

9th grade Pre-IB American History Honors

Summer Assignment

Background to Summer Reading Assignment

Although many people feel that history is simply lists of names, places, and dates, I believe that the discipline of history is *interpretation* of evidence. Documents and artifacts can only be understood through the lens of personal knowledge and experience. ***Every piece of evidence is capable of varying interpretations.*** The story of American history was generally told from one point of view throughout most of the existence of our country. Historians disagreed over some of the details, but the big picture was generally agreed upon.

This began to change in 1980 with the publication of *A People's History of the United States*. ***Professor Howard Zinn set out to tell the story of America from the point of view of the poor and the powerless.*** Beginning with the arrival of Columbus and continuing through America's long war in Vietnam, *A People's History* endeavors to give voice to those who were not making policies but were subject to them. ***Publication of this book created a storm of controversy in 1980, but Dr. Zinn's thesis is widely accepted today.*** His ideas are, in fact, fairly mainstream.

The Text: Howard Zinn, A People's History of the United States 1492-Present

- A copy is available online via: <http://www.historyisaweapon.com/zinnapeopleshistory.html>

The Assignment:

- Read the selected chapters of the text
- Respond to the questions for each chapter in complete sentences. (10 questions total)
- Make sure your responses are in order by chapter and stapled together.

Chapter 1: Columbus, the Indians, and Human Progress

1. Why did Zinn choose to write this book and take the perspective that he has?
2. According to Zinn, what is the sacrifice of human progress?

Chapter 2: Drawing the Color Line

1. How did slavery develop? How did racism develop along with it?
2. Why was it feared that whites would join slave revolts? How was this prevented?

Chapter 3: Persons of Mean and Vile Condition

1. Analyze the statement "It seems quite clear that class lines hardened through the colonial period; the distinction between rich and poor became sharper." (Describe the role and makeup of the elite, middle and lower classes and how the upper classes maintained control.)

Chapter 4: Tyranny is Tyranny

1. Explain the phrase “Tyranny is tyranny let it come from whom it may” by using the evidence that Zinn offers throughout the chapter.

Chapter 5: A Kind of Revolution

1. How did the various groups in colonial society respond to the movement for Revolution and how did the war add to the conflict between the rich and poor?

Chapter 6: The Intimately Oppressed

1. How were the lives of early American women different from the lives of women who came to the Americas from Europe?

Chapter 7: As Long as Grass Grows or Water Runs

1. In your opinion, was removal of Native Americans necessary for the progress of American civilization? In other words, did the end justify the means? Make sure you engage with the text to support your ideas.

Chapter 8: Chapter 9: Slavery Without Submission, Emancipation Without Freedom

1. How does Zinn argue that the Civil War was not really fought over the moral issue of slavery, but rather the economic issue of slavery?