

APUSH Writing Guidelines & Historical Thinking Skills

The AP history courses seek to apprentice students to the practice of history by explicitly stressing the development of historical thinking skills while learning historical content. Students best develop historical thinking skills by investigating the past in ways that reflect the discipline of history, most particularly through the **exploration and interpretation** of a rich array of primary sources and secondary texts and through the regular development of **historical argumentation in writing**.

This section presents the historical thinking skills that students should develop in all AP history courses. The **nine** historical thinking skills are grouped into four categories:

1. Analyzing Sources and Evidence,
2. Making Historical Connections,
3. Chronological Reasoning, and
4. Creating and Supporting a Historical Argument.

The first table [page 2 of this document] describes how each skill demonstrates historical thinking from the perspective of a history practitioner. The second table lists the proficiency expectations for each of the nine historical thinking skills. **Every AP Exam question will assess one or more of the skill-based proficiency expectations as well as one or more of the thematic learning objectives.**

There are 9 skills, but the **BIG FOUR** are the ones you will be answering directly on essays. Other skills are important for *how you write* your essays or *how you analyze* multiple choice prompts and short answer questions.

1. **Historical Causation** (Explaining causes and/or evaluating impact of events)
2. **Patterns of Continuity and Change over Time** (Explaining how & why things change or remain the same)
3. **Periodization** (Analyzing turning points and characterizing eras)
4. **Comparison** (Explaining how and why events are similar and/or different)

The AP U.S. History Exam is 3 hours and 15 minutes long and includes both a 100-minute multiple-choice / short-answer section (Part I) and a 95-minute free-response section (Part II). Each section is divided into two parts, as shown in the table below. A majority of your points will come from writing... and understanding these skills is extremely important in ensuring you are prepared for the prompts! Skills are also necessary in interpreting multiple choice questions.

Section	AP Exam Question Type	Number of Questions	Timing	Percentage of Total Exam Score
I	Part A: Multiple-choice questions	55 questions	55 minutes	40%
	Part B: Short-answer questions	4 questions	50 minutes	20%
BREAK				
II	Part A: Document-based question	1 question	55 minutes	25%
	Part B: Long essay question	1 question (chosen from a pair)	35 minutes	15%

Historical Thinking Skill Categories

Analyzing Historical Sources and Evidence		Making Historical Connections	Chronological Reasoning	Creating and Supporting an Argument
Primary Sources	Secondary Sources			

