**Period 4**

**1800 - 1848**

**OVERVIEW**

Period 4 focuses on the history of the United States between 1800 and 1848. This division highlights the new nation’s move from an emerging postcolonial country to one that controlled most of a continent and had to redefine the meaning of both democracy and citizenship. This was an era of competing political, social, and economic “revolutions,” as dramatic changes in voting rights, the economy, and society led to a mass democracy and a growing, if contested, sense of a national identity.

The end of the Federalist era and the emergence of the Democratic-Republicans marked the beginning of the process of broadening participatory democracy. The four decades that followed the turn of the nineteenth-century saw the broadening of the franchise (the right to vote) from the privileged few to most white males. To be sure, many were still left without voting rights – women, American Indians, most African Americans (whether enslaved or not), and many newly arrived immigrants – but the move toward a more open definition of citizenship gained momentum.

The creation of modern political parties also began during this period as the United States moved from the federalist decade of the 1790s to the formation of the Democratic-Republicans and later the Democratic and Whig parties. As the voter base broadened and the nation expanded, questions arose about the proper role of the federal and state governments in the growing republic and the expanding economy. Some of these issues were decided by the U.S. Supreme Court; for example in *McCulloch v. Maryland*, the Supreme Court decided that state laws could be ruled unconstitutional. Other issues surfaced in the context of new economic conditions that saw the emergence of factories in the North and the development of slavery as a uniquely southern institution. The diverging economic structures of the North and South led to a sharpening of distinct regional identities. All of these changes left many Americans struggling to match democratic ideals with the harsher realities surrounding them, touching off a series of reform efforts – the Second Great Awakening, the movement for women’s rights, and abolition (the move to abolish slavery) – that ultimately served both to unite and divide the country.

During this period, the United States also embarked on unprecedented territorial and economic expansion. The boundaries of the United States doubled with the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, opening the prospect of landownership to millions and beginning the rapid westward movement that transformed the continent. Along with access to new lands came revolutionary changes in technology and economic specialization that brought both prosperity and increased focus on regional interests that had an impact on markets as well as politics. This rapid development resulted in significant changes in the lives of everyone regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic group. Many people were able to take advantage of new opportunities, while others, such as American Indians like the Cherokee and Iroquois nation, found themselves further marginalized in the name of “progress.”

Rapidly changing technology fueled the expansion of American commerce into the global market as factories expanded in the North and cotton cultivation came to dominate the southern economy. Efforts to organize the national economy, including proposals such as the American System, which sought to use tariff revenues to fund internal improvements, strengthened economic ties between the North and the newly opening West but further isolated the slaveholding South. Efforts to modernize transportation fostered regional division, as canals and roads tended to connect the Northeast to the West, while the South continued to rely on rivers for transportation and trade. The lives of people in all parts of the country were affected by the economic growth as the nature of the workplace changed.

Entry into the global economy also complicated U.S. foreign policy. Territorial expansion and growing markets required involvement with the rest of the world. At the same time, the United States sought to remain isolated from European political conflicts. Territorial expansion also raised questions about the role of slavery in the newly acquired areas. The existence and expansion of slavery emerged during this period as issues of overarching national concern. The slavery question was settled temporarily by political expediency, such as the Missouri Compromise, which divided the Louisiana Territory into free and slave areas, but there was no final resolution to the debate over slavery in this era.

**KEY TERMS**

Economic specialization Primacy of the judiciary

Human perfectibility Regional identity

Interchangeable parts Republicanism

Internal improvements Romantic beliefs

Market revolution & market economy Social hierarchy

Mass democracy Sovereignty

National culture Transcendentalism

Nativism

**GUIDING QUESTIONS**

1. What characteristics of national identity emerged in the first half of the nineteenth century?
2. List & describe four Marshall court cases that established the principle of federalism in the United States.
3. From the reading, how did rapidly changing technology fuel the expansion of American commerce into the global market?
4. From the reading, how did efforts to modernize transportation foster regional division?
5. In what ways did immigration change the social, economic, and political fabric of America?
6. From the reading, list three reform movements of the early nineteenth century and describe how they served to unite AND divide the country.
7. What are similarities and differences between the Jeffersonian Republicans and Jacksonian Democrats? Account for these similarities and differences.
8. What was the impact of western migration on American Indians? Give three specific examples of the impact of western migration on American Indians from Period 4 (1800 – 1848).
9. List and describe two specific examples of territorial expansion from Period 4 (1800 – 1848) that raised the question of slavery in the newly acquired areas.
10. Identify three turning points in the development of American foreign policy in Period 4 (1800 – 1848).