**Perceptions of Significance[[1]](#footnote-1)**

1. **United States History**
2. Top 40 things that come to mind

**1. Native Americans-** It is important for students to learn about lives of people on the North American continent before European settlement, and how Europeans treated them very poorly.

**2. Early exploration-** It is important for students to learn about the early explorers founding many of the places we know of today and the hardships they faced.

**3. Roanoke Island-** It is important to discuss the “Lost Colony” and discuss the failure of this early settlement.

**4. Jamestown-** It is America’s first permanent settlement and it is important to discuss that this settlement nearly failed like Roanoke Island. I have visited Jamestown on multiple occasions.

**5. Plymouth colony-** It is important to talk about the Puritans coming to America to escape religious persecution back home and talk about early settlement in New England.

**6. French and Indian War-** Important war to discuss in which France lost nearly all of its claims in North America and the cost of the war set the stage for the American Revolution.

**7. Boston Tea Party-** Act that brought the Colonies closer to war with Britain and led to martial law in Massachusetts.

**8. Revolutionary War-** America won its independence and it is important to discuss the hardships soldiers faced in the war. I have visited Valley Forge once and Yorktown a couple of times.

**9. Declaration of Independence-** A cornerstone document that is very important to discuss with students.

**10. Articles of Confederation-** Important to discuss the shortcomings of this document that made the Constitution necessary.

**11. U.S. Constitution-** Another cornerstone document that is very important to discuss with students.

**12. Bill of Rights-** Important to discuss these first ten amendments, and they mean in terms of protecting American citizens from government.

**13. Alien and Sedition Acts-** Important to discuss with students about how these acts by John Adams were some of the biggest infringements on liberty in American history.

**14. War of 1812-** An important and sometimes forgotten war that is important to discuss about British attempt to reassert its influence on the U.S.

**15. Missouri Compromise-** Helped ease tensions as well as maintain balance between the North and South for a few decades.

**16. Trail of Tears-** Important to discuss the hardships Native American groups like the Cherokee faced in this journey due to the actions of President Jackson and the Federal government that resulted in thousands of deaths.

**17. Mexican-American War-** The U.S. gained nearly half of Mexico’s territory from the war and many Civil War generals fought in this conflict.

**18. Compromise of 1850-** This Congressional act prevented the U.S. from going to Civil War in the 1850’s; however, most people realized the act would only keep the peace temporarily.

**19. Kansas-Nebraska Act-** This act that help make Kansas and Nebraska states let to Civil War in Kansas, and helped further North/South tensions.

**19. Dred Scott Decision-** Controversial court decision that technically made slavery legal nationwide and helped further North/South tensions.

**20. Harpers Ferry-** The actions of John Brown and his followers brought the nation much closer to Civil War.

**21. American Civil War-** It is important for students to learn about the causes of this conflict, the scale of its destruction, impact on soldiers and the home front, plus its impacts that are still being felt today.

**22. Reconstruction-** Sometimes overlooked, as Reconstruction helped reunite America; however, Reconstruction also helped promote de jure segregation in the South and de facto segregation in the North for another century.

**23. Jim Crow Laws-** Important for students to learn about the discriminatory impacts of these laws on Black Americans.

**24. Indian wars-** Important to discuss with students how the west was really won and the wars devastating impacts on Native Americans.

**25. Westward expansion-** Important to discuss individuals like Lewis and Clark, and the hardships early settlers faced out west.

**26. Industrial revolution-** Important to discuss how the industrial revolution transformed and how it impacted social life in the U.S.

**27. Plessy vs. Ferguson-** Important Supreme Court case decision that justified segregation under “separate but equal” for over another half century.

**28. Spanish American War-** Turning point in American history as the country became more involved in international affairs as a result of the war.

**29. World War I-** America did not become involved until later in the war, but helped turn the tide. There was also a massive effort on the home front and civil liberties were extremely curtailed.

**30. Great Depression-** It is important to discuss about the causes and effects of America’s worst economic downturn. It is also to note that the Depression did not come to an end until World War II.

**31. World War II-** It is very important to discuss America’s involvement in the war and the effort on the home front. World War II also represents the end of isolationism in America.

**32. Atomic bomb-** It is important to discuss the ramifications of this weapon, and its use as a deterrent.

**33. Cold War-** It is important to discuss America’s key role in the Cold War as the leader of NATO and the West. The Cold War also transformed America’s foreign policy objectives.

**34. Cuban Missile Crisis-** It is important to discuss the time period when America came closest to nuclear confrontation with the Soviet Union.