Historical Thinking Skill Descriptions

<p>1. Analyzing Evidence: Content and Sourcing</p> <p>Historical thinking involves the ability to describe, select, and evaluate relevant evidence about the past from diverse sources (including written documents, works of art, archaeological artifacts, oral traditions, and other primary sources) and draw conclusions about their relevance to different historical issues.</p> <p>A historical analysis of sources focuses on the interplay between the content of a source and the authorship, point of view, purpose, audience, and format or medium of that source, assessing the usefulness, reliability, and limitations of the source as historical evidence.</p>	<p>2. Interpretation</p> <p>Historical thinking involves the ability to describe, analyze, and evaluate the different ways historians interpret the past. This includes understanding the various types of questions historians ask, as well as considering how the particular circumstances and contexts in which individual historians work and write shape their interpretations of past events and historical evidence.</p>	<p>3. Comparison</p> <p>Historical thinking involves the ability to identify, compare, and evaluate multiple perspectives on a given historical event in order to draw conclusions about that event.</p> <p>It also involves the ability to describe, compare, and evaluate multiple historical developments within one society, one or more developments across or between different societies, and in various chronological and geographical contexts.</p> <p>4. Contextualization</p> <p>Historical thinking involves the ability to connect historical events and processes to specific circumstances of time and place as well as broader regional, national, or global processes.</p> <p>5. Synthesis</p> <p>Historical thinking involves the ability to develop understanding of the past by making meaningful and persuasive historical and/or cross-disciplinary connections between a given historical issue and other historical contexts, periods, themes, or disciplines.</p>	<p>6. Causation</p> <p>Historical thinking involves the ability to identify, analyze, and evaluate the relationships among historical causes and effects, distinguishing between those that are long term and proximate. Historical thinking also involves the ability to distinguish between causation and correlation, and an awareness of contingency, the way that historical events result from a complex variety of factors that come together in unpredictable ways and often have unanticipated consequences.</p> <p>7. Patterns of Continuity and Change over Time</p> <p>Historical thinking involves the ability to recognize, analyze, and evaluate the dynamics of historical continuity and change over periods of time of varying length, as well as the ability to relate these patterns to larger historical processes or themes.</p> <p>8. Periodization</p> <p>Historical thinking involves the ability to describe, analyze, and evaluate different ways that historians divide history into discrete and definable periods. Historians construct and debate different, sometimes competing models of periodization; the choice of specific turning points or starting and ending dates might accord a higher value to one narrative, region, or group than to another.</p>	<p>9. Argumentation</p> <p>Historical thinking involves the ability to create an argument and support it using relevant historical evidence.</p> <p>Creating a historical argument includes defining and framing a question about the past and then formulating a claim or argument about that question, often in the form of a thesis. A persuasive historical argument requires a precise and defensible thesis or claim, supported by rigorous analysis of relevant and diverse historical evidence. The argument and evidence used should be framed around the application of a specific historical thinking skill (e.g., comparison, causation, patterns of continuity and change over time, or periodization).</p> <p>Furthermore, historical thinking involves the ability to examine multiple pieces of evidence in concert with each other, noting contradictions, corroborations, and other relationships among sources to develop and support an argument.</p> <p>Argumentation Continued: Using Evidence to Support an Argument</p> <p>Historical thinking involves the ability to examine multiple pieces of evidence in concert with each other, noting contradictions, corroborations, and other relationships among sources to develop and support an argument.</p>
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Historical Thinking Skill Proficiency Expectations

Students will be able to...

ANALYZE EVIDENCE...

1. Explain the relevance of the author's point of view, author's purpose, audience, format or medium, and/or historical context as well as the interaction among these features, to demonstrate understanding of the significance of a primary source.
2. Evaluate the usefulness, reliability, and/ or limitations of a primary source in answering particular historical questions.

INTERPRET DOCUMENTS...

1. Analyze a historian's argument, explain how the argument has been supported through the analysis of relevant historical evidence, and evaluate the argument's effectiveness.
2. Analyze diverse historical interpretations.

COMPARE & CONTRAST...

1. Compare diverse perspectives represented in primary and secondary sources in order to draw conclusions about one or more historical events.
2. Compare different historical individuals, events, developments, and/ or processes, analyzing both similarities and differences in order to draw historically valid conclusions. Comparisons can be made across different time periods, across different geographical locations, and between different historical events or developments within the same time period and/ or geographical location.

CONTEXTUALIZE...

1. Situate historical events, developments, or processes within the broader regional, national, or global context in which they occurred in order to draw conclusions about their relative significance.

SYNTHESIZE...

1. Make connections between a given historical issue and related developments in a different historical context, geographical area, period, or era, including the present.
2. Make connections between different course themes and/or approaches to history (such as political, economic, social, cultural, or intellectual) for a given historical issue.

ANALYZE CAUSES AND EFFECTS...

1. Explain long and /or short-term causes and/or effects of an historical event, development, or process.
2. Evaluate the relative significance of different causes and/or effects on historical events or processes, distinguishing between causation and correlation and showing an awareness of historical contingency.

ANALYZE PATTERNS OF CONTINUITY AND CHANGE OVER TIME...

1. Identify patterns of continuity and change over time and explain the significance of such patterns.
2. Explain how patterns of continuity and change over time relate to larger historical processes or themes.

ANALYZE HISTORICAL PERIODS...

1. Explain ways historical events and processes can be organized into discrete, different, and definable historical periods.
2. Evaluate whether a particular event or date could or could not be a turning point between different, definable historical periods, when considered in terms of particular historical evidence.
3. Analyze different and/or competing models of periodization.

CREATE AND DEFEND AN ARGUMENT...

