

# I. Historical Thinking Skills

This section presents the historical thinking skills that are meant to be explored by students throughout the AP U.S. History course. **Every AP Exam question will require a student to apply one of the historical thinking skills to one of the thematic learning objectives** (see Section II).

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.

Skill Type	Historical Thinking Skill
I. Chronological Reasoning	1. <b>Historical Causation</b>
	2. <b>Patterns of Continuity and Change over Time</b>
	3. <b>Periodization</b>
II. Comparison and Contextualization	4. <b>Comparison</b>
	5. Contextualization
III. Crafting Historical Arguments from Historical Evidence	6. Historical Argumentation
	7. Appropriate Use of Relevant Historical Evidence
IV. Historical Interpretation and Synthesis	8. Interpretation
	9. Synthesis

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!

Section	AP Exam Question Type	Number of Questions	Timing	Percentage of Total Exam
I	Part A: Multiple-choice questions	55 questions	55 minutes	40%
	Part B: <b>Short-answer</b> questions	4 questions	45 minutes	<b>20%</b>
	BREAK			
II	Part A: <b>Document-based question</b>	1 question	60 minutes	<b>25%</b>
	Part B: <b>Long essay question</b>	1 question (chosen from a pair)	35 minutes	<b>15%</b>

## Skill Type I: Chronological Reasoning

### Skill 1: Historical Causation (cause and effect/impact)

Historical thinking involves the ability to **identify, analyze, and evaluate the relationships among multiple historical causes and effects**, distinguishing between those that are **long-term and proximate**, and among coincidence, causation, and correlation.

#### Proficient students should be able to ...

- Compare causes and/or effects, including between short-term and long-term effects.
- Analyze and evaluate the interaction of multiple causes and/or effects.
- Assess historical contingency by distinguishing among coincidence, causation, and correlation, as well as critiquing existing interpretations of cause and effect.

### Skill 2: Patterns of Continuity and Change over Time

Historical thinking involves the ability to recognize, analyze, and evaluate the dynamics of historical continuity and change over periods of time of varying lengths, as well as the ability to **relate these patterns to larger historical processes or themes**.

#### Proficient students should be able to ...

- Analyze and evaluate historical patterns of continuity and change over time.
- Connect patterns of continuity and change over time to larger historical processes or themes.

### Skill 3: Periodization

Historical thinking involves the ability to describe, analyze, evaluate, and construct models that historians use to **organize history into discrete periods**. To accomplish this periodization of history, historians **identify turning points** and recognize that the choice of specific dates gives a higher value to one narrative, region, or group than to other narratives, regions, or groups. How a historian defines historical periods depends on what the historian considers most significant — political, economic, social, cultural, or environmental factors. Changing periodization can change a historical narrative. Moreover, historical thinking involves being aware of how the circumstances and contexts of a historian's work might shape his or her choices about periodization.

#### Proficient students should be able to ...

- Explain ways that historical events and processes can be organized within blocks of time.
- Analyze and evaluate competing models of periodization of United States history.

## Skill Type II: Comparison and Contextualization

### Skill 4: Comparison (comparing AND contrasting)

Historical thinking 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. It also involves the ability to **identify, compare, and evaluate multiple perspectives** on a given historical experience.

#### Proficient students should be able to ...

- Compare related historical developments and processes across place, time, and/or different societies, or within one society.
- Explain and evaluate multiple and differing perspectives on a given historical phenomenon.

*...it's not just about similarities and differences... its about the significance of those similarities and differences...*

### Skill 5: Contextualization

Historical thinking involves the ability to **connect historical events and processes to specific circumstances of time and place** and to broader regional, national, or global processes.

#### Proficient students should be able to ...

- Explain and evaluate ways in which specific historical phenomena, events, or processes connect to broader regional, national, or global processes occurring at the same time.
- Explain and evaluate ways in which a phenomenon, event, or process connects to other, similar historical phenomena across time and place.

#### Think of context as a three part concept...

- Local context...** facts about the event, describing who/what/when etc.
- Broad context...** the bigger picture, theme, era, why/how
- Other context...** similar in kind but from a different kind... (connecting the theme/era to another era with same theme)

## Skill Type III: Crafting Historical Arguments from Historical Evidence

### Skill 6: Historical Argumentation

Historical thinking involves the ability to define and frame a question about the past and to address that question through the construction of an argument. A plausible and persuasive argument requires a **clear, comprehensive, and analytical thesis**, supported by **relevant historical evidence** — not simply evidence that supports a preferred or preconceived position. In addition, argumentation involves the capacity to describe, analyze, and **evaluate the arguments of others** in light of available evidence.

#### Proficient students should be able to ...

- Analyze commonly accepted historical arguments and explain how an argument has been constructed from historical evidence.
- Construct convincing interpretations through analysis of disparate, relevant historical evidence.
- Evaluate and synthesize conflicting historical evidence to construct persuasive historical arguments.

### Skill 7: Appropriate Use of Relevant Historical Evidence

Historical thinking involves the ability to **describe and evaluate evidence** about the past from diverse sources (including written documents, works of art, archaeological artifacts, oral traditions, and other primary sources) and requires the students to pay attention to the content, authorship, purpose, format, and audience of such sources. It involves the capacity to **extract useful information**, make **supportable inferences**, and **draw appropriate conclusions** from historical evidence, while also **noting the context** in which the evidence was produced and used, recognizing its limitations and assessing the points of view it reflects.

#### Proficient students should be able to ...

- Analyze features of historical evidence such as audience, purpose, point of view, format, argument, limitations, and context germane to the evidence considered.
- Based on analysis and evaluation of historical evidence, make supportable inferences and draw appropriate conclusions.

#### Use HIPP to help you break down sources!

**H**istorical context

**I**ntended audience

**P**oint of view (author's)

**P**urpose (author's)

*Then ask yourself... how does this information support or refute my thesis?*

## Skill Type IV: Historical Interpretation and Synthesis

### Skill 8: Interpretation

Historical thinking involves the ability to **describe, analyze, evaluate, and construct diverse interpretations of the past**, and being aware of how particular circumstances and contexts in which individual historians work and write also shape their interpretation of past events. Historical interpretation requires analyzing evidence, reasoning, determining the context, and **evaluating points of view** found in both primary and secondary sources.

#### Proficient students should be able to ...

- Analyze diverse historical interpretations.
- Evaluate how historians' perspectives influence their interpretations and how models of historical interpretation change over time.

#### Use HIPP to help you break down sources!

**H** istorical context

**I** ntended audience

**P** oint of view (author's)

**P** urpose (author's)

*Then ask yourself... what is an opposing point of view?*

### Skill 9: Synthesis

**(this will be one of your major goals when writing your concluding paragraphs!)**

Historical thinking involves the ability to develop **meaningful and persuasive new understandings of the past** by applying all of the other historical thinking skills, by drawing appropriately on ideas and methods from different fields of inquiry or disciplines, and by creatively fusing disparate, relevant, and sometimes contradictory evidence from **primary sources and secondary works**. Additionally, synthesis may involve applying **insights about the past to other historical contexts or circumstances, including the present**.

#### Proficient students should be able to ...

- Combine disparate, sometimes contradictory evidence from primary sources and secondary works in order to create a persuasive understanding of the past.
- Apply insights about the past to other historical contexts or circumstances, including the present.