

over federal economic policy during the time of Washington and Hamilton (pp. 144-146).

And in Chapter 8, Bennett makes clear that the sectional differences that helped lead to the Civil War were at their foundation economic differences. The South remained economically agrarian, while the North was changing dynamically with new forms of manufacturing and transportation.

Grade 11 U.S. History

5. Standard 1 – Early National Development: 1775 to 1877

How well does LBH help students to be able to conduct a review and summarize key ideas, events, and developments from the Founding Era through the Civil War and Reconstruction, 1775 to 1877?

America: The Last Best Hope, by William J. Bennett (former U.S. Secretary of Education), is a best selling, two volume historical narrative that covers United States history from the voyages of Columbus to our own times. A team of award-winning educators (Team HOPE) joined with Dr. Bennett to adapt this historical work for classroom use. Schools have the option of splitting the volumes at 1877 (Volume I and Volume II Enhanced) or at 1914 (Volume I and Volume II). It is the strong belief of the team creating a curriculum and teacher and student resources for *Last Best Hope* (a curriculum entitled *The Roadmap*), that this product is unique and has the potential to revolutionize history education. Its primary strength is Bennett's ability to capture the dramatic *story* in history. He does so in a fair and balanced way that does not hide America's flaws, but points out clearly the unique nature of the American experiment in democracy in the history of the world. As he notes in his introduction, Bennett wants readers (and students) to "enjoy the story of their country" and in doing so develop a "new patriotism – a new reflective, reasoned form of patriotism."

This period of United States history is covered in depth and in an engaging, narrative style in *Last Best Hope*, Volume I. It begins with the period of exploration, then proceeds to offer detailed accounts of the American Revolution, the Articles and Constitutional periods, the early Republic, the Jacksonian period, growing sectionalism, the Civil War, and Reconstruction. Throughout are accounts of key individuals, both well known and little known, and analysis of critical documents, court cases, and events that shaped America in its founding era. The *Roadmap* that accompanies *Last Best Hope* provides both teachers and students with summaries of each chapter of Volume 1, which should make a review of key events of America's first century easy to accomplish.



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6. Standard 2 – Development of the Industrial United States: 1870 to 1900

How well does LBH help students to be able to examine the political, economic, social and cultural development of the United States during the period from 1870 to 1900?

Chapter 1 of *Last Best Hope* (Volume II Enhanced) relates the triumphs and pitfalls of the transformation of the United States into an industrial nation. Bennett calls his chapter on this era “An Age More Golden than Gilded?” A theme throughout is that although there were no presidents in this period that might be deemed “great,” the nation was nonetheless led by honorable, capable men. And “Robber Barons” often led companies that in reality brought goods to people at progressively lower prices.

Politically, Bennett covers all of the closely contested presidential campaigns of this era, as well as the growth of civil service reform as a way to curb political corruption. Socially, the chapter covers well the impact of massive European immigration on American cities, industries, and culture.

The chapter also tells of the impact of industrialism on all sectors of American society. Farmers felt threatened by major corporations and railroads and formed the pivotal “populist” political movement. Reformers in cities who had to deal with masses of poor people impacted by industrialism (and its economic stresses as seen in the depression of the 1890s) responded with a new “social gospel” calling on people of faith to create a more just society here on earth, and not just prepare for a better life in the hereafter.

7. Standard 3 – Emergence of the Modern United States: 1897 to 1920

How well does LBH help students to be able to examine the political, economic, social and cultural development of the United States during the period from 1897 to 1920?

Bennett tells the story of the emergence of a modern America onto the world stage in Chapters 2 and 3 of *Last Best Hope*. Chapter 2 shows how the relatively minor Spanish American War marked America’s turn from a focus on settling its own continent to an interest in lands and resources around the globe. It also helped launch the career of Theodore Roosevelt, who plays a large role in Bennett’s narrative.