1. Articulate a defensible claim about the past in the form of a clear and compelling thesis that evaluates the relative importance of multiple factors and recognizes disparate, diverse, or contradictory evidence or perspectives.
2. Develop and support a historical argument, including in a written essay, through a close analysis of relevant and diverse historical evidence, framing the argument and evidence around the application of a specific historical thinking skill (e.g., *comparison, causation, patterns of continuity and change over time, or periodization*).
3. Evaluate evidence to explain its relevance to a claim or thesis, providing clear and consistent links between the evidence and the argument.
4. Relate diverse historical evidence in a cohesive way to illustrate contradiction, corroboration, qualification, and other types of historical relationships in developing an argument.

Creating Your Argument... The Thesis Statement – What are you defending?

Your thesis is not only your answer or stand on a question, it is your entire introductory paragraph which includes your answer/stand, analysis of an opposing or alternate viewpoint, context, and organizational categories/themes. Your introduction will typically be between 2 and 5 sentences, and it should clearly communicate your answer/stand and what you will be expounding upon in your body paragraphs.

The Thesis Formula:

Although X, Y because ABC.

'X' represents the strongest point against your argument. We call this the counter-argument. It can also be an alternate viewpoint.

'A, B, and C' represent the three strongest points for your argument. We call these your organization categories. Sometimes you may only have two... other times four... three is usual but not mandatory.

'Y' represents the position you will be taking – in other words, your stand on the prompt. Your Y must be clear and ATFP... *address the full prompt!*

For example, if you were addressing the prompt, "Evaluate the extent to which westward migration in the later 19th century contributed to maintaining continuity as well as fostering change in the United States," your thesis might include the following:

Y: led to dramatic changes

ABC: geographically, economically, and politically

X: maintained continuity culturally

Weak Thesis: Although westward migration maintained continuity, it fostered change to a greater extent because of changes in politics, economics, and geography.

Strong Thesis: Although westward migration in the later 19th century propagated the spirit of manifest destiny and white dominance which was consistent with westward expansion in the early 19th century with things like the addition of new states in the Louisiana Territory and the Trail of Tears, the movement westward in the later half of the 19th century fostered change to a greater extent than it maintained continuity. Change came economically with new technology, resources, and labor, politically with new, western political organizations and agendas, and geographically with dramatic changes to the environment.

Formulas for the BIG FOUR

The formula is essentially the same for any type of question, and you can move the variables around. Below you will find some different ways to use it depending on what type of question you are answering.

1. **Historical Causation:**

What are the major causes or consequences of "event" and what were the most important causes or consequences of "event"?

X = least important cause or consequence, with an explanation why

A, B, C = most important causes / consequences, explanations why, broken up into organizational categories

Y = your assertion statement

2. **Continuity and Change over Time:**

What are the major patterns of continuity or change over the time period and was there more continuity or change over that time period?

X = continuity or change, your counter-argument

A, B, C = continuity or change during the specified time period, broken up into organizational categories

Y = your assertion statement

3. **Compare and Contrast:**

What similarities and differences are there between the two things, are there more similarities or differences, and why, account for those similarities or differences?

X = more similar or different, your counter-argument

A, B, C = similarities or differences between the two things, broken up into organizational categories

Y = your assertion statement

4. **Periodization | (or Take a Position):**

Evaluate whether something was a turning point or a major marking period in history, noting what things were like before and after that period.

X = counter argument, why something was or was not a turning point

A, B, C = argument, why something was a turning point broken up into organizational categories

Y = your assertion statement

Body Paragraphs – What are you saying?

Each body paragraph will focus on a category or theme and contain your exposition (defending your thesis) with specific, historical evidence relevant to your topic. Your goal is to have at least three – five specific pieces of evidence for each category or theme. If you are including document analysis, remember you still need outside evidence independent from the documents. For the DBQ, you will also need to extend your argument and analysis by illustrating contradictions, corroborations, and/or qualifications.

One last thing about your body paragraphs... end each one with “Close the Loop!”

