

# OxfordAQA

# International GCSE

## History (9245)

### Scheme of work

### Life in the USA 1920 -1968

For teaching from September 2026 onwards  
For International GCSE exams in June 2028 onwards

# Contents

You can use the title links to jump directly to the different sections of this scheme of work  
(Use Ctrl and click to follow the link)

Section title	Page
<b>Introduction</b>	3
Assumed coverage and teaching hours	3
Assessment	3
Resources	4
<b>Part One: American People and ‘The Boom’ of the 1920s</b>	5
The ‘Boom’	5
Social and cultural developments	7
Divided society	8
Review	10
<b>Part 2: Bust – Americans’ experiences of the Depression and the New Deal, 1929-1945</b>	11
American society during the Depression	11
The New Deal	13
The impact of the Second World War	14
Review and assessment of Part 2	15
<b>Part 3: Post-war America, 1945-1968</b>	16
Post-war American society and economy (1)	16
Post-war American society and economy (2)	18
Civil Rights campaigns in the 1950s and 1960s	19
Review and assessment Part 3	21

# Introduction

This scheme of work is intended to help teachers plan and implement the teaching of Life in America, 1920-1968 option of the Oxford AQA International GCSE History (9245) specification. The purpose is to provide advice and guidance to teachers, not to prescribe and restrict their approach to the specification. There are obviously many other ways of organising the work, and there is absolutely no requirement to use this scheme. We hope the suggested activities will support your teaching of this topic.

The scheme focuses on life for the people of the United States during a turbulent period. It was a period of opportunity and inequality – when some Americans lived the ‘American Dream’ whilst others struggled with poverty, discrimination and prejudice. The Specification content is based on an unfolding narrative of key developments in America’s domestic history and allows students to explore the effect these developments had on people.

Students will study how people’s lives were affected by the political, social, economic and cultural aspects of the period and the role ideas played in influencing change. They will also look at the role of key individuals and groups in shaping change and the impact the developments had on people.

## Assumed coverage and teaching hours

This scheme of work assumes that the OxfordAQA International GCSE Sociology (9292) is taught as a two-year linear course, with a total of approximately 120–140 guided learning hours in total, in line with specification guidance. This equates to two hours of teaching per week over two academic years, although this may vary according to local timetabling arrangements and students’ prior experience of. As this particular optional topic equates to one quarter of the qualification, this scheme of work is designed to be taught in around 30-35 hours

Work will also need to be completed outside of lessons. The amount of independent study required will depend on curriculum time, the pace of delivery and the extent to which assessment practice and consolidation activities are incorporated into timetabled lessons.

## Assessment

Assessment points in the learning activity column indicate possible assessment opportunities. These could be short tests of about ten minutes (exam-style questions, short factual tests, source evaluation) or longer assessments (exam-style questions).

The assessment in Section B is based on a series of short and extended response questions.

- Question 1 tests AO1 and is worth 3 marks. It requires students to show their knowledge of a given issue.
- Question 2 tests AO1 and AO2 and is worth 6 marks. It requires students to explain one way in which a given issue developed, supporting their explanation with knowledge and understanding. It will focus on the 2<sup>nd</sup> order concept of cause/consequence or change.
- Question 3 tests AO1 and AO2 and is worth 9 marks. It requires students to explain two changes or two ways/ reasons why a given issue developed, supporting their explanation

with knowledge and understanding. It will focus on the 2<sup>nd</sup> order concept of cause/consequence or change.

- Question 4 tests AO1 and AO2 and is worth 12 marks. It requires students to construct an extended response with a line of reasoning. It requires students to explain a given cause/ consequence/ change and at least cause/ consequence/ change in the context of a broader development leading to a judgement that evaluates their relative importance. It will focus on the 2<sup>nd</sup> order concept of cause/consequence or change.

## Resources

Research exercises assume students have access to a textbook(s) and / or the internet. You can supplement textbook(s) by other sources.

OUP support this option with 'Life in the USA, 1920-1969', published in 2026 as part of the OxfordAQA International series and available in various formats.

A parallel product written for a similar AQA UK examination option about America contains supplementary material: 'America 1920-1973: Opportunity and Inequality'.

# Part One: American People and ‘The Boom’ of the 1920s

## The ‘Boom’

### Suggested timing

3 hours

### Specification content

**The ‘Boom’:** benefits; advertising and the consumer society; hire purchase; mass production, including Ford and the motor industry; inequalities of wealth; Republican government policies; stock market boom.