**35. Vietnam-** It is important to look at why the U.S. failed in completing its objectives. Vietnam also caused a lot of turmoil and social change on the home front. Vietnam also resulted in a change of U.S. Cold War strategy.

**36. Brown vs. Board of Education-** Important Supreme Court decision that set the groundwork for the end of legal segregation in the U.S.

**37. U.S. Civil Rights Movement-** It is very important to discuss the work of many individuals over many decades like Martin Luther King in ending segregation, and the backlash against it by whites.

**38. Watergate-** Important to discuss the impacts of incident and cover-up that resulted in Americans having little faith in their government.

**39. Korean War-** Important war to discuss, as Korea became an important test of America’s Cold War policy of containment.

**40. Post-Cold War America/Terrorism-** It is important to look at America in the post-cold war era and the threats the country faces from international terrorism. It is also important to look at technological developments like the internet.

1. 10 individuals that come to mind

**1. George Washington-** His leadership in the Revolution and Presidency help America become independent, as well remain a democracy.

**2. Thomas Jefferson-** His writing of the Declaration of Independence and his acquisition of the Louisiana Territory during his Presidency are important to discuss. Jefferson’s concept of States Rights is important to discuss as well.

**3. James Madison-** His leadership in writing the Constitution and his leadership during the War of 1812 are important to discuss as well.

**4. Andrew Jackson-** It is important to discuss “Old Hickory’s” Presidency, especially the increase of citizen participation in American democracy.

**5. Abraham Lincoln-** His leadership during the Civil War kept the country together and his actions helped end slavery in the U.S.

**6. Ulysses Grant-** General that helped the Union win the war, and he also helped reunite this country. He was also a two-term president that played a heavy hand in Reconstruction; however, his Presidency was also plagued by scandals.

**7. Robert E. Lee-** May be one of the greatest Generals in American if not world history. He helped develop West Point, build numerous military defenses, and played a major role in the Mexican War. He also helped Grant in reuniting America.

**8. Franklin Roosevelt-** His leadership during the Depression and World War II is important to discuss. The Federal government also greatly expanded under the FDR administration.

**9. Martin Luther King-** It is important to discuss the leadership of MLK during the Civil Rights Movement and his views on Vietnam.

**10. Ronald Reagan-** It is important to look the Reagan presidency and his impact on domestic policy, as well his involvement in peacefully winning the Cold War against the Soviets.

1. **World History**

A. Top 40 things that come to mind

**1. Mesopotamia-** It is important to look at the cradle of civilization and early legal documents like the Hammurabi Code.

**2. Israel-** Israel has been the birthplace of two of the world major religions of Christianity and Islam. Islam has also had a major influence in Israel.

**3. Phoenicia-** The contributions of this empire in terms of the Phoenician alphabet are very important to discuss.

**4. Ancient Greece-** The philosophical and democratic ideals of Greek civilization are important to discuss in terms of how they influence the World today.

**5. Persia-** It is important to look at the impact this empire had in the Ancient World, and the Persian Empire contributions to civilization.

**6. Carthage-** This empire at one time rivaled Rome and it is important to look at its contributions to civilization as well as its downfall.

**7. Roman Republic-** Many of the ideals of a republican form of government influence modern governments like the U.S. It is also important to look at what caused the downfall of the Roman Republic.

**8. Roman Empire-** It is important to look at the contributions of the Roman Empire to civilization and what caused the empire’s downfall.

**9. Early Christianity-** It is important to look at how Christianity developed, nearly went extinct, and then thrived in the Roman Empire.

**10. Early Islam-** It is important to look at the early development and spread of Islam. It may also be important to clear up misconceptions about Islam.

**11. Great Schism-** It is important to look the impacts upon history of the split of Christianity into Catholic and Eastern Orthodox sects.

**12. Black Death-** It is important to look at the causes and impacts on world history resulting from the Black Death. Also is it possible for a mass pandemic like this to happen today?

**13. Renaissance-** Important event in world history, that is important in terms of its contribution to art, science, and culture.

**14. Venice-** The contributions of Venice to business, commerce, shipbuilding, government, and culture are important to study.

**15. New World-** It is important to discuss the explorers and the discovery of a new hemisphere that represents a turning point in world history.

**16. Protestant Reformation-** The formation of Protestantism as a result of corruption in the Catholic Church and its impacts is important to study.

**17. Mongolian Empire-** The expansiveness of this empire and its impact on other cultures is important to discuss.

**18. China-** It is important to look at the inventions of older Chinese empires as well as the influence China has had in more modern history.

**19. American Revolution-** The Revolution pertains to World History as well because it was unique, part of a larger World War at the time, and it influenced the French Revolution as well.

