While covering the foundations of American government, this text also moves beyond the nuts and bolts to explain why and how important aspects of government have evolved, their impact on government and individuals, and why they may be controversial, inspire debate, and worth learning.

These three amendments adopted in 1865 through 1879, began to implement the promise of equality and the vision of a unified nation rather than a collection of individual states. These are the 13th, the 14th and the 15th amendments.