

Main lines of the canon

Introductory explanation: characteristics of the main lines

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- It is important that certain terms like “the Netherlands”, “Dutch culture” and “Dutch history” are used with caution. After all, up until the nineteenth century the term “the Netherlands” is an anachronism and the adjective “Dutch” remains problematic in early history. When a text mentions the history of Dutch language and culture, and Dutch territory and the Dutch state, we actually mean “relevant to this region”, without the suggestion that this region in that time already presented a cultural, political or linguistic unity. We have treated these matters as historical phenomena.
- In the texts, Dutch history and culture are not treated as isolated components but rather they are described within the context of developments in Europe and the rest of the world.
- The structure of the main lines is roughly chronological, although it should be pointed out that certain aspects (for example, the struggle against the water or Christian culture) cannot be restricted to one single period.
- The main lines provide orientation in time and place: they sketch a general picture of what the previous generations that inhabited this region would have experienced.

Main lines of the canon of Dutch history and culture

Introduction

These fourteen “main lines of the canon” are meant to serve as background texts to the fifty windows. They are the red threads running through the history of the Netherlands that indicate the cross-links between the separate windows, thereby helping to create cohesion in the topics, objects, persons and themes featured on the chart.

1 The Low Countries by the sea

The modern-day Netherlands was largely “created” by human hands: dyked-in, reclaimed and developed. Adapting to and struggling against water is a red thread in the history of this region.

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→ The Beemster polder • The great flood

2 On the periphery of Europe

The region that is today known as the Netherlands is a river delta on the periphery of the European continent. This geographic position has determined the history of the region throughout the centuries. In 4500 BC, an agrarian society began to develop here, and from the beginning of the Christian era the region formed one of the frontiers of the Roman Empire. In later centuries, the region became part of other large empires. It was only from about 1590 that the first contours of the modern-day Netherlands began to be mapped. However, the borders would often be changed dramatically.

→ The Roman Limes • Charlemagne • Charles V

3 A converted country

Little is known about the religion of the earliest inhabitants of the region, but thanks to Tacitus (among others) we do know something about the gods that the people here honoured. The people of the low countries converted to Christianity from about 600-700 AD. Monasteries became centres of culture. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, wars were waged in the name of the true doctrine. Today, Christianity still remains an important feature of Dutch culture.

→ Megalithic tombs • The Roman Limes • Willibrord • Erasmus • The Beeldenstorm • The Statenbijbel

4 A Dutch language

The earliest extant words written in Dutch date from circa 1100. They were written by a Flemish monk. Printed material in the “mother tongue” only became available in the sixteenth century. Many people continued to speak and write in Latin (scientists) and in French (the elite). Regions had their own dialects. And yet the Netherlands has a long history of literature in its own language. The borders of language do not run parallel to political borders.

→ **Hebban olla vogala • The printing press • The Statenbijbel • Max Havelaar • Annie M.G. Schmidt**

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5 An urbanised country and a trading hub at the mouth of the Rhine, Schelde and Maas rivers

From circa 1100, urbanisation began to take place in the region and trading centres were established. The centre of gravity initially lay in the south (Flanders and Brabant), but by circa 1500 the north (province of Holland) was a strong centre of trade. From circa 1600, the provinces of Holland and Zeeland were important hubs for trade in Europe. The modern-day Netherlands continues to fulfil this function.

→ **The Hanseatic League • The canal ring • The port of Rotterdam**

6 The Republic of the Seven United Netherlands: founded on rebellion

Towns, with their citizens, have different interests than the nobility. The first signs of a clash of these interests could be seen early. In the late Middle Ages, the Burgundian rulers tried to bring the Low Countries under one administration, but this policy met with resistance from both town-dwellers and the nobility. In the sixteenth century, this resistance blended with the call for Reformation. War broke out and the nobility became “gueux”. William of Orange rose to become the leader of the Rebellion and for this reason is known as the “father of the fatherland”. The unique political structure known as the “Republic” developed after his violent death in 1584. Features of the Republic: the administrative power of regents; weak central authority; religious tolerance.

→ **Floris V • Charles V • The Beeldenstorm • William of Orange • The Republic • Spinoza • The canal ring**

7 The blossoming of the Golden Age

The Republic of the Seven United Netherlands was a superpower in Europe in the seventeenth century: economically, politically and culturally. The period was short but intense. Immigrants (Jews, Flemings, Huguenots) played an important role in this blossoming.

In the cultural domain, the scope and quality of seventeenth-century painting was particularly remarkable. Economically, it was shipping, the staple market, the highly-developed land cultivation and industry. Politically, the Republic had a unique form of government on a continent where monarchies were the rule. The disaster year of 1672 signalled the beginning of the end for this period of previously unknown blossoming. Thereafter, the Republic was a humble player on the European stage, dependent on the European powers for room to manoeuvre. In economic and cultural terms, the Republic was also less of a European player from the end of the seventeenth century.

→ **Rembrandt • Michiel de Ruyter • Spinoza • Country mansions**

8 Business sense and colonial power

Dutch ships took to the seas from about 1600. Europe was the world's centre of trade, but business was conducted in Asia, Africa and America as well. Colonies were established in Asia and America. The Dutch also traded in slaves on all three continents. In the nineteenth century, the centralisation of the Dutch administration of the colonies led to lengthy wars. To this day, the Netherlands still maintains strong ties with Indonesia, Surinam and the Antilles.