**20. French Revolution-** Major turning point in European history, that eventually resulted in Napoleon coming to power.

**21. Napoleonic Wars-** War that a major impact upon the European continent and also affected the U.S.

**22. Ottoman Empire-** Important to look at the empires impact in the Middle East and especially the Balkans.

**23. Russian Empire-** Important to study the Czars and the empire impact upon the world history.

**24. American Civil War-** Important to discuss in World History as well because other nations influence the war, plus the siege warfare latter in the war was a precursor to trench warfare in World War I.

**25. Industrial Revolution-** The industrial revolution had worldwide impacts, and led to racial political views from individuals like Karl Marx.

**26. Rise of Germany-** It is important to look at the rise of Germany into a world power under Otto von Bismarck and its destabilizing effect on world peace.

**27. Rise of Japan-** It is important to look at Japan becoming a world power as a result of the Meji Restoration.

**28. European colonization-** European powers colonizing Africa and Asia had a major impact on the areas colonized and destabilized world peace.

**29. World War I-** The most destructive war in history up to that point, and led to the end of the Ottoman Empire.

**30. Russian Revolution-** The rise of Lenin and the Bolsheviks to power affected the course of World History for nearly the rest of the twentieth century.

**31. Treaty of Versailles-** The strict terms of this treaty imposed on Germany contributed to the rise of Hitler.

**32. Great Depression-** It has impacts worldwide and contributed to the rise of Hitler as well.

**33. World War II-** The war changed the course of history by destroying Germany and Japan. Britain and France power in world affairs was weakened as a result of the war, while the U.S. and the USSR became the world’s two superpowers. Also, it is important to look at the causes and devastating impacts of the Holocaust.

**34. Cold War-** Influence world affairs for nearly half a century, and created a bi-polar world.

**35. Israel-Palestine conflict-** One of the most violent areas of the world that has a threat to lead to a large regional conflict.

**36. Korean War-** A U.N. action that involved major world powers like the U.S. and China directly fighting each other.

**37. Marshall Plan-** Recovery package named after General George Marshall which helped Europe recover from World War II and saved countries from becoming Communist states.

**38. Collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe-** It is important to look at the collapse of Communism and fall of the Berlin Wall and why it is a turning point in history.

**39. Khmer Rouge-** It is important for students to understand that other mass murders have taken place in more recent times like the actions of the Khmer Rouge under Pol Pot in Cambodia.

**40. Colonies declaring independence-** It is important to look at the impacts of former European colonies declaring independence after World War II. Particular attention should be paid to India and Pakistan, as those two states have had very strained relations as a result of the British leaving South Asia.

B. 10 individuals that come to mind

**1. Hannibal-** One of the greatest generals in world history; however, he made some serious mistakes that modern military commanders can learn from today.

**2. Julius Caesar-** Military commander and politician that helped contribute to the fall of the Roman Republic and the rise of the Roman Empire.

**3. Augustus Caesar-** One of the most powerful and effective rulers in history. He helped stabilize and expand the Roman Empire.

**4. Jesus-** His teachings, death, and resurrection as believed by Christians transformed the world up to today.

**5. Constantine-** His conversion to Christianity and his movement of the capital of the Roman Empire to Constantinople changed world history.

**6. Alexander the Great-** Great military commander that helped spread Greek culture across the Mediterranean and the Middle East.

**7. Adolf Hitler-** Mass murderer that was able to brainwash an entire nation, and nearly conquer all of Europe.

**8. Joseph Stalin-** Another mass murderer that was able to gain complete control of the Soviet Communist Party and was one of the three important actors in forming the Post World War II world.

**9. Winston Churchill-** Provided Britain much needed leadership during World War II and was another important actor in forming the Post World War II world.

**10. Franklin Roosevelt-** Provided the leadership for the U.S. during World War II and was the final important actor in forming the Post World War II world.

1. **Government/Civics/Econ**

A. 30 things that come to mind

**1. Magna Carta-** Important document that weakened the power of the British monarchy and laid the foundations of representative government in Britain, the U.S., as well as other states centuries later.

**2. Athenian Direct Democracy-** It is important to study early democracies in Greece, as many later democracies including the U.S. have some basis off of Greek democracy.

**3. Roman Republic-** It is very important to study the Roman Republic because American government is based more off of the Roman Republic than Greece, because America is a Constitutional Republic.

**4. Monarchy-** It’s important to study this form of government, why it failed in many states, and why it is still in place in a few states today.

**5. Early American Colonial governments-** American government is based off of these Colonial governments.

**6. 1st and 2nd Continental Congress-** These important meetings set the stage for American independence and democracy.

**7. Declaration of Independence-** Similar rationale as U.S. History, as this document set the framework for representative government.