Also prominent in Chapter 2 is the rising Progressive Movement that addressed the social, political, and economic challenges brought forth by industrialism. Both political



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parties had strong progressive wings and progressivism opened the way for an expanded role for governments of all levels in the daily lives of Americans.

Chapter 3 focuses on World War I and its dramatic impact on America's role in the world. Bennett shows the impact of the war on all aspects of American culture, from music (George M. Cohan) to mass communication (George Creel and the Committee on Public Information).

Last Best Hope dramatically illustrates that the America of 1920 was a vastly different nation than the America of 1897.

8. Standard 4 – The Modern United States in Prosperity and Depression: 1920s and 1930s

How well does LBH help students be able to examine the political, economic, social and cultural development of the United States during the period from 1920 to 1939?

Bennett's *Last Best Hope* captures American life in the life in the 1920s and 1930s in Chapters 4 and 5. Economic developments are at the center of this story. The U.S. saw the economy boom during the 1920s. Bennett describes the growth of the stock market and the increased access to automobiles and other consumer goods. But this prosperity came to a sudden halt with the stock market crash of 1929.

Social and cultural life during the era is also detailed in *Last Best Hope*. Chapter 4 discusses the new roles for women, especially in cities, and the Harlem Renaissance, spurred by the Great Migration of blacks from southern farms to urban areas in the North. This included the uniquely American art form – jazz. He also shows the impact on culture of new forms of communication, such as radio and motion pictures. All of these developments led to a clash between proponents of modernism and proponents of tradition – as Bennett describes in his accounts of the 1924 Democratic convention and the Scopes “Monkey Trial.”

Politically, Bennett details the Republican dominance during the 1920s in Chapter 4, but with the coming of the Great Depression, Franklin Roosevelt and the Democrats swept to power (chapters 4 and 5). Chapter 5 shows clearly that Roosevelt's New Deal dramatically changed the role of the federal government forever.



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9. Standard 5 – The United States and World War II: 1939 to 1945

How well does LBH help students to be able to examine the causes and course of World War II, the effects of the war on United States society and culture, and the consequences of the war on United States involvement in world affairs?

World War II forms the heart of Bennett's narrative in *Last Best Hope*. In fact, parts of chapter 5 and all of chapters 6, 7, and 8 are dedicated to the war. Chapter 5 covers the rise of totalitarian dictators around the globe. Chapter 6 explains how the war in Europe impacted the American economy and helped pull the U.S. out of the Depression. The chapter also shows FDR's growing awareness of the totalitarian threat in Europe to U.S. security and how the president slowly brought public opinion from a staunch isolationism to a willingness to aid the Allies.

Chapter 7 describes the shock of Pearl Harbor and the dark days of 1942. By 1943 the miracle of American mobilization had begun to turn the tide and in 1944 and 1945, the Allies achieved total victory (Chapter 8). Bennett relates details of all major campaigns across the globe, the importance of Anglo-American cooperation, and the uneasy alliance with the USSR. This tense relationship is clearly seen by the reader as a precursor to the Cold War to follow World War II.

Bennett's description makes clear that World War II was a "total war" that impacted all aspects of American society and culture. He pays particular attention to the changing roles for women and African-Americans.

10. Standard 6 – Postwar United States: 1945 to 1960

How well does LBH help students to be able to examine the political, economic, social and cultural development of the United States during the period from 1945 to 1960?

Bennett covers 1945 to 1960 in chapters 9 and 10 of *Last Best Hope*. Politically, he details key policy initiatives of both the Truman and Eisenhower administrations. Economically, he covers the difficult post war years, which were beset by countless strikes, and the rising prosperity of the 1950s (including the massive growth of the automobile industry, the growth of highways, and the rise of suburbs).

Also crucial during this period are the tense relations with the USSR that became the Cold War – a conflict that included one war, the Korean War. The Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan, and NATO changed American foreign policy forever.



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Socially and culturally, in Chapters 9 and 10 Bennett covers the impact of the “Red Scare” on America. He also shows the courage of early civil rights protestors.

