Recurring Themes in U.S. History

**American and National Identity:** This theme focuses on the formation of both an American national identity and group identities (i.e. gender, class, racial, and ethnic identities) in U.S. history. This theme also focuses on how American values have developed and changed over time. This theme is concerned with questions such as: What does it mean to be an American? What does it mean to be an African American? How and why have debates over American national identity changed over time?

**Work, Exchange, and Technology:** This theme focuses on the development of American economics based on agriculture, commerce, and manufacturing. Key questions include: How have changes in markets, transportation, and technology affected American society from colonial times to the present day? Why have different labor systems developed in British North America and the United States, and how have they affected U.S. society? How have debates over economic values and the role of government in the U.S. economy affected politics, society, the economy, and the environment?

**Migration and Settlement:** This theme focuses on why and how the various people who moved to, from, and within the United States adapted to their new social and physical environments as well as how they transformed the existing society. Key questions include: Why have people migrated to, from, and within North America? How have changes in migration and population patterns affected American life?

**Politics & Power:** This theme focuses on how different social and political groups have influenced society and government in the US, as well as how political beliefs and institutions have changed over time. This theme as examines the changing relationships among the branches of the federal government and among national, state, and local governments. Key concerns include: How and why have different political and social groups competed for influence over society and government in what would become the United States? How have Americans agreed on or argued over the values that guide the political system as well as who is a part of the political process?

**America in the World:** This theme is focused on the global context in which the United States originated and developed as well as the influence of the United States on world affairs. Key concerns include: How have events in North America and the United States related to contemporary developments in the rest of the world? How have different factors influenced U.S. military, diplomatic, and economic involvement in international affairs and foreign conflicts, both in North America and overseas?

**Geography and the Environment:** This theme examines the role of environment, geography, and climate in both constraining and shaping human actions. Key questions include: How did interactions with the natural environment shape the institutions and values of various groups living on the North American continent? How did economic and demographic changes affect the environment and lead to debates over use and control of the environment and natural resources?

**Culture & Society:** This theme explores the roles that ideas, beliefs, social mores, and creative expression have played in shaping the United States. Key concerns include: How and why have moral, philosophical, and cultural values changed in what would become the U.S.? How and why have changes in moral, philosophical, and cultural values affected U.S. history?