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AP United States History- Example Paper

AP Example Essay

Background Info

Title

Although the Spanish, French, and English all had major impacts on their respective settlements, the English had a substantial influence on what became the American colonies. From the early founding of Jamestown in 1607 until the calls for American independence in 1776, the people who settled in New England had a direct impact on the nation's future. American culture and values changed over the course of the next one-and-a-half centuries, leading to uniqueness only present in the New World. Spanning from religious groups to scientific thinkers, developments in New England led to independent viewpoints that differed from Great Britain's. Ultimately, this was a contributing factor for the American War of Independence in 1776. As Europeans began to come to the New World, they began to impact the fledgling nation's development and beliefs through the Puritans' high standards for worship and purity, Enlightenment thinkers' questioning of the world around them, and the Revivalists' shift in religious views and values.

Thesis

Separatist Puritans, who reached the New World in the early seventeenth century, left England in order to start their own communities in which they would not be persecuted for their beliefs. Arriving aboard the *Mayflower* in 1620, the Pilgrims signed the Mayflower Compact and established a government based on the consent of the people. Tying together Bible teachings and English Common Law, a direct democracy by way of frequent town meetings kept the community together as Puritans followed the New England Way. Furthermore, John Winthrop's

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“A Model of Christian Charity” sermon aboard the *Arabella* en route to what would become the Massachusetts Bay Colony highlighted Puritan beliefs. Describing the “City upon a Hill” as a potential utopia, Winthrop hoped to shame the Anglican Church into repentance of its Catholic abuses. People there worked hard and lived in moderation, exhibiting the “Protestant work ethic”. Family- the “little commonwealth”- was the basis of society as populations rapidly expanded. A strong sense of faith and community, most notably shown by the Elect’s difficult conversion experience, eventually led to strife with Native American tribes like the Wampanoag due to the establishment of praying towns as well as land disputes; one such instance was King Philip’s War. Puritan towns grew and an emphasis on education led to the founding of Harvard, William and Mary, and Yale for the purpose of educating clergy. Religion also led to conflicts among Europeans; Roger Williams, proponent of the separation between church and state, was exiled from the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Williams then bought land and founded the religiously tolerant Plymouth Plantation. Thomas Hooker, Puritan dissenter and founder of the Colony of Connecticut, was known for his advocacy of Christian suffrage. His colony’s “Fundamental Orders of Connecticut” is seen as possibly the first democratic constitution to establish a representative government.

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