→ **The VOC • Slavery • Max Havelaar • Indonesia • Surinam and the Antilles • Diversity in the Netherlands**

9 Nation-state, constitutional monarchy

In the second half of the eighteenth century, due to the influence of the Enlightenment, among other things, the need arose among a broad range of people to acquire and disseminate knowledge. New ideas about the organisation of the state and society were discussed. The patriot movement's attempts to limit the power of the Stadholders (governors) and to give the people a greater voice were initially unsuccessful.

The modern-day Dutch state was formed between 1795 and 1848. The foundations of the nation-state were laid in the French period (1795-1813). After the defeat of Napoleon, William I, the son of the last Stadholder (governor) became king of a united kingdom. This “restoration” of the Netherlands did not last long, because Brussels joined in the rebellions of the year 1830. In 1848, the foundations for a constitutional monarchy (as the Netherlands still is today) were laid with the drafting of the Constitution by Thorbecke. The kingdom became minor power that cherishes its neutrality.

→ **Country mansions • Eise Eisinga • The patriots • Napoleon Bonaparte • King William I • The Constitution**

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10 The rise of modern society

From circa 1870, Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague and Utrecht began to grow into cities. Industrialisation reached the region relatively late. The laying of the first railways began somewhat earlier. Distances became smaller: the integration of the Netherlands had begun.

The call for equality under the law became stronger. “Common” citizens demanded their say in society and politics. This resulted in universal suffrage being granted to men and women in 1917 and 1919 respectively. “Modern” artists of the time no longer regarded themselves as the keepers of established artistic traditions and reveal themselves as artistic innovators. In literature this goal is reflected in the “Movement of the Eighties”, in painting, in Impressionism and Post-impressionism and in the applied art of the Art Nouveau and Modernism movements.

→ **The first railway • Opposition to child labour • Vincent van Gogh • Aletta Jacobs • World War I • De Stijl**

11 The Netherlands in a time of World War 1914-1945

As a small country, the Netherlands tried to avoid involvement in large conflicts in Europe. It succeeded during World War I, but at its end, the Netherlands was dragged into a world crisis. The blackest moments of the German occupation were the bombing of Rotterdam, the deportation and murder of the Jewish population and the winter of starvation. In Asia, the war began in 1942, but after the liberation of 1945 a new war began that lasted until 1949. World War II is referred to as “the past that refuses to become history”.

→ **World War I • De Stijl • The crisis years • World War II • Anne Frank • Indonesia**

12 The welfare state, democratisation and secularisation

Reconstruction began immediately after the end of World War II. After those years of deprivation and hard work, the 1950s heralded in a period of great change in the lifestyle of the Dutch population. The welfare state and an affluent society ensured a radical rise in the standard of living. In addition, people were breaking their ties with their church, socio-political group and family. This change was marked in particular by less hierarchical relationships between parents and children, the rise of new male and female role patterns and increasingly open views on sexuality. In terms of politics, this was combined with a strong movement towards democratisation: the authority of established, elite groups was called into question.

→ **Willem Drees • The great flood • Television • The port of Rotterdam • Annie M.G. Schmidt • The natural gas deposit**

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13 The diversification of the Netherlands

After World War II, the Netherlands became embroiled in a colonial war with the Indonesian independence movement. During and after this war, many Dutch, Indo-Europeans, and Moluccans left for the Netherlands. Other immigration waves followed: in the 1960s, workers from Mediterranean countries arrived, at the time of the decolonisation of Surinam (1975) people arrived from the former colony and later from the Netherlands Antilles, as well as numerous other regions. Dutch society changed with this increasing immigration. Inevitably, tensions arose between the established inhabitants and the new arrivals.

→ **Indonesia • Surinam and the Antilles • Diversity in the Netherlands**

14 The Netherlands in Europe

After World War II made way for the Cold War, the Netherlands became an advocate of Atlantic and European cooperation. Once the Cold War had ended, European cooperation rapidly gained momentum. In this phase, the Netherlands was also active in UN peacekeeping missions.

→ **Srebrenica • Europe**

Primary education sector and lower secondary education

The table below gives a summary of the possibilities for differentiating the content of the wall chart with fifty topics and the main lines for the primary education sector and the lower secondary education sector respectively.

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Primary education	Lower secondary education
<p>Dutch history and culture form the core of the course material.</p>	<p>European history and culture together form the starting point for the course material. Dutch history and culture are discussed as a component of this complex.</p>
<p>Dutch history and culture are treated in relation to the outside world, but remain the “main story”.</p>	<p>The “story of the Netherlands” is part of and connected to other “stories”. Comparisons are therefore possible, for example, comparing the Republic with French absolutism, or Dutch democracy in the 1930s with German Nazism.</p>
<p>The main emphasis is on the storyline.</p>	<p>Alongside the storyline aspect, more attention is paid to the relationships between the themes and to long-term developments.</p>
<p>The emphasis lies on the acquisition of orientation knowledge and less on acquiring skills.</p>	<p>The emphasis is still on the acquisition of orientation knowledge, but on a higher, more abstract level than at primary schools. This means that it is possible to pay more attention to, for example, cause-and-effect relationships and historical empathy.</p>