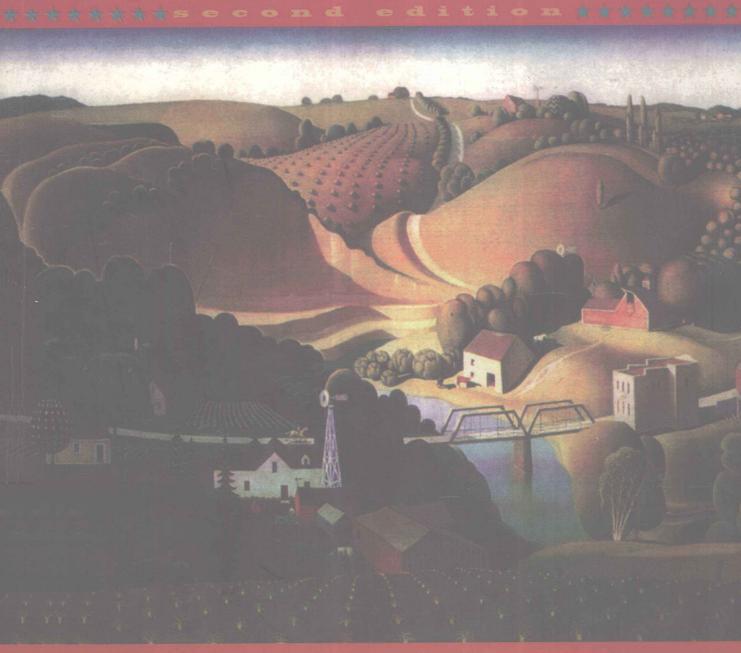
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American Views



pocuments in american History

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Introduction

American Views brings together diverse and wide-ranging texts that illustrate many facets of American life across a span of more than four centuries. We have tried to strike a balance between the need to represent important ideas and developments in public life and the equally important goal of illustrating the experiences of ordinary individuals. The result is a text that offers students exciting, varied, eye-opening views of the American past.

The documents illustrate four themes of central importance to American history. The first theme is **power and liberty**: the relationship between institutions of authority, on the one hand, and the desires and aspirations of ordinary individuals on the other. The second theme is **the human mosaic**. It depicts the great diversity of peoples of America and the enormous range of experiences, opportunities, challenges, and barriers they have encountered. The third theme, **making a living**, concentrates on the ways in which ordinary Americans have supported themselves and their families. The fourth theme focuses on **America in the world**: the role America has played in relation to the rest of the world throughout its history. Taken together, these themes provide students with a strong foundation in the central issues that shape our understanding of American history.

Each document is presented with a brief introduction that raises important interpretive questions or offers useful context. At the end of each chapter we have included a set of study questions designed to help students process and interpret what they have read; the questions can serve as preparation for class discussions and for exams. Assembling this text has been an exciting and rewarding process. We hope that reading it is an illuminating one.

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Discovery and First Settlement

1. Thomas More Describes Utopia

In Utopia, the famous English churchman and humanist Sir Thomas More (1478–1535) described an imaginary society more just, equal, and humane than any then in existence. The following passage justifies the Utopians' practice of colonizing, and conquering if necessary, other peoples in order to expand their own society. In both these themes—the wish to create ideal societies, and the ongoing impulse to expand and conquer—More anticipates enduring characteristics of American development. What do you find appealing in More's account? What would you change if you were describing your own "utopia"?

Of Sciences, Crafts, and Occupations

Husbandry [farming] is a Science common to them all in general, both men and women, wherein they are all expert and cunning. In this they are all instructed even from their youth: partly in their schools with traditions and precepts, and partly in the country near the city, brought up as it were in playing, not only beholding the use of it, but by occasion of exercising their bodies in practicing it also. Besides husbandry, which (as I said) is common to them all, every one of them learns one or another science, as his own proper craft. That is most commonly either clothworking in wool or flax, or masonry, or the smith's craft, or the carpenter's science. For there is no other occupation that any number to speak of do use there. For their garments, which throughout all the Island are of one fashion (saving that there is a difference between the man's garment and the woman's, between the married and the unmarried) and this one continues for evermore unchanged. seemly and comely to the eye, no let [hindrance] to the moving and wielding of the body,

also fit both for winter and summer: as for these garments (I say) every family makes their own. But of the other foresaid crafts every man learns one. And not only the men, but also the women. But the women, as the weaker sort, are put to easier crafts: as to work wool and flax. The more laborious sciences are committed to the men. For the most part every man is brought up in his father's craft. For most commonly they are naturally thereto bent and inclined. But if a man's mind stand to any other, he is by adoption put into a family of that occupation, which he does most fancy. Whom not only his father, but also the magistrates do diligently look to, that he is put to a discreet and an honest householder. And if any person, when he has learned one craft, desires to learn also another, he is likewise suffered and permitted.