**8. Articles of Confederation-** Similar rationale as U.S. History, it is important to take a look at the strengths and weaknesses of this document.

**9. U.S. Constitution-** Similar rationale as U.S. History, as an effective study of U.S. Government or Civics cannot be done without studying the Constitution.

**10. Connecticut Compromise-** Important event that set up the bicameral legislature at the Federal level.

**11. Three-fifths Compromise-** It is important to discuss this compromise on how it helped prevent Civil War for nearly a century, but at the same time legally justified the institution of slavery.

**12. Federalists-** It is important to study what is a Federalist, and who would be considered a Federalist in modern times.

**13. Anti-Federalists-** Similar rationale to Federalists, it is important to study who they are and what they represent today.

**14. States’ Rights-** This is a very important concept to discuss, as this was a major cause of the Civil War and is still relevant today.

**15. Bill of Rights-** Similar rationales to U.S. History, as an effective study of U.S. Government cannot be done without studying the Bill of Rights.

**16. Executive Branch-** Important to study the powers and responsibilities of this branch of government. It’s also important to look at the power of Executive Branch agencies like the IRS, EPA, and Department of Defense.

**17. Legislative Branch-** Similar rationale to Executive Branch, it’s important to look at the powers and responsibilities of this branch.

**18. Judicial Branch-** Similar rationales to the other two branches of government, it is important to look at the power of the Judicial Branch in terms of ruling laws or other actions unconstitutional by the other two branches of government, states, corporations, or individuals.

**19. Communism-** Important to study this economic system and form of government, as well as why it has consistently failed over time.

**20. Capitalism-** Important to study this economic system in terms of its pros and cons, as well as why this economic system has been mostly successful over time.

**21. Opportunity Cost-** Important to discuss in an econ class, as any action you do there is an opportunity cost to it in terms of other activities you could have been doing. I learned about this in Econ 2005 class in Spring 2011.

**22. Supply and Demand-** Important basic economic concept to discuss in an Econ class, as well as a Government class. I learned more details about this concept in Econ 2005 in Spring 2011.

**23. Emancipation Proclamation-** Very important document in American history, that there are some serious misconceptions about.

**24. De jure segregation-** Important to discuss this type of segregation practiced in American government throughout most of its history.

**25. De facto segregation-** Important to discuss how this type of segregation had existed in American and other governments as well.

**26. Women’s suffrage-** Important to look at the impact of the right of women to vote on American government.

**27. Voting Rights Act-** It is important to look at the ramifications of this law, including the recent Supreme Court decision.

**28. Electoral College-** It is important for students to know what the Electoral College, and how it is an indirect form of electing our President/Vice-President.

**29. Political Parties-** It is important to study the history of Political Parties, how the work, and what they represent today.

**30. Citizen Participation-** It’s important to look at how citizen participation has evolved throughout American history, and in other areas of the world.

1. Ten individuals that come to mind

**1. Thomas Jefferson-** Similar rationale to U.S. History, as his writing of the Declaration and his concept of States Rights are important to discuss.

**2. James Madison-** Similar rationale to U.S. History, as his writing of the Constitution and Bill of Rights, as well as his changing views on Federalism are important to discuss.

**3. Patrick Henry-** Henry is well known for his “Give me liberty or give me death” speech and other Revolutionary War activity; however, he was also one of the strongest Anti-Federalists against ratification of the Constitution.

**4. Alexander Hamilton-** On the opposite end of the spectrum Hamilton was one of the biggest Federalists and strongest proponents of ratifying the Constitution.

**5. Karl Marx-** It is important to discuss Marx’s political and economic views as they have impacted billions of people.

**6. Andrew Jackson-** Similar rationale to U.S. History, as increased citizen participation during his presidency is important to discuss.

**7. Franklin Roosevelt-** Similar rationale to U.S. History, as the Executive Branch greatly expanded under him and he is also the only President to serve over two terms.

**8. Ronald Reagan-** Similar rationale to U.S. History, as Reagan worked during his Presidency to redefine the scale, scope, and size of government.

**9. Richard Nixon-** It is important to discuss his involvement in Watergate and the cover-up that resulted in low trust in Government.

**10. Abraham Lincoln-** Similar rationale to U.S. History, Lincoln may be one of the most powerful Presidents in U.S. History, like FDR. Depending on one’s opinion, Lincoln may have also violated the Constitution and infringed on civil liberties on multiple occasions during the Civil War.

1. With the exception of a few of these topics I do not know specifically where and how I learned about these events. For nearly all of these events I learned about them on TV, in class, and/or at museums in Virginia. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)