

# Readability

## McDougal Littell *The Americans*

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**AGRICULTURE DEVELOPS** Between 10,000 and 5,000 years ago, a revolution quietly took place in what is now central Mexico. There, people began to plant crops. Some archaeologists believe that maize (corn) was the first plant that ancient Americans developed for human use. Other plants followed – gourds, pumpkins, peppers, beans, and more. Eventually, agricultural techniques spread throughout the Americas.

The introduction of agriculture brought tremendous change. Agriculture made it possible for people to remain in one place and to store surplus food. As their surplus increased, people had more time to develop other skills. From this agricultural base evolved larger, more stable societies and increasingly complex cultures. However, some Native American cultures never adopted agriculture and remained nomadic, moving from place to place in search of food and water, while others mixed nomadic and non-nomadic lifestyles.

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Many Southerners, however, saw the annexation of Texas as an opportunity to extend slavery and increase Southern power in Congress. Furthermore, the Wilmot Proviso, a proposed amendment to a military appropriations bill of 1846, prohibited slavery in lands that might be gained from Mexico. This attack on slavery solidified Southern support for war by transforming the debate on war into a debate on slavery.

Northerners mainly opposed the war. Antislavery Whigs and abolitionists saw the war as a plot to expand slavery and ensure Southern domination of the Union. In a resolution adopted by the Massachusetts legislature, Charles Sumner proclaimed that “the lives of Mexicans are sacrificed in this cause; and a domestic question, which should be reserved for bloodless debate in our own country, is transferred to fields of battle in a foreign land.”

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Throughout the 1972 campaign, the Watergate burglary generated little interest among the American public and media. Only the *Washington Post* and two of its reporters, Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, kept on the story. In a series of articles, the reporters uncovered information that linked numerous members of the administration to the burglary. The White House denied each new *Post* allegation. Upon learning of an upcoming story that tied him to the burglars, John Mitchell told Bernstein, “That’s the most sickening thing I ever heard.”

The firm White House response to the charges, and its promises of imminent peace in Vietnam, proved effective in the short term. In November, Nixon was reelected by a landslide over liberal Democrat George S. McGovern. But Nixon’s popular support was soon to unravel.