When he has learned both, he occupies whichever he will: unless the city have more need of the one, than of the other. The chief and almost the only office of the Syphograuntes [magistrates] is, to see and take heed, that no man sits idle: but that everyone apply his own craft with earnest diligence. And yet for all that,

not to be wearied from early in the morning, to late in the evening, with continual work, like laboring and toiling beasts. For this is worse than the miserable and wretched condition of bondmen [slaves]. Which nevertheless is almost everywhere the life of workmen and artificers, except in Utopia. For they dividing the day and the night into 24 just hours, appoint and assign only six of those hours to work, before noon, upon which they go straight to dinner: and after dinner, when they have rested two hours, then they work 3 hours and upon that they go to supper. About eight o'clock in the evening (counting one o'clock as the first hour after noon) they go to bed: eight hours they give to sleep. All the void time, that is between the hours of work, sleep, and meat, that they are suffered to bestow, every man [does] as he likes best himself. Not to the intent that they should misspend this time in riot or slothfulness: but being then licensed from the labor of their own occupations, to bestow the time well and thriftily upon some other science, as shall please them. For it is a solemn custom there, to have lectures daily early in the morning, where only those who are chosen and appointed to learning are constrained [required] to be present. Nevertheless a great multitude of every sort of people, both men and women go to hear lectures, some one and some another, as every man's nature is inclined. Yet, this notwithstanding, if any man had rather bestow this time upon his own occupation (as it happens in many, whose minds rise not in the contemplation of any liberal science) he is not letted [hindered], nor prohibited, but is also praised and commended, as profitable to the commonwealth. After supper they bestow one hour in play: in summer in their gardens: in winter in their common halls: where they dine and sup. There they exercise themselves in music, or else in honest and wholesome communication. . . .

But if the multitude throughout the whole Island pass and exceed the due number, then they choose out of every city certain citizens, and build up a town under their own laws in the next land where the inhabitants have much waste and unoccupied ground, receiving also of the same country people to them, if they will join and dwell with them. They thus joining and dwelling together do easily agree in one fashion of living, and that to the great wealth of both the peoples. For they so bring the matter about by their laws, that the ground which before was neither good nor profitable for the one nor for the other, is now sufficient and fruitful enough for them both. But if the inhabitants of that land will not dwell with them to be ordered by their laws, then they drive them out of those bounds which they have limited, and appointed out for themselves. And if they resist and rebel, then they make war against them. For they count this the most just cause of war, when any people hold a piece of ground void and vacant to no good nor profitable use, keeping other[s] from the use and possession of it, which notwithstanding by the law of nature ought thereof to be nourished and relieved

2. Bartolomé de las Casas' Brief Account of the Destruction of the Indies, 1542

Las Casas (1474–1566) was a Dominican friar and, for many years, an outspoken critic of Spanish conquerors in the Americas. The following passage describes in vivid detail the brutalities he witnessed. His powerful accounts gave rise to the view of the Spanish conquest known as the "Black Legend": the view that Spanish colonizers were uniquely violent and exploitative in their relations with native peoples. Some English writers contrasted this negative image of Spanish colonization with the more favorable hope that English colonies might establish "gentle Christian government" among American natives.

Short Report of the Destruction of the Indies

The Indies were discovered in the year fourteen hundred and ninety-two. The year following, Spanish-Christians went to inhabit them, so that it is since forty-nine years that numbers of Spaniards have gone there: and the first land, that they invaded to inhabit, was the large and most delightful Isle of Hispaniola, which has a circumference of six hundred leagues.

- 2. There are numberless other islands, and very large ones, all around on every side, that were all—and we have seen it—as inhabited and full of their native Indian peoples as any country in the world.
- 3. Of the continent, the nearest part of which is more than two hundred and fifty leagues distant from this Island, more than ten thousand leagues of maritime coast have been discovered, and more is discovered every day; all that has been discovered up to the year forty-nine is full of people, like a hive of bees, so that it seems as

though God had placed all, or the greater part of the entire human race in these countries.

- 4. God has created all these numberless people to be quite the simplest, without malice or duplicity, most obedient, most faithful to their natural Lords, and to the Christians, whom they serve; the most humble, most patient, most peaceful, and calm, without strife nor tumults; not wrangling, nor querulous, as free from uproar, hate and desire of revenge, as any in the world.
- 5. They are likewise the most delicate people, weak and of feeble constitution, and less than any other can they bear fatigue, and they very easily die of whatsoever infirmity; so much so, that not even the sons of our Princes and of nobles, brought up in royal and gentle life, are more delicate than they; although there are among them such as are of the peasant class. They are also a very poor people, who of worldly goods possess little, nor wish to possess: and they are therefore neither proud, nor ambitious, nor avaricious.