11. Standard 7 – The United States in Troubled Times: 1960 to 1980

How well does LBH help students to be able to examine the political, economic, social and cultural development of the United States during the period from 1960 to 1980?

Last Best Hope covers the period 1960-1980 in Chapters 11, 12, and 13. Politically, Bennett discusses Kennedy’s New Frontier, Johnson’s Great Society, the rise and fall of Richard Nixon, Gerald Ford’s restoration of dignity to the Oval Office, and the surprising election of Jimmy Carter. Economically, Bennett compares the relative prosperity of the 1960s with the “stagflation” of the 1970s. Socially and culturally, Bennett details the rise of the counterculture and its challenge to traditional American values. In the midst of this tumultuous time, Bennett tells of the rise of a new conservative movement shown in the nomination of Barry Goldwater for president by the Republicans in 1964 and by the rising prominence of Ronald Reagan.

Bennett also engages students with the drama of the space program, the divisive Vietnam War, the challenge put forth by Martin Luther King, Jr. and other civil rights protestors for America to live up to its ideals, and the fact that America nearly came apart at its seams during the riots and disturbances of the 1960s.

12. Standard 8 – The Contemporary United States: 1980 to the Present

How well does LBH help students to be able to examine the political, economic, social and cultural development of the United States during the period from 1980 to the present?

Chapter 14, the final chapter of *Last Best Hope*, details key events of the 1980s and the presidency of Ronald Reagan. At the heart of this story is Reagan’s focus on a few key issues – shrinking the size of the federal government by cutting taxes and federal spending, rebuilding a strong U.S. military, and winning the Cold War.

Bennett tells how Reagan’s rise to the presidency and his party’s growing power in Congress represented a dramatic political break after decades of Democratic dominance. He did indeed transform government and raise questions about the very nature of the welfare state. Students will recognize debates about Reagan in this chapter in the debates about public policy still being waged today.



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A key aspect of Bennett's narrative on the Reagan years is Reagan's ability to move beyond the status quo in the Cold war and actually put America in a position to win the decades long conflict, thus opening the door for the spread of freedom around the globe.

Last Best Hope ends in 1989, a conscious decision made by Bennett and the team of educators (Team HOPE) that is adapting the work for classroom use. They reached a consensus that accounts of events beyond the Reagan administration fall into the realm of current events and contemporary politics, rather than history. However, as an aid to teachers and students who want to survey these recent occurrences, the accompanying *Premium Roadmap* covers key political, economic, and social events from 1989 to the present.

13. Standard 9 – Historical Thinking

How well does LBH help students to be able to conduct historical research that incorporates information literacy skills such as forming appropriate research questions; evaluating information by determining its accuracy, relevance and comprehensiveness; interpreting a variety of primary and secondary sources; and presenting their findings with documentation?

One of the great strengths of *Last Best Hope* is Bennett's incorporation of multiple historical points of view. He presents history as not simply a dry recitation of the "facts," but rather as an engaging story *and* a debate between conflicting views of the past. This is seen throughout both volumes of *Last Best Hope*. The author works such divergent perspectives seamlessly into his narrative - examples include the debate over the legacy of Columbus, the founding fathers and slavery, the decision to drop atomic bombs to end World War II, and the challenges laid out by the 1960s counterculture. This approach will open the door for teachers and students together to form research questions and create working theses for historical papers. This aspect of *Last Best Hope* is, more than any other feature, what separates the work from a standard textbook.

The readability of the narrative is the book's strongest attribute, which will undoubtedly increase literacy skills. Students will also gain strength in evaluating primary sources. Bennett incorporates such sources throughout his narrative and even more primary sources are included in the accompanying *Roadmap and Premium Roadmap*. Students will learn to think in a more deeply historical manner and also increase their presentation skills by their participation in multiple classroom activities, such as historical plays and historical debates, included for each chapter in the *Roadmap*, and additionally in the *Premium Roadmap*.