cable companies for business in telecommunications.



An illustration from the days of modem-connectivity to the web

Reading and Assignments

- Read the article: *Living in the Information Age*.
- Narrate about today's reading using the appropriate notebook page. Be sure to include key people, events, and dates within the narration.
- Instead of answering discussion questions, prepare a bullet point outline describing the development of the information age based on today's reading.
- Be sure to visit www.ArtiosHCS.com for additional resources.

Key People, Places, and Events

Information Revolution

Internet

cyberspace

World Wide Web

Adapted for High School from the book:

U.S. History Online Textbook

source: ushistory.org

Living in the Information Age

Some called it the Information Revolution. Technological changes brought dramatic new options to Americans living in the 1990s. From the beginning of the decade until the end, new forms of entertainment, commerce, research, work, and communication became commonplace in the United States. The driving force behind much of this change was an innovation popularly known as the Internet.

Personal computers had become widespread by the end of the 1980s. Also available was the ability to connect these computers over local or even national networks. Through a device called a modem, individual users could link their computers to a wealth of information using conventional phone lines. What lay beyond the individual computer was a vast domain of information known as cyberspace.

The Internet was developed during the 1970s by the Department of Defense. In the case of an attack, military advisors suggested the advantage of being able to operate one computer from another terminal. In the early days, the Internet was used mainly by scientists to communicate with other scientists. The Internet remained under government control until 1984.

One early problem faced by Internet users was speed. Phone lines could only transmit information at a limited rate. The development of fiber-optic cables allowed for billions of bits of information to be received every minute. Companies like Intel developed faster microprocessors, so

personal computers could process the incoming signals at a more rapid rate.



Upon its release in 1983 the Apple “Lisa” computer — named for one of its developer’s daughters — was supposed to revolutionize personal computing. But interest in “Lisa” was minimal due to its nearly \$10,000 price tag and the introduction of the much more affordable “Macintosh” a year later.

In the early 1990s, the World Wide Web was developed, in large part, for commercial purposes. Corporations created home pages where they could place text and graphics to sell products. Soon airline tickets, hotel reservations, books, and even cars and homes could be purchased online. Colleges and universities posted research data on the Internet, so students could find valuable information without leaving their dormitories. Companies soon discovered that work could be done at home and submitted online, so a whole new class of telecommuters began to earn a living from home offices unshaven and wearing pajamas.

New forms of communication were

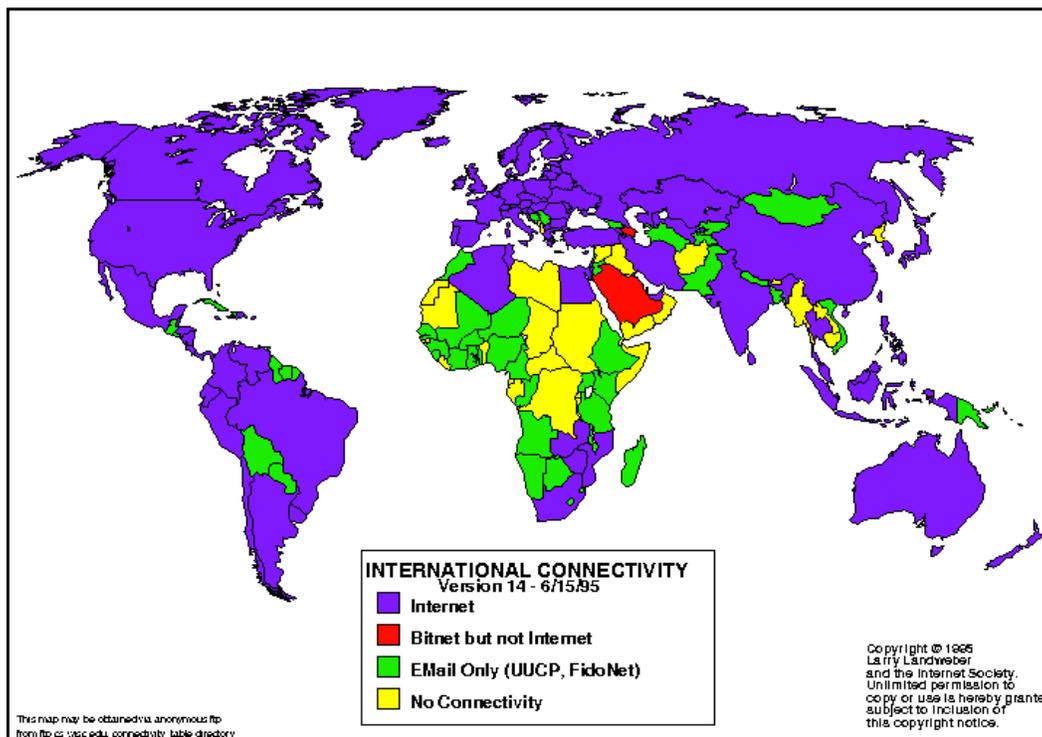
introduced. Electronic mail, or email, became a convenient way to send a message to associates or friends. Messages could be sent and received at the convenience of the individual. A letter that took several days to arrive in the past could now be read within minutes. Internet service providers like America Online and CompuServe set up electronic chat rooms. These were open areas of cyberspace where interested parties could join in a conversation with perfect strangers.

