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AP United States History- Example Paper

### AP Example Essay

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. The beliefs and development of North America between 1620 and 1776 were impacted by its early founders because of the Puritans' high moral standards for life as a religious community, Enlightenment thinkers' questioning of the world around them, and the Revivalists' shift in religious views and values. Separatist Puritans that first reached America in 1620 brought influential religious beliefs, as they had wanted to separate from the English Church's residual Catholic practices and popish influences. The Enlightenment that occurred in the middle of the eighteenth century led to many well-read individuals to question aspects of religion and believe more in science and reason. The First Great Awakening that occurred in the beginning of the eighteenth century saw a time where people became more religious and emphasized direct and emotional worship.

Separatist Puritans, who reached the New World in the early seventeenth century, left England in order to start their own towns in which they would not be persecuted for their beliefs. The first of these Puritans were known as the Pilgrims, Separatists who arrived in Plymouth in 1620 from aboard the *Mayflower*. The Pilgrims signed the Mayflower Compact, the first written government contract on American soil and created a government based on the consent of the people. Rules in the colony were

based on both the Bible and English Common Law. Believing in the teachings of Calvinists like John Calvin, a direct democracy by way of frequent town meetings was the adopted form of government. Church and government were tied together and Puritans followed the New England Way. Furthermore, while on the ship the *Arabella* during the voyage to the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1630, John Winthrop gave a sermon known as “A Model of Christian Charity”. He described the future city as a utopia and this sermon is known for using the term “City Upon a Hill” to describe the religious colony. This was similar to the feelings of American exceptionalism many individuals had later on. Having such a godly community, Winthrop hoped, would shame England into repenting and fixing its Catholic practices. People worked hard and lived in moderation. Family- the “little commonwealth”- was the basis of society. There was a strong sense of community within towns and population growth in these areas was significant. These pious peoples at first got along with the local natives, but the establishment of praying towns, the fervor to Christianize the Native Americans, and disputes over land led to many conflicts, including King Philip’s War in 1675. As time went on, literacy and schooling were pushed and led to colleges being founded for churchmen; these institutions included what is now Harvard, William and Mary, and Yale. During this time, however, not all agreed with the Puritan ways. Roger Williams was kicked out of the Massachusetts Bay Colony and founded Providence Plantation in 1636 in order to provide a place for religious minorities; Williams was unpopular because of his idea that church and state should be separate. It should be noted that later on, when the United States became independent, church and state were separate as Williams had advocated for. 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. Anne Hutchinson challenged the authority of Puritan ministers in 1636; similar to how individuals challenged political authority leading up to the American Revolution. Both religious dissenters and the hardworking Puritans’ strict values shaped American life, just in different ways.