

**It's About Time:**

**Preparing for the**

**AP U.S. History Exam**

Developed by  
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<http://whyteachhistory.com/apush/review>

# The AP U.S. History Exam

Exam Date: \_\_\_\_\_

- Students should take a pencil, eraser, pen (blue or black ink), and government-issued or school-issued photo ID. Students may also want to bring a watch.
- Students should not bring any electronic equipment or communication devices, like cell phones, smart phones, tablets, or anything else that contains a camera or provides access to the internet. Do not bring watches that beep or have an alarm. No food or drink, including bottled water, is allowed at the testing site.

## SECTION ONE

**Part A: Multiple Choice Questions** .....**55 minutes** (40% of exam score)  
55 questions organized in sets of 2-5

**Part B: Short Answer Questions** .....**40 minutes** (20% of exam score)  
3 questions (3 parts to each question)

- **Question #1:** Students will **analyze a secondary source** that addresses content from **Periods 3-8 (1754-1980)**.
- **Question #2:** Students will apply the the skill of either **causation or comparison** to a **primary source** that addresses content from **Periods 3-8 (1754-1980)**.
- **Question #3:** Students will apply the skill of either **causation or comparison** to a question from either **Periods 1-5 (1491-1877) or Periods 6-9 (1865 to the present)**.

## SECTION TWO

**Part A: Document-Based Question** .....**60 minutes** (25% of exam score)  
1 question (5-7 documents)

**Part B: Long Essay Question** .....**40 minutes** (15% of exam score)  
1 question

- Choose from three questions dealing with **Periods 1-3 (1491-1800), Periods 4-6 (1800-1898), or Periods 7-9 (1865 to the present)**.

## Passing the AP U.S History Exam

*Think analytically.*

*Write well.*

*Know a significant amount of historical information.*

# AP History – Practices and Skills

## Disciplinary Practices

### 1. Argument Development

- ❖ *What position should I take on a historical question, and what evidence will support my position?*

### 2. Analyzing Historical Evidence

- ❖ *How reliable and relevant are the original source documents that I am analyzing?*

## Reasoning Skills

### 3. Contextualization

- ❖ *When and where did something happen, and what else was going on?*

### 4. Comparison

- ❖ *Regarding two or more historical topics, how are they the same and how are they different?*

### 5. Historical Causation

- ❖ *Why did something happen in the past, and what was the impact?*

### 6. Continuity and Change over Time

- ❖ *What has stayed the same in history, and what has changed?* Applying Thinking Skills to AP U.S