### Teaching guidance

- This study, by its nature, relates to the lives of people who lived and experienced events during the period in question. Recurring questions will relate to the problems they faced, how far the problems were dealt with and how far their lives were affected.
- At any early stage, students might consider different groups in society and compare their experiences, so building up a complex view of the past. These groups might include some or all the following – the list is not exhaustive: farmers, workers in industrial settings, professional people such as bankers, teachers etc, the unemployed, immigrants, women representing different socio-economic groups, African Americans. The lives of these groups can be tracked through each Part of the specification, taking their stories up to 1968.
- Here is an early opportunity to practice writing in response to ‘explain’ style questions: questions 2, 3 and 4. A common method to approach this is using the structure Point, Evidence, Explain, though this is by no means the only permissible approach.

### Possible teaching and learning activities

- Centres could organise their teaching around the enquiry question: how did mass production change the economy and people’s lives?
- Present students with contemporary advertisements that aimed to sell a selection of mass-produced goods (cars, radios, fridges etc.) to the public. Discuss the importance of Ford and the motor industry to the development of the ‘boom’ when compared to other factors such as hire purchase and Republican policies?
- Class discussion: what do these adverts suggest about the social changes mass production brought?
- Consumerism, hire purchase and advertising; to understand the impact mass production had, you may wish to give your students a brief overview of the reasons why there was a boom.
- To develop your students’ understanding of the Republican government’s policies

explore ideas and policies of:

- 'rugged individualism'
- laissez-faire
- the Tariff policy.
- Discuss terms such as economic and social factors when considering the Boom – were the opportunities presented in the 1920s more about one or the other?
- To develop your students' understanding that the 1920s was a decade of contrasts – full of opportunities for some and not for others. The focus should be on evaluating the impact the 'Boom' had on different groups in American society, particularly those groups who did not benefit from the 'Boom'.
- In groups, ask your students in small groups to research and prepare a presentation on the stock market boom – who benefited and what was the potential for disaster? Why did so few people think that a stock market crash might occur?
- Discuss the questions: 'how far was the 1920s really 'roaring'? What was the impact of the Boom on the lives of different groups of Americans? Ask them to study the positive and negative impact of the 'Boom' on different groups and to capture their findings and report back to the class.

# Social and cultural developments

## Suggested timing

2 hours

## Specification content

**Social and cultural developments:** entertainment, including cinema and jazz; the roles and status of women, including the continuation of traditional values and changing fashions; the women's rights movement and its impact, including the right to vote and the Sheppard-Towner Act.

## Teaching guidance

This is an opportunity to explore the social and cultural changes that took place during the 1920s, using the entertainment industry and status of women as case studies.

## Possible teaching and learning activities

- Centres could organise their teaching around the enquiry question: how did the entertainment industry change in the 1920s?
- In groups, ask your students to research and produce a profile of a movie star or jazz musician such as:
  - Louis Armstrong
  - Clara Bow
  - Gloria Swanson
  - Rudolph Valentino.
- Students can identify how the entertainment industry changed, using the profiles they have produced.
- In studying the roles and status of women, centres could organise their teaching around the enquiry question: how did life change for women during the 1920s?
- From a range of sources which depict what life was like for different groups of women in the 1920s, including flappers, ask your students to identify and explain what each source suggests life was like for women from different backgrounds.
- Students may write an answer to the question: why were changes in women's rights and laws such as the Sheppard-Towner Act important?

# Divided society

## Suggested timing

4 hours

## Specification content

**Divided society:** organised crime, prohibition and their impact on society; racial tensions, immigration controls, including the quota system of 1921 and the National Origins Act of 1924; the Jim Crow Laws and the Ku Klux Klan; the Red Scare, including the Palmer Raids and Sacco and Vanzetti; attempts to combat prejudice, including the NAACP and the UNIA.

## Teaching guidance

- The focus should be on how prohibition encouraged organised crime and the impact prohibition and organised crime had on American society. Develop your students' understanding of the reasons why prohibition was introduced.
- Students should consider how these elements contributed to the idea that America in the 1920s was a 'divided society'.
- Develop your students' understanding of how different groups in American society were treated. Explore the causes of racial tension and reasons for prejudice against immigrants and how these prejudices were expressed.
- Explore further how racial tension and the treatment of immigrants contributed to a 'divided society' in the 1920s.
- The emphasis should be on the reasons for the Red Scare and the influence of the Ku Klux Klan. How does the Red Scare and the Ku Klux Klan reflect a 'divided society' in the 1920s?