Closing the loop means to explain *how or why* your evidence supports your thesis... always connect back to your thesis!

How to Reference the Documents in the DBQ

The most *unsophisticated* way to reference a document in a DBQ essay is to do the following, “According to ‘Document 1’ blah, blah, blah.” “Document 1 says this; document 2 says this . . . etc.” Don’t do this!

Instead, you should show the reader that you understand the documents and use them effectively within the argument of your paper. **DO NOT quote the documents.** In order to get full credit (3 points) for document usage on the DBQ, you must be **HIPP*** and you must use **ALL or ALL BUT ONE document**. Document usage in the DBQ will include (at least H + one of the other levels of analysis must be employed):

***H: Historical Context + I: Intended Audience or P: Purpose or P: Point of View**

Suppose you had a document that was excerpt from the Clayton Antitrust Act. Your **HIPP** may look something like this:

H: Historical Context – Progressive Era, President Wilson signed, Act of Congress to limit monopolies

I: Intended Audience – The United States of America (adding new laws) and businesses

P: Purpose - help the government break up trusts/monopolies, fix the problems of the earlier Sherman Anti-Trust Act

P: Point of View – It is in the nation’s best interest to support competition and fair business practices, therefore government needs the power to force trusts to bust up

YOU DO NOT NEED TO HAVE ALL FOUR COMPONENTS... JUST H + ONE OF IPP

What would it look like in an essay? If you had a paragraph addressing ways the federal government implemented progressive reform in the early 1900s, you could include the document like this: “The historical context of the Clayton Antitrust Act was the Progressive Era in the early 1900s when Wilson’s administration supported progressive legislation as they were desperately seeking help in enforcing anti-trust legislation under a relatively inefficient Sherman Antitrust Act. The purpose was to give some enforcement power over anti- trust legislation to the federal government.”

Conclusion – How much should you say?

Your concluding paragraph should NOT simply restate your thesis. You want to conclude with higher level analysis; however your conclusion does not need to be extensive. For your essays in this class, your conclusions will have three requirements.

Conclusion Formula: Therefore, Y + BC. BC is similar/different to OC, because E.

First: Restating your thesis with broad context... **Therefore, Y + BC.** (one sentence)

BC = Broad Context... what is the *big picture* within the era you are writing about... (identify one of the major historical themes – MAGPIES)

Second: Synthesis... or *Other Context* (similar in kind but in a different time)... One sentence connecting and comparing, then

OC = Other Context... what other time period experienced a similar or different big picture/theme?

Third: Explanation... One sentence explaining *how* your theme/topic is similar or different than that same theme/topic in a different era.

E = explanation (at least one strong piece of evidence to support your comparison)

How will you be graded?

Long Essay (LE) RUBRIC – 6 Possible Points

<p>Thesis: Introductory Paragraph Skill: ARGUMENTATION <u>Must use thesis formula!</u> Although X, Y because ABC. Don't forget to ATFP!</p> <p>Presents a thesis that makes a historically defensible claim and responds to all parts of the question. The thesis must consist of one or more sentences located in one place, the introduction. The thesis must DO MORE than restate the question, it must have complex analysis including opposing/varying viewpoint or evaluation of significance [depending on prompt].</p>	◇
<p>Support for Argument: Body Paragraphs Skill: ARGUMENTATION <u>Explain Your Evidence + Close the Loop!</u> Stay within parameters!</p> <p>Supports the stated thesis (or makes a relevant argument) using specific evidence <i>from relevant era</i> (at least 3 specific pieces of evidence) and Clearly and consistently states how the evidence supports the thesis or argument, and establishing clear linkages (close the loop... connect back to your thesis!)</p>	◇ First Point Must Be Earned Before Second Point Possible ◇
<p>Application of Targeted Skill: Body Paragraphs Skill: TARGETED "BIG FOUR" SKILL <u>Apply the Skill with Evidence!</u></p> <p><u>Change Over Time</u> Describes historical continuity and change over time. and Clearly and thoroughly explains <i>at least 3 specific reasons/examples</i> that both maintained continuity and fostered change .</p> <p><u>Comparison</u> Describes similarities and differences among historical individuals, events, developments, or processes. and Clearly and specifically explains <i>at least 3 specific reasons</i> for both similarities and differences or, [depending on prompt], and evaluates the significance historical individuals, events, developments, or processes.</p> <p><u>Causation</u> Describes causes and/or effects of a historical event, development, or process. and Clearly and thoroughly explains <i>at least 3 specific reasons</i> for the causes and/or effects of the historical event, development, or process. [If prompt asks for both... analysis must cover both!]</p> <p><u>Periodization</u> Describes the ways in which the historical development specified in the prompt was different from and similar to developments that preceded and/or followed. and Clearly and thoroughly explains the extent to which the historical development specified in the prompt was different from and similar to other developments that preceded and/or followed.</p>	◇ First Point Must Be Earned Before Second Point Possible ◇
<p>Synthesis: Concluding Paragraph <u>Must us conclusion formula!</u> Therefore, Y + BC. BC is similar/different to OC, because E.</p> <p>Accurately and explicitly extends the argument by explaining the connections between the argument and a development in a <u>different historical period</u>, situation, era, or geographical area.</p> <p>[Although the official rubric has options for historiography and thematic contrasting, in this class your conclusion will focus on comparative context.]</p>	◇

