

Questions to Consider:

Sean Wilentz, ed., *Major Problems in the Early Republic, 1787-1848* (1992).

Generic Questions for Approaching *Major Problems*:

- Why are these primary documents in here? What did you learn from them? What do you still want to know?
- Identify a key passage or section in each of the primary documents? Why did you choose it? How does it fit into the “big picture” of the early republic?
- What is the argument of each of the secondary essays? Can you explain it in a few sentences?
- What, for you, are the author’s major contributions to the effort to understand the early American republic? What are the achievements of the author’s interpretations? What is left out, forgotten, or revised?

Chapter 1:

- How have historians periodized and viewed the early republic? When and why have they seen it as radical? as conservative? What was the “market revolution” and how has it changed the study of the period? What was the role of regionalism and nationalism in the early republic? What is Rossiter’s argument about America’s “mission” and its relationship to nationalism and imperialism?

Chapter 2:

- How did Hamilton and Madison define the problems facing the newly independent nation? What solutions did they propose to these problems in the Constitution? What were Henry and Singletary’s objections to the Constitution? According to Pinckney, how did the Constitution ultimately address the issue of slavery and to whose interest?
- What, for Hamilton, were the justifications for maintaining a national debt? What was Hamilton’s position on the assumption of debts and compensation to holders of government notes? What arguments were used by Jefferson and Hamilton in the debate over the constitutionality of the national bank? What major philosophical differences were embedded in these arguments? How does Madison depict the history of parties in the United States and how does he describe the political scene in the early 1790s?
- According to Kramnick, what were the four languages of politics involved in the “great national discussion”? In what ways did Federalists and Antifederalists use the same languages to different ends? How did Federalists and Antifederalists view representation and the state?
- In what ways did the Constitution protect the institution of slavery? What compromises were made to slaveholders to ensure constitutional reform? In what ways did the Constitution have antislavery potential? How did the “great national discussion” make slavery a local rather than a national institution?

- According to Young, what was the greatest compromise involved in the drafting and ratification of the Constitution? In what ways did delegates use coercion and accommodation to deal with popular threats from below while drafting the Constitution? during ratification? How did America's political leaders deal with the specter of democratic majorities in the states?
- After reading these essays do you see the Constitution as counter-revolutionary and conservative, modern and progressive, or a bit of both? Explain. What is gained by exploring the drafting and ratification of the Constitution from multiple perspectives?

Chapter 3:

- What political ideals, issues, and strategies appear in the minutes of the Democratic Society of Pennsylvania? How did William Findley and George Washington analyze the causes and the larger meaning of the Whiskey Rebellion? How did Jefferson, Washington, and Adams describe the political landscape in 1796 and 1798? What concerns did they share? Where did their opinions concerning parties and foreign policy differ?
- From reading the Kentucky Resolutions, the account of the trial of David Brown, and Adams's reaction to his defeat, what were the Alien and Sedition Acts all about? What concerns of Federalists motivated these acts? In what ways did the public and political leaders respond? What were the implications of Jefferson's anonymously authored Kentucky Resolutions?
- According to Appleby, how did Federalists and Republicans respond to new opportunities for economic development? What were their respective visions of the future? What was the role of popular politics "out-of-doors" in these differing conceptions of society? How does Ashworth respond to Appleby's economic explanation for partisanship? What does he suggest about the role of slavery in the transition in republican ideology in the 1790s?

Chapter 4:

- What were the essential principles expressed by Jefferson in his first inaugural address? How did Hamilton and Randolph view Jefferson's attachment to these ideals? What justifications for the Louisiana Purchase appear in Livingston's letter? What constitutional issues did the Louisiana Purchase raise and how did Jefferson respond? What essential ideas were advanced in Marshall's opinion in *Marbury v. Madison*? Why did partisanship increase late in Jefferson's term? What role was played in that process by the embargo?
- What do Hofstadter, McDonald, and McCoy see as the essential republican imperatives? How do they assess the relationship between ideology, interest, and practice during Jefferson's administration? According to Hofstadter, what issues demonstrate how Jeffersonian policy trumped Jeffersonian theory? How does McDonald argue that Jefferson was true to his principles and what does he see as the cost of that adherence? Why, according to McCoy, was the west so essential to Jeffersonian political economy?

Chapter 5:

- What racial theories did Jefferson develop in *Notes on the State of Virginia*? What were his grounds for the “natural” racial differences between whites, blacks, and Indians? In what ways does Ben’s confession demonstrate the complexity of slavery in Virginia? What connections between race and religion were expressed in the accounts of Jones & Allen and Watson? What ideas about Indians were incorporated into Dwight’s poem? What were Jefferson’s private opinions about Indian policy? How were those ideals expressed in Harrison’s treaty? How did the Shawnee explain their situation and respond to U.S. expansion?
- Based on the images in chapter five and Eliza Southgate’s letters, what were the implications of the Revolution for gender roles in the early republic? According to Lewis, what did republicanism demand of women? How did ideas about marriage change and how were these ideas connected to broader political themes?
- According to Sheehan, what were the goals and ultimate limitations of the philanthropic approach to the “Indian problem” in the early republic? What, for Merrell, were the conditions essential for a renewal of the effort to “civilize” Indians? How and why did both Indians and whites resist this policy? What was the importance of “revitalization movements” in Indian America? Why did the Cherokee represent the best hope for these civilization and improvement efforts?

Chapter 6:

- According to the primary documents in chapter six, what were the issues behind the War of 1812? What reasons were advanced for going to war? What were supposed to be the benefits? How did Federalists respond to these arguments for war? What role did the west play during the War of 1812? How was the war interpreted by the Republican Boileau and the Federalists meeting at Hartford?
- According to Brown, why were Republican and Federalist views of each other distorted? How did partisan fears account for the decision to go to war? What role did Madison play in the complex relationship between republicanism and the move towards war? How, for Watts, did the "Report on the Causes and Reasons for War" encapsulate liberal ideology? In what ways was the War of 1812 a national crusade? How did the call to arms reflect anxieties over political and market dislocations?

Chapter 7:

- How did farmers, merchants, and foreign travelers view the shift toward commercial production and Americans’ pursuit of wealth? What roles for women were advocated by Mrs. A.J. Graves and how did they square with women’s realities? How did young women view factory work in the Lowell Mills? What factors affected the cabinet-making industry in the 1830s and 1840s? Why (and how) did some workers seek to organize? What views on property, labor, and innovation were expressed by Skidmore and Potter?
- How does Bruchey characterize antebellum American industrialization? What methods were used in manufacturing and what were the effects of industrialization on class division and economic opportunity? According to Wilentz, how and why did the clothing, shoe, and furniture industries move from piecework to outwork to sweating? What were the

implications of this shift for antebellum workers and consumers? In Stansell's view, how was Bowery culture defined and organized? In what ways did it change perceptions of working-class women and relationships between young men and women? How did Bowery culture help create an alternative definition of nineteenth-century womanhood?

Chapter 8:

- How did southern planters envision their duties and hope to manage their plantations? What difficulties did they face in practice? How did slaves resist their enslavement and describe their experiences? What did Fredricksburg's free blacks request of the state? How did Kemble experience southern slavery and how did she view the possibility of interracial cooperation? How did southern yeoman view the peculiar institution? In the wake of Nat Turner's rebellion, how did Marshall and Dew, respectively, oppose and defend slavery?
- Why, for Genovese, was paternalism central to the master-slave relationship in the Old South? How did it constrain and empower both blacks and whites? What was the role of the overseer in the plantation system? How does Genovese characterize the relationship between lower-class whites and slaves? According to Frederickson, why (and on what grounds) has Genovese got it wrong? How does Frederickson describe the master-slave relationship? What was the role of racial ideology in this relationship? How did folk tales reflect the culture of American slaves? In what ways did these stories serve masters' interests? What did they do for slaves?

Chapter 9:

- What were the grievances of the parties involved in the Black Hawk War? What were the major issues, from the perspectives of both settlers and Mexicans, on the Texan war for independence? How did Bryant & Carson describe life in early California? How did Governor Coles view the question of slavery's extension? What, according to Kirkland, were the characteristics of frontier life? How were speculators and squatters portrayed during the Congressional debates on land policy in the 1830s?
- Why, according to Swierenga, were frontier communities ambivalent about nonresident speculators? What helped produce "cordial relations" between the two groups? What was the overall role of speculators on the frontier? How, for Faragher, did traditions of common use help frontier families in Sugar Creek? What types of resources were used in common, and with what implications for social organization? What factors gradually pushed squatters into tenancy? What was the role of the market and rural social structure in promoting a capitalist orientation and "classed" landscape in the Midwest?

Chapter 10:

- How did Monroe describe the state of the nation in 1817? What role did the Panic of 1819 and the Missouri Crisis of 1820 play in undermining national harmony? How did Adams describe the relationship between liberty and power? How did craft workers and Calhoun address this question, particularly in light of the distribution of wealth and taxes? What were Van Buren's arguments for a new opposition party? What role was Jackson to play in this system?

- According to Brown, how did the Missouri Crisis reveal a new basis for political parties? What were southerners' fears during this crisis and why did they agree to compromise? How did northern politicians like Van Buren view the south and slavery? What framework does Formisano use to account for partisanship before 1820? What was "the Politics of the Revolutionary Center?" What accounts for Jackson's election in 1828 in Formisano's essay? According to Ward, how were anti-intellectual ideas used by Jackson's supporters in the 1828 election? How did the contrast between Adams and Jackson reflect beliefs about the distinction between America and Europe?

Chapter 11:

- What were Jackson's arguments against the Maysville Road Bill? How did Clay respond? What arguments were raised by South Carolina's ordinance of nullification? How did Jackson respond? What were Jackson's arguments against the recharter of the BUS? How did Webster respond? How did Hone and Colton describe party politics and ideology? What themes and arguments extended across all of these documents? In other words, what do these political debates tell us about Jackson and Jacksonian Democracy?
- What, according to Remini, was Jackson's philosophy of government? Who were "the people," what did they mean to Jackson, and what did Jackson mean to them? How does Saxton characterize the elements of the democratic coalition? What was the role of slavery and Indian removal in Jacksonian democracy? How did various democratic groups tactically use racism to further political ends? According to Howe, where did Whigs stand on these issues? What was the role of morality in defining Whig political culture?

Chapter 12:

- What connections did Finney draw between religious conversion and social reform? How did Beecher relate temperance to America's society and economy? What were Frances Wright's ideas about free love and racial equality? What were the major issues in the "Declaration of Sentiments" issued by the Seneca Falls women's rights convention? How did Morse and Mann, respectively, connect popery & free public education to American ideals? What class issues and tactics appeared in the discussion of labor's "coffin handbill" of 1836? What were the goals (and potential problems) facing religious reform efforts in the antebellum south?
- According to Johnson, how and why did liquor become a problem in Rochester? What led to a redefinition of drinking and what were the assumptions and promises of temperance reform efforts? For Ryan, what social and emotional functions were provided by voluntary associations? What strategies were used by the Female Moral Reform Society and how did they reflect social norms concerning women's roles? How did temperance reform both involve women and help restructure their roles? According to Davis, what were the functions of nativist literature? What was the role of projection in depictions of the corrupting powers of Catholics, Masons, and Mormons?

Chapter 13:

- What sort of future for slaves did Walker's Appeal envision? How did Walker & Garrison draw upon the Declaration of Independence? What was immediatism? What objections to

immediatism can be seen in the statements of its proponents? How did Jay attempt to refute Dew's arguments defending slavery? Why did Grimke address her appeal to southern women? How did Sullivan's letters view abolition and the role of women in the movement? On what grounds did Hammond and Fuller defend slavery? What were their arguments about southern civilization and Christian sanction?

- What, according to Foner, were the key tenets of labor ideology? What did the rhetoric of "wage slavery" evoke? Why and how did the labor and abolitionist movements differ? What, for DuBois, was the source of women's consciousness of their oppression? Why did feminism emerge from Garrisonian abolition rather than from earlier moral reform efforts? According to Harding, what were the major responsibilities of the black freedom struggle in the North? On what key issues did black and white abolitionists differ and with what implications? What, according to Faust, were the characteristics of proslavery ideology after 1831? In what ways might proslavery advocates been more attuned to majority American viewpoints?

Chapter 14:

- What issues were embedded in O'Sullivan's concept of "manifest destiny?" What, according to Polk and Castillo, were the causes of the Mexican-American War? How did abolitionists and free soil democrats view the war? How was the conflict viewed by northern Whigs like Sumner and southerners like Calhoun? How did the war affect the second party system? What were the key issues in the platforms produced for the campaign of 1848? Finally, what was the role of slavery and racial ideology in the debates over western expansion and manifest destiny?
- According to Graebner, why was the doctrine of "manifest destiny" insufficient to account for American expansion in the West? What other factors were involved, particularly in efforts to annex Texas and acquire California? What, in Hietala's account, was the ultimate purpose of "manifest destiny?" How was the concept intertwined with ideas about race in antebellum America? How did expansionists draw on the legacies of Jefferson in creating domestic and foreign policies rooted in racial prejudice?