- 6. Their food is so poor, that it would seem that of the Holy Fathers in the desert was not scantier nor less pleasing. Their way of dressing is usually to go naked, covering the private parts; and at most they cover themselves with a cotton cover, which would be about equal to one and a half or two ells square of cloth. Their beds are of matting, and they mostly sleep in certain things like hanging nets, called in the language of Hispaniola hamacas.
- 7. They are likewise of a clean, unspoiled, and vivacious intellect, very capable, and receptive to every good doctrine; most prompt to accept our Holy Catholic Faith, to be endowed with virtuous customs; and they have as little difficulty with such things as any people created by God in the world.
- 8. Once they have begun to learn of matters pertaining to faith, they are so importunate to know them, and in frequenting the sacraments and divine service of the Church, that to tell the truth, the clergy have need be endowed of God with the gift of pre-eminent patience to bear with them: and finally, I have heard many lay Spaniards frequently say many years ago, (unable to deny the goodness of those they saw) certainly those people were the most blessed of the earth, had they only knowledge of God.
- 9. Among these gentle sheep, gifted by their Maker with the above qualities, the Spaniards entered as soon as they knew them, like wolves, tigers, and lions which had been starving for many days, and since forty years they have done nothing else; nor do they otherwise at the present day, than outrage, slay, afflict, torment, and destroy them with strange and new, and divers kinds of cruelty, never before seen, nor heard of, nor read of, of which some few will be told below: to such extremes has this gone that, whereas there were more than three million souls, whom we saw in Hispaniola, there are to-day, not two hundred of the native population left.

- 10. The island of Cuba is almost as long as the distance from Valladolid to Rome; it is now almost entirely deserted. The islands of San Juan [Porto Rico], and Jamaica, very large and happy and pleasing islands, are both desolate. The Lucaya Isles lie near Hispaniola and Cuba to the north and number more than sixty, including those that are called the Giants, and other large and small Islands; the poorest of these, which is more fertile, and pleasing than the King's garden in Seville, is the healthiest country in the world, and contained more than five hundred thousand souls, but to-day there remains not even a single creature. All were killed in transporting them, to Hispaniola, because it was seen that the native population there was disappearing.
- 11. A ship went three years later to look for the people that had been left after the gathering in, because a good Christian was moved by compassion to convert and win those that were found to Christ; only eleven persons, whom I saw, were found.
- 12. More than thirty other islands, about the Isle of San Juan, are destroyed and depopulated, for the same reason. All these islands cover more than two thousand leagues of land, entirely depopulated and deserted.
- 13. We are assured that our Spaniards, with their cruelty and execrable works, have depopulated and made desolate the great continent, and that more than ten Kingdoms, larger than all Spain, counting Aragon and Portugal, and twice as much territory as from Seville, to Jerusalem (which is more than two thousand leagues), although formerly full of people, are now deserted.
- 14. We give as a real and true reckoning, that in the said forty years, more than twelve million persons, men, and women, and children, have perished unjustly and through tyranny, by the infernal deeds and tyranny of the Christians;

and I truly believe, nor think I am deceived, that it is more than fifteen.

15. Two ordinary and principal methods have the self-styled Christians, who have gone there, employed in extirpating these miserable nations and removing them from the face of the earth. The one, by unjust, cruel and tyrannous wars. The other, by slaying all those, who might aspire to, or sigh for, or think of liberty, or to escape from the torments that they suffer, such as all the native Lords, and adult men; for generally, they leave none alive in the wars, except the young men and the women, whom they oppress with the hardest, most horrible, and roughest servitude, to which either man or beast, can ever be put. To these two ways of infernal tyranny, all the many and diverse other ways, which are numberless, of exterminating these people, are reduced, resolved, or sub-ordered according to kind.

16. The reason why the Christians have killed and destroyed such infinite numbers of souls, is solely because they have made gold their ultimate aim, seeking to load themselves with riches in the shortest time and to mount by high steps, disproportioned to their condition: namely by their insatiable avarice and ambition, the greatest, that could be on the earth. These lands, being so happy and so rich, and the people so humble, so patient, and so easily subjugated, they have had no more respect, nor consideration nor have they taken more account of them (I speak with truth of what I have seen during all the aforementioned time) than,-I will not say of animals, for would to God they had considered and treated them as animals,—but as even less than the dung in the streets.

17. In this way have they cared for their lives—and for their souls: and therefore, all the millions above mentioned have died without faith, and without sacraments. And it is a publicly known truth, admitted, and confessed by all,

even by the tyrants and homicides themselves, that the Indians throughout the Indies never did any harm to the Christians: they even esteemed them as coming from heaven, until they and their neighbours had suffered the same many evils thefts, deaths, violence and visitations at their hands.

Of Hispaniola

In the island of Hispaniola—which was the first, as we have said, to be invaded by the Christians—the immense massacres and destruction of these people began. It was the first to be destroyed and made into a desert. The Christians began by taking the women and children, to use and to abuse them, and to eat of the substance of their toil and labour, instead of contenting themselves with what the Indians gave them spontaneously, according to the means of each. Such stores are always small, because they keep no more than they ordinarily need, which they acquire with little labour; but what is enough for three households, of ten persons each, for a month, a Christian eats and destroys in one day. From their using force, violence and other kinds of vexations, the Indians began to perceive that these men could not have come from heaven.

- 2. Some hid their provisions, others, their wives and children: others fled to the mountains to escape from people of such harsh and terrible intercourse. The Christians gave them blows in the face, beatings and cudgellings, even laying hands on the lords of the land. They reached such recklessness and effrontery, that a Christian captain violated the lawful wife of the chief king and lord of all the island.
- 3. After this deed, the Indians consulted to devise means of driving the Christians from their country. They took up their weapons, which are poor enough and little fitted for attack, being of little force and not even good for

defence; For this reason, all their wars are little more than games with sticks, such as children play in our countries.

- 4. The Christians, with their horses and swords and lances, began to slaughter and practice strange cruelty among them. They penetrated into the country and spared neither children nor the aged, nor pregnant women, nor those in child labour, all of whom they ran through the body and lacerated, as though they were assaulting so many lambs herded in their sheepfold.
- 5. They made bets as to who would slit a man in two or cut off his head at one blow: or they opened up his bowels. They tore the babes from their mothers' breast by the feet, and dashed their heads against the rocks. Others they seized by the shoulders and threw to the rivers, laughing and joking, and when they fell into the water they exclaimed: "boil body of so and so!" They spitted the bodies of other babes, together with their mothers and all who were before them, on their swords.
- 6. They made a gallows just high enough for the feet to nearly touch the ground, and by thirteens, in honour and reverence of our Redeemer and the twelve Apostles, they put wood underneath and, with fire, they burned the Indians alive.
- 7. They wrapped the bodies of others entirely in dry straw, binding them in it and setting fire to it; and so they burned them. They cut off the hands of all they wished to take alive, made them carry them fastened on to them, and said: "Go and carry letters": that is; take the news to those who have fled to the mountains.

- 8. They generally killed the lords and nobles in the following way. They made wooden gridirons of stakes, bound them upon them, and made a slow fire beneath: thus the victims gave up the spirit by degrees, emitting cries of despair in their torture.
- 9. I once saw that they had four or five of the chief lords stretched on the gridirons to burn them, and I think also there were two or three pairs of gridirons, where they were burning others; and because they cried aloud and annoyed the captain or prevented him sleeping, he commanded that they should strangle them: the officer who was burning them was worse than hangman and did not wish to suffocate them, but with his own hands he gagged them, so that they should not make themselves heard, and he stirred up the fire until they roasted slowly, according to his pleasure. I know his name, and knew also his relations in Seville. I saw all the above things and numberless others.
- 10. And because all the people who could flee, hid among the mountains and climbed the crags to escape from men so deprived of humanity, so wicked, such wild beasts, exterminators and capital enemies of all the human race, the Spaniards taught and trained the fiercest boarhounds to tear an Indian to pieces as soon as they saw him, so that they more willingly attacked and ate one, than if he had been a boar. These hounds made great havoc and slaughter.
- 11. And because sometimes, though rarely, the Indians killed a few Christians for just cause, they made a law among themselves, that for one Christian whom the Indians killed, the Christians should kill a hundred Indians.

3. Richard Hakluyt Encourages English Colonization

Richard Hakluyt the younger (1552?–1616) was an active and influential promoter of English overseas colonization during the reign of Queen Elizabeth. He published many accounts of overseas exploration and settlement that helped his fellow Englishmen to imagine the possibilities of overseas dominion. In this excerpt Hakluyt considers the benefits an American colony might bring to the English realm. His argument for colonization brings together a complex mix of economic, political, and religious considerations. How did the Spanish example of colonization influence Hakluyt's expectations?