Grade Conversion: 6 = 100; 5 = 90; 4 = 80; 3 = 70 ; 2 = 60; 1 = 50

TOTAL: _____

Document Based Question (DBQ) RUBRIC – 7 Possible Points

Thesis: Introductory Paragraph Skill: ARGUMENTATION Must use thesis formula! <i>Although X, Y because ABC. Don't forget to ATFP!</i>							
Presents a thesis that makes a historically defensible claim and responds to all parts of the question. The thesis must consist of one or more sentences located in one place, the introduction. The thesis must DO MORE than restate the question; it must have complex analysis including opposing/varying viewpoint or evaluation of significance [depending on prompt].							
Document Analysis & Support for Argument: Body Paragraphs Skills: ANALYZING EVIDENCE and Argumentation Analyze Documents & Use Them To Defend Your Thesis! Cite Docs! Close the Loop! Stay within parameters!							
	Doc. 1	Doc. 2	Doc. 3	Doc. 4	Doc. 5	Doc. 6	Doc. 7
a. Offers plausible analysis in support of stated thesis or relevant argument							
b. Includes extended HIPP analysis (not found in source)							
1 Point: At least 6 documents used effectively to support the stated thesis or relevant argument. 1 Point: At least 4 documents analyzed effectively (author's point of view, purpose, audience, or historical context).							
Argument Development – 1 Point: Develops and supports a cohesive argument that recognizes and accounts for historical complexity by explicitly illustrating relationships among historical evidence such as contradiction, corroboration, and/or qualification.							
Using Evidence Beyond the Documents: Body Paragraphs Skills: CONTEXTUALIZATION & Argumentation Additional evidence to defend thesis NOT found in the documents! Stay within parameters!							
Provides an example or additional piece of specific evidence beyond those found in the documents to support or qualify the argument. This example must be thoroughly explained. Other outside evidence assessed as parts of the introduction, conclusion, or document analysis will not count.							
Contextualization (continuation of using evidence beyond the documents) & Synthesis: Concluding Paragraph Must us conclusion formula! Therefore, Y + BC. BC is similar/different to OC, because E.							
Contextualization – 1 point: Situates the argument by explaining the broader historical events, developments, or processes immediately relevant to the question. This broad contextualization must be thoroughly explained with outside – specific evidence.							
Synthesis – 1 point: Accurately and explicitly extends the argument by explaining the connections between the argument and a development in a <u>different historical period</u> , situation, era, or geographical area. [Although the official rubric has options for historiography and thematic contrasting, in this class your conclusion will focus on comparative context.]							

Grade Conversion: 7 = 100 ; 6 = 95; 5 =90; 4 = 80 ; 3 = 70 ; 2 = 60; 1 = 50

TOTAL: _____