## Possible teaching and learning activities

- Centres could organise their teaching around the enquiry question: what impact did prohibition and organised crime have on American society?
- Students complete a table which includes information on the causes, effects, successes and failure of prohibition.
- Ask your students to research the life and 'work' of Al Capone and write a report that describes the impact he had on American society. What does a study of Al Capone tell your students about organised crime?
- Strategies such as card sorts or diamond 9s can help students consider what might be the 'main reason' in comparison to others, which is a key skill in coming to a judgement in the 12 mark Question 4 on the exam paper. In this case, ask students the question: what was the main reason for the introduction of Prohibition in the 1920s?
- Students produce a timeline to show the increasing restrictions of immigration laws. Ask students to identify why they think these laws were introduced.
- In groups, ask your students to prepare notes for a TV programme which is looking back at the injustice of the Sacco and Vanzetti trial.
- Students brainstorm possible reasons why there was a Red Scare. Write a report for the US Attorney General about the 'Palmer Raids'.
- Students produce a fact file on the Ku Klux Klan that covers membership profile, structure, growth and decline.

- Class debate: how far was American society divided in the 1920s? Was it both a tolerant and intolerant society.

# Review

## Suggested timing

1 hour

## Specification content

Review and assessment of Part 1: American People and 'The Boom' of the 1920s

## Assessment guidance

- This is the opportunity to develop your students' exam technique and to test their learning so far.
- You can use exam-style questions based on the content of Part 1.
- For second order concept questions, analyse students' effectiveness when writing Point/Evidence/Explanation paragraphs in answer to an 'explain' style question.

## Resources

Specimen papers and Activities sections of the OUP textbook.

# Part 2: Bust – Americans' experiences of the Depression and the New Deal

## American society during the Depression

### Suggested timing

3 hours

### Specification content

**American society during the Depression:** unemployment; impact on farmers and businessmen; Hoover's attempts to deal with the Depression and the reasons for his unpopularity; Roosevelt's election and contribution as President, including fireside chats; the 1933 banking crisis and Roosevelt's response.

### Teaching guidance

- The focus should be on how different groups in society were affected by the Depression. You can give your students a brief outline of the reasons for the Wall Street Crash, but the emphasis should be on the effects of the Crash on the lives of the American people.
- Against the background of groups who did not benefit from the Boom of the 20s, students might consider the complexities associated with the onset of Depression, eg why were African Americans were likely to lose their jobs first.
- Teaching would develop students' understanding of the measures Hoover took and their impact on the American people. Looking ahead, a study point would compare the effectiveness of Hoover's actions compared to those of Roosevelt.
- Coverage would include the strength of Roosevelt's campaign as well as the reasons for his victory, and the new President's immediate response to the Depression.

### Possible teaching and learning activities

- Centres could organise their teaching around the enquiry question: What was life in the USA like during the Depression?
- Students complete a table that details different social and industrial groups and record the effects they suffered.
- Give your students a range of contemporary photographs of Depression era America – what can they learn about the effects of the Depression on American society?
- Students evaluate two contrasting sources of life during the Depression and identify how they differ and reasons why the authors may have different views. As a class, debate which is more convincing.
- Students produce a summary of the measures President Hoover took and assess their impact / popularity.
- Give your students a range of sources relating to Hoover and ask them to identify his successes and failures. Students can write a presentation on Herbert Hoover that aims to give a balanced view of his time as president.

- Students create a spider diagram of reasons for Roosevelt's victory and another for the reasons why Hoover lost.
- Create ideas for an election speech by Roosevelt, picking out three or four points which he would wish to highlight.
- In groups, students discuss the following statement: 'This was a worldwide Depression and it wasn't Hoover's fault. However, in the 1932 election, he was doomed to fail.'
- Class discussion: What was Roosevelt's immediate response to the crisis he inherited in 1933? What do you think were the first concerns at the top of his 'to do' list?

# The New Deal

## Suggested timing

4 hours

## Specification content

**The New Deal:** key features and its successes and limitations of the New Deal for different groups in society including farmers, the unemployed, homeowners, workers, the elderly, and people with illness and disability; problems faced by women, African Americans and Indigenous peoples; opposition from the Supreme Court, Republicans, radical politicians.

## Guidance

- Develop your students' understanding of Roosevelt's policies and his contribution to America's recovery. How did life change for the American people? Track how New Deal reforms affected different groups.
- Opportunities here to explore different views about Roosevelt, the New Deal and its successes and limitations. Why there was opposition to the New Deal?