Advocates of the Internet cited its many advantages. The commercial possibilities were limitless. Convenience was greatly improved. Chat rooms and email allowed individuals to converse who may never have had the opportunity in the past. Educational opportunities were greatly enhanced because of the wealth of knowledge now

placed at the fingertips of any wired individual. “Surfing the net” became a pastime in and of itself.

Critics charged that the Internet created a technological divide that increased the gap between the haves and have-nots. Those who could not afford a computer or a monthly access fee were denied these possibilities. Many decried the impersonal nature of electronic communication compared to a telephone call or a handwritten letter. The unregulated nature of the Internet allowed pornography to be broadcast to millions of homes. Protecting children from these influences, or even from meeting violent predators, would prove to be difficult.

Regardless of its drawbacks, by the end of the 1990s, the world was fast becoming wired.



This map shows just how “wired” the world had become as of mid-1995

Lesson Five

History Overview and Assignments The End of “The American Century”

The 20th century had been dubbed by many as “The American century.” Will the 21st century also be an American century? Or will the United States be eclipsed by new superpowers like China or the European Union? Only time will reveal the answers.



Disneyland Paris was the object of intense resistance by French citizens who feared U.S. cultural influence would undermine French traditions.

Despite these concerns, the park still manages to draw over 10 million visitors each year.

Reading and Assignments

- Read the article: *The End of “The American Century”*.
- Narrate about today’s reading using the appropriate notebook page. Be sure to include key people, events, and dates within the narration.
- Instead of answering discussion questions, be prepared to actively discuss whether you believe the 21st century will also be known as an “American century.” Be prepared to substantiate your reasons.
- Be sure to visit www.ArtiosHCS.com for additional resources.

U.S. History Online Textbook

source: ushistory.org

The End of “The American Century”

In 1900, the United States was an emerging giant. In the midst of its second industrial revolution, America had just begun to acquire an overseas empire and international influence.

During the first half of the 20th century, the United States proved to be the decisive combatant in two major world wars, earning the right to determine a post war outcome. The Cold War that plagued the world in the last half of the 20th century proved in the end to be an American victory as well.

American scientists had developed nuclear technology, the computer, put human beings on the moon, and were at the vanguard of immunization techniques.

America’s postwar economy was the envy of the globe. A consumer-driven middle class built the highest standard of living in the world. American popular culture was everywhere. Levi’s jeans, Coca-Cola, McDonald’s, and Hollywood movies were enjoyed around the world.

When the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, the United States was the only remaining military superpower, and the world looked to Washington for leadership at combating aggression in the Persian Gulf, ending ethnic cleansing in places such as Kosovo, and halting nuclear proliferation.

The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) ended economic barriers with Canada and Mexico and promised even more prosperity.

Why then did so many Americans feel uneasiness and uncertainty as the 21st

century approached? Economic challenges were created by the prosperous Pacific Rim and a stronger European Union. Although legal barriers to equality were largely eliminated for American minority groups, real incomes stagnated for the bottom half of American wage earners. Women made advances toward equity, but still earned less than seventy-five cents for every dollar earned by American males. Many Americans felt they were working longer hours for less.

Many viewed America as a civilization in decline. The rise of the divorce rate led to many children being raised in broken homes. Gun violence was a major problem. School shootings became commonplace. When two students entered Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado in April 1999 with weapons, they murdered thirteen people before taking their own lives. Critics pointed to a media that glorified and promoted violence, permissive gun laws, failing schools, and neglectful parenting.

Environmentalists observed the ominous dwindling of rainforests and effects of pollution. Disasters such as the Exxon Valdez oil spill of 1989 and rising gasoline prices in 2000 illustrated America’s embarrassing dependency on fossil fuels and the ecological and economic havoc that resulted.

Many wonder—will the 21st century also be an “American Century”? Or will the United States be eclipsed by new superpowers like China or the European Union? Only time will reveal the answers.