

Talk Time Topic: American History

Let's get started... Make a short timeline of your life.

On each line below write the year that something important happened in your life. (Example: when you started school or graduated, when you got married, when you came to America, etc.) Look at your classmates' timelines and take turns asking each other: "What happened to you in ____?" (year)



Background:

Today we will talk about 3 important periods in American history.

1492-1776: Settling a Territory

In 1492, Christopher Columbus discovered America when he was looking for a way to sail from Spain to India. When he saw the Native Americans who lived here, Columbus thought that they were Indians. Many Europeans came to America after Columbus. Most came to find wealth or to have religious freedom. The Native Americans helped the settlers to survive by teaching them how to farm and fish.

1776-1861: Forming a Nation

In 1776 many people in America lived in English colonies, but they did not want to pay taxes to England. The people fought a revolution -- a war to be free from England. We celebrate American independence on July 4th. After the war, the U.S. formed a government that had an elected president instead of a king.

1861-1941: Expanding West

In 1861 the people in the US had a conflict about slavery. The South made money by farming and they wanted to allow slavery. The people of the North worked in industry and they thought slavery was wrong. The North fought the South in the Civil War. The North won and slavery was ended. People began to move west. Many hardworking immigrants came to America in this period and helped to make America strong.



In pairs for 5 minutes, ask and answer these questions:

When did you come to America? Will you stay in this country? Why did you come? Do some of your family members still live in your home country? Do some live here?

Share your partner's answers with the group.

Discussion Questions:

How old is your home country?

Who were the first people to live in your home country?

Have there been different governments? Have there been wars?

Would you want to sail around the world like Columbus?

Why do you think the first settlers left their homes and came here?
What do you think they left behind?

Many people came here from England in the 1600's for religious freedom. Do you think this is a common reason that people leave their countries today?

Is there freedom of religion in your home country?

Other people came for better work opportunities. Do you think this the most common reason that people leave their countries today?

What do you have in common with the first American settlers?

Why do you think the Native Americans helped the first settlers?

Do people in the U.S. help you and your family? What do they do?

Do you have American friends? How did you meet them? What do you do together?

Did your home country ever have slavery? How long ago?

Did your home country ever have a Civil War? If so, what was the conflict about?

What is one thing that you would like to change about America?

What is something that you like about your home country?

New words and Idioms:

timeline, discover, sail, Native Americans, Indians, explorer, wealth, religious freedom, survive, farm, fish, colonies, revolution, independence, government, expand, conflict, slavery, allow, South, North, industry, Civil War, in common