## Possible teaching and learning activities

- Students might focus on the overall enquiry question: how far did the New Deal achieve its aims?
- Students produce a spider diagram of Roosevelt's policies. Give your students an outline of the overall aims of the New Deal.
- Students can explore the successes and limitations of the New Deal through:
  - the nature and outcomes of the 'Hundred Days'
  - measures taken by Roosevelt such as his fireside chats, the Emergency Banking Act
  - the overall aims of the New Deal Programme (relief, recovery and reform).
- Develop your students' understanding of the nature and reasons why people were opposed to the New Deal through research. The focus should be on:
  - the Supreme Court ruling against the NRA & AAA
  - criticism by the Republican party and business for over involvement in people's lives; and criticism from left wing individuals for failure to do enough in people's lives.
- Card sort exercise: students match critical statements on the New Deal to the views of opposition groups.
- There is an opportunity to assess Roosevelt's contribution. Was Roosevelt responsible for saving the USA from Depression? Or did he make central government too powerful?
- Give your students a card sort exercise matching the effects of the New Deal on different groups in American society – did everyone benefit from the New Deal?
- Using two secondary sources about the effectiveness of the Roosevelt's New Deal, students identify the successes and failures.
- Class debate which provides an overview of their learning: how successful was the New Deal? Students can consider to what extent it met its aims and how it changed the lives of the American people.

- Students complete an inference exercise using a collection of sources and statements to populate a table with evidence for and against Roosevelt's contribution as President.

## The impact of the Second World War

### Suggested timing

2 hours

### Specification content

**The impact of the Second World War:** America's economic recovery; Lend Lease; exports; social developments, including experiences of African Americans and women; internment policies.

### Teaching guidance

- The focus should be on the impact the Second World War had on the American economy: why the demand for production increased and unemployment reduced.
- Looking back, there is an opportunity here to compare the impact of the Second World War with the New Deal. Which was more important in causing the US economy to improve?
- The focus should also be on how the war progressed the fight for Civil Rights, the treatment of African Americans in the armed forces and the opening of areas of employment for women after 1941.

### Possible teaching and learning activities

- Students might focus on the overall enquiry question: what impact did the Second World War have on the American economy? A presentation might offer contrasting views about how far the Second World War brought about a revolution in people's lives.
- Students research how the economy recovered during the Second World War.
- Students write an explanation that explores how the Second World War changed the American economy.
- Use card sorts or similar exercises such as Diamond 9s to encourage students to compare the importance of different factors and practice reaching supported judgements.
- Students research the origins and effects of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and the Fair Employment Practice Committee (FEPC) as evidence of improvements in Civil Rights and contrast this with examples of continuing segregation in the armed forces. This might also reference internment as an example of the Second World War's impact on the civil rights of Americans of Japanese descent.
- Quiz your students about what they remember about the status and roles of women in the 1920s and 1930s.
- Using a range of contemporary sources relating to women's experiences throughout the war, ask your students to compile a fact file on women's war work. What do the sources tell us about the experience of women during the war?

# Review and assessment of Part 2

## Suggested timing

1 hour

## Assessment guidance

- This is opportunity to develop your students' exam technique and to test their learning on the content of Part 2.
- You could use this as an opportunity to develop their understanding of how to answer AO1/AO2 questions such as the 6 and 9 mark questions and the bullet-point 12 mark evaluative question.
- Discuss exam technique with your students. Use low tariff questions to check acquisition of knowledge.
- For second order concept questions, analyse students' effectiveness when writing Point/Evidence/Explanation paragraphs in answer to an 'explain' style question.

# Part 3: Post-war America, 1945-1968

## Post-war American society and economy (1)

### Suggested timing

3 hours

### Specification content

**Post-war American society and economy:** consumerism and the causes of prosperity; the American Dream; McCarthyism; popular culture, including Rock and Roll and television.

### Teaching guidance

- The focus should be on the reasons for post war prosperity and what is meant by the 'American Dream'. how did prosperity change the lives of the American people?
- Opportunities here to retrace the threads for groups of Americans studied in the 20s and 30s – which groups saw the most and least changes to their lives?
- Coverage would include the causes and effects of McCarthyism including his downfall. Why was there such an extreme fear of communism?
- Students should have an awareness of the broader context of the Cold War to understand the roots of McCarthyism.
- Explore how popular culture changed how it reflects on life in America at that time.
- The focus should also be on the key features of pop culture and the contrasting views of the old and young generations.

### Possible teaching and learning activities

- Students might focus on the overall enquiry question: Was the 'American Dream' a reality or illusion?
- Students complete a spider diagram that gives details on the causes of prosperity. Areas to include are:
  - Second World War
  - Post-war Federal government policies on GIs
  - Cold War military spending.
- Students complete a second spider diagram which details the effects including wage rises, population growth, house building boom, growth of suburbia, home and car ownership, television advertising and shopping malls.
- Students study a range of sources on the subject of the American Dream and write their own definition.
- Give your students an overview of the Cold War 1945–1950 that includes worldwide events and key stages of the nuclear arms race.
- Class debate: why was there such a fear of communism?
- Students produce a timeline of key events and developments during the McCarthy era.
- Class debate: how did McCarthyism affect American society?
- Research and discuss possible reasons for McCarthy's downfall.
- Quiz students about what they have learnt about American popular culture before the Second World War.