A brief Collection of certain reasons to induce her Majesty and the state to take in hand the western voyage and the planting there.

- 1. The soil yields and may be made to yield all the several commodities of Europe, and of all kingdoms, dominions, and Territories that England trades with, that by trade and merchandise comes into this Realm.
- 2. The passage there and home is neither too long nor too short, but easy and to be made twice in the year.
- 3. The passage cuts not near the trade of any Prince, nor near any of their countries or Territories and is a safe passage, and not easy to be annoyed by [any] Prince or potentate whatsoever.
- 4. The passage is to be performed at all times of the year. . . .
- 5. And where England now for certain hundred years last past by the peculiar commodity of wools, and of later years by clothing of the

same, has raised itself from meaner [poorer] state to greater wealth and much higher honor, might, and power than before, to the equalling of the princes of the same to the greatest potentates of this part of the world, It comes now to pass that by the great endeavor of the increase of the trade of wools in Spain and in the west Indies now daily more and more multiplying, That the wools of England and the cloth made of the same, will become base [cheap], and every day more base than other, which prudently weighed, it behooves this Realm if it means not to return to former old meanness and baseness, but to stand in present and late former honor glory and force, and not negligently and sleepingly to slide into beggary, to foresee and to plant at Norumbega [New England] or some like place. . . .

6. . . . How easy a matter may it be to this Realm swarming at this day with valiant youths rusting and hurtful by lack of employment, and having good makers of cable and of all sorts of cordage, and the best and most cunning shipwrights of the world to be Lords of all those Seas, and to spoil Philip's [King Philip II of

Spain] Indian navy, and to deprive him of yearly passage of his Treasure into Europe, and consequently to abate the pride of Spain and of the supporter of the great Antichrist of Rome, and to pull him down in equality to his neighbor princes, and consequently to cut off the common mischiefs that come to all Europe by the peculiar abundance of his Indian treasure, and this without difficulty.

- 7. . . . [T]his Realm shall have by that means ships of great burden [capacity] and of great strength for the defense of this Realm . . . and withall great increase of perfect seamen. . . .
- 8. This new navy of mighty new strong ships so in trade to that Norumbega and to the coasts there, shall never be subject to arrest of any prince or potentate, as the navy of this Realm from time to time has been . . . but shall be always free from that bitter mischief without grief or hazard to the merchant, or to the state. . . .
- 9. The great mass of wealth of the realm embarked in the merchants' ships carried out in this new course, shall not lightly in so far distant a course from the coast of Europe be driven by winds and Tempests into ports of any foreign princes. . . .
- 10. No foreign commodity that comes into England comes without payment of custom once, twice, or thrice before it come[s] into the Realm, and so all foreign commodities become dearer to the subjects of this Realm, and by this course to Norumbega foreign princes' customs are avoided, and the foreign commodities cheaply purchased, they become cheap to the subjects of England and to the common benefit of the people, and to the saving of great Treasure in the Realm, whereas now the Realm becomes poor by the purchasing of foreign commodities in so great a mass at so excessive prices.
- 11. At the first traffic [trade] with the people of those parts, the subjects of this Realm for many

years shall change many cheap commodities of these parts, for things of high valour [value] there not esteemed, and this to the great enriching of the Realm, if common use fail not.

- 12. By the great plenty of those Regions the merchants and their factors [traders] shall lie there cheap, buy and repair their ships cheap, and shall return at pleasure without stay or restraint of foreign Prince . . . and so he shall be rich and not subject to many hazards, but shall be able to afford the commodities for cheap prices to all subjects of the Realm.
- 13. . . . [B]y thousands of things there to be done, infinite numbers of the english nation may be set on work to the unburdening of the Realm with many that now live chargeable to the state at home.
- 14. If the sea coast serve[s] for making of salt, and the Inland for wine, oils, oranges, lemons, figs, etc., and for making of iron, all which with much more is hoped, without sword drawn, we shall cut the comb of the French, of the Spanish, of the Portuguese, and of enemies, and of doubtful friends to the abating of their wealth and force, and to the greater saving of the wealth of the Realm.
- 15. . . . [W]e may out of those parts receive the mass of wrought wares that now we receive out of France, Flanders, Germany, etc. and so we may daunt the pride of some enemies of this Realm. . . .
- 16. We shall by planting there enlarge the glory of the gospel and from England plant sincere religion, and provide a safe and a sure place to receive people from all parts of the world that are forced to flee for the truth of God's word.
- 17. If frontier wars there chance to arise, and if thereupon we shall fortify, it will occasion the training up of our youth in the discipline of war, and make a number fit for the service of the