

Fall History & Heritage -- #7 (November 12)

The following descriptions (often in Q&A form) are based on the sources indicated. Aside from quotations, the teacher is responsible for both expression & analysis.

Margaret Sanger -- (*Christian Almanac*; Grant & Wilbur; Oct. 16)

Planned Parenthood's pioneer, **this social activist (1883--1966)** opened the first American birth control clinic in Brooklyn, N.Y., in 1916? Her radical aim, inspired by the new "science" of eugenics, was chiefly to alter the reproductive habits and restrict the offspring of minorities and other "undesirables." Over time, her movement spawned a greater war against all reproduction in the West, facilitating the so-called sexual revolution with its feminist dream of a world without sex-role differentiation.

Herman Melville -- (*Christian Almanac*; Grant & Wilbur; Oct. 25)

"What I feel most moved to write will not pay. Yet write the other way, I cannot." The self-disclosure was made by **this 19th-century American writer (1819--1891)**, a true master of the craft who quit his career in his prime for another job to support his family, rather than risk lowering his literary standards? He was posthumously honored, however, as one of the greatest writers of fiction in English, his critically acclaimed works including *Moby Dick*, *Billy Budd*, and *Redburn*.

Declaration of Independence -- (*America, Vol. 1*; W. Bennett; pp. 245-246)

Even Jefferson, ordinarily gracious in his assessment of N. American Indians, had to concede their barbaric practices, as he did in **this iconic American document (1776)?** In a long list of accusations against Britain, he wrote, "[The King] has excited domestic insurrections amongst us, and has endeavoured to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers, the merciless Indian Savages, whose known rule of warfare is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes, and conditions."

Nicholas Biddle -- (*America, Vol. 1*; W. Bennett; p. 249)

"This worthy President thinks that because he has scalped Indians and imprisoned judges he is to have his own way with the Bank. He is mistaken." So said **this Philadelphia financier (1786--1844)**, President of the Bank of the U.S., in a bristling critique of Andrew Jackson's 1832 veto of the national bank charter renewal bill? A spirited nationalist and a "believer in progress," observes historian Forrest McDonald, the financier "had minimal tolerance for the logic of states' righters."

Jackson, the Constitution, & the President's Veto Power -- (Bennett; p. 249)

As he demonstrated with his opposition to bank charter renewal bill (1832), Pres. Andrew Jackson was willing to veto proposed laws on the grounds of unconstitutionality.

Jackson wasn't willing to leave such matters to the courts (ultimately the U.S. Supreme Court), as so often the case today in the legislative as well as executive branches. His oath, like that of all chief executives, was to uphold the Constitution, and he presided as head of a separate and co-equal branch of the general government.

Thus, it's hard to see how Jackson, or any president, could faithfully execute his office without judging for himself whether his actions, like signing a congressional bill or enforcing a federal law, were constitutional.

The fact of the matter is that all three branches of the general (U.S.) government must heed the Constitution and endeavor to keep its provisions. They may, of course, differ in their interpretations and “check & balance” one another in their activity. Tensions and conflicts, strains in the system, are inevitable along the way. Relief and resolution were meant to be worked out patiently within the framework of relatively frequent elections and in accordance with the rule of law.

Finally, we should never forget why constitutionality matters in this federal republic—to the people, to the states, and to all officeholders on all levels of government. The Constitution, in part, gave us a general government empowered to do something good for the states & the people. Even more, however, the fathers' venerable document seeks to prevent that same government from doing harm.

“Old Man Eloquent” -- (*America, Vol. 1; W. Bennett; pp. 250-253*)

Late in his career, former President John Q. Adams (1767--1848) earned **this nickname** for his indefatigable resistance in the House of Representatives to that body's so-called “gag rule”? Adams had been selected to represent a Mass. House district in 1830, not long after a loss in his bid for a second presidential term to Jackson. The “gag rule,” the object of Adams' ire to his dying day, was demanded by Dixie congressmen as a way of suppressing discussion of any antislavery measures.

American Colonization Society -- (*America, Vol. 1; W. Bennett; pp. 256-58*)

The goal of **this humanitarian organization**, founded in 1817, was to resettle emancipated Negro slaves somewhere other than the U.S., preferably back in Africa? Many prominent Americans, North & South, including Henry Clay and Abraham Lincoln, backed the society, which managed to establish the West African nation of Liberia. The society's success, however, was less than stellar: the ex-slaves of Liberia wasted no time enslaving other nearby tribes and turning the country into a huge plantation.

***The Liberator* -- (*America, Vol. 1; W. Bennett; p. 264*)**

“Accursed be the American Union, as a stupendous republican imposture! Accursed be it, as the most frightful despotism, with regard to three millions of the people, ever exercised over any portion of the human family! NO UNION WITH SLAVEHOLDERS.” Thus wrote abolitionist and social activist William Lloyd Garrison, a Bostonian, in **this newspaper**, a journal Garrison founded in 1831? The abolitionist's exaggerated, incendiary rhetoric, horrifying to Southerners, won him few admirers even in the North.