- Students study profiles of movie stars, rock stars, films and TV shows. What do these profiles tell us about the changes in popular culture?
- Students compare positive and negative representations of Rock and Roll music and discuss the reasons for the different views.
- Students write a series of explanations about the key changes in American popular culture.

# Post-war American society and economy (2)

## Suggested timings

2 hours

## Specification content

**The New Frontier and 'Great Society':** the social policies of Presidents Kennedy and Johnson; impact of feminist movements in the 1960s, including the Equal Pay Act.

## Teaching guidance

- The focus should be on the aims of the 'Great Society' policy and the legislation involved.
- Include the principles and achievements of the feminist movement.
- There are opportunities here to practice 'explanation' as well as an understanding of how to draw historical conclusions from sources.

## Possible teaching and learning activities

- Students might focus on the overall enquiry question: how far was a 'Great Society' created?
- Give your students an outline of the aims and key features of the 'Great Society'.
- Students study critical evaluations of Kennedy's and Johnson's social welfare policies.
- Students make notes on the Great Society Programme and evaluate its impact.
- Class debate: did life get better for the poor?
- Quiz students about what they remember about the position of women in 1920s, 1930s, 1940s and 1950s.
- As a class, discuss reasons for the feminist movement in the 1960s.
- Give your students a list of topics to research to complete a diagram of the US feminist movement in the 1960s. In different groups students should produce summaries of the key events and individuals. Include the Equal Pay Act of 1963. Each group feeds back to the whole class.
- Class discussion: compare and contrast the campaigns of the feminist movement to the Civil Rights movement. What are the similarities? How do they differ?
- Practice a bullet style question and writing paragraphs to compare the importance of the campaigns of the 1960s and 1970s – which group benefited more – women or African Americans?

# Civil Rights campaigns in the 1950s and 1960s

## Suggested timing

4 hours

## Specification content

**Civil Rights campaigns in the 1950s and 1960s:** legal challenges to segregation, including Brown versus Topeka Board of Education; Rosa Parks and the Montgomery Bus Boycott; The Little Rock Nine; Freedom Rides and Marches; NAACP, SCLC, Martin Luther King and peaceful protests; Malcolm X, the Black Power Movement and protests; Race Riots; the role of the media, and the impact of Presidents and Federal governments; Civil Rights Acts of 1964 and 1968.

## Teaching guidance

- Develop your students' understanding of the key events and developments of the Civil Rights campaign.
- The focus should be on the nature of segregation as outlined by the Jim Crow Laws and the key events of the Civil Rights campaign.
- Examine the difference between Malcolm X, the Black Power movement and Martin Luther King's principles of non-violence.
- Develop your students understanding of the Civil Rights Acts in 1964 and 1968 – how significant were they for the Civil Rights movement? What was their impact?

## Possible teaching and learning activities

- Give your students an overview of the Segregation Laws and how these affected African Americans.
- Students to study sources about the work of Martin Luther King and the Civil Rights campaigners; what inferences can be drawn from them and how does provenance help historians to understand the period? How can contextual knowledge of Civil Rights campaigns be applied?
- Students complete a group exercise to allow them to share information on:
  - the case of Brown v. Topeka Board of Education
  - the Montgomery Bus Boycott
  - the crisis at Little Rock High School
  - sits-ins and freedom rides
  - the influence of Martin Luther King and Civil Rights marches.
- Students use their findings to produce a timeline of the key events and developments; prioritise reasons for the developments in the Civil Rights campaigns.
- Students produce a profile of Martin Luther King.
- Students suggest how a speech by Malcolm X might include by written to emphasise important points about his philosophy.
- Students complete a table on the contents and impact of Civil Rights legislation during the 1960s.
- Class presentation: compare and contrast the ideas, actions and strategies of Martin Luther King and Malcolm X; what do the differences between them suggest about

American society at that time?

- Practice a bullet style question and writing paragraphs to compare the importance of the Civil Rights campaigns and Presidential action in bringing about change.

# Review and assessment of Part 3

## Suggested timing

1 hour

## Assessment guidance

- This is an opportunity to review and assess Parts one, two and three and to develop your students' exam techniques.
- Give your students a Section A question from one of the specimen papers.