

II. Understanding America Today

A. American Politics

1. In 2016 Donald Trump was elected president of the United States, instead of his main rival Hillary Clinton.
2. During the election, Trump said he would “Make America Great Again.”
3. He meant that he was rejecting of the policies of the previous president Barack Obama, whereas Hillary Clinton would continue them. (Trump was the nominee chosen by the Republican party, and Clinton was chosen as the nominee for the Democratic party, to whom Obama also belongs.)
4. Many issues were involved in the election, as always, but one stands out in the big picture of American history. President Obama was the first “African-American” president in the history of the United States.
5. This is important because Africans were first brought to America early in American history, and slavery remained part of American culture for a long time.
6. Many people would say that racism is still a problem in American culture as well, and they believe that having Barack Obama as president was good sign. They thought of him as a president who would bring “Change We Can Believe In.” (That was his slogan.) Having Donald Trump as president makes people who believe in that change very unhappy.
7. Donald Trump is now hoping to be re-elected under the slogan “Keep America Great.”
8. His adversary this time around is Joe Biden, who was Barack Obama’s vice-president.

B. The American Social Contract in our Times

1. Even though Americans disagree on things like who should be president, they agree there should be a president, and what the rules are for electing one.
2. This is part of the “social contract,” which is the name for the agreement between people about how life should be lived.
3. Every family has a “social contract,” which includes the responsibilities of each of the parents, and the rules that apply to each of the members of the household, including pets!
4. History At Our House classes also have a social contract. Mr. Powell commits to being available for live classes on a certain schedule to present certain material, and your parents commit to a certain schedule of payments to qualify you to participate. If you want to participate you agree to raise your hand and wait your turn to you speak, and you agree not to chat and/or annotate without permission.
5. In American society as a whole, the social contract has many parts, from the rules for driving, and the rules of “social distancing” because of Covid, to the rules for tipping at a restaurant, and even for greeting people you know or don’t know.
6. The social contract for society as a whole is *the set of rules everyone agrees to live by, and which the government enforces.*

C. The First Anchor Fact of the Story

1. When we study history to understand the world around us, we need to understand the present properly to begin with.
2. Even though he is the president right now, if we begin only with Donald Trump, we won't have the whole picture, because Donald Trump is the president *who came after Barack Obama*.
3. It is the combination of presidents Obama and Trump that is unique about modern America. Together, they are the first "anchor fact" of our story. (An "anchor fact" is an event from the past that we need to know in order to understand the world we live in.)
4. American history at this time is the story of a country that recently had Barack Obama as president (2009-17) *who was then followed* by Donald Trump. These things are both true and important.
5. Here is how this can be shown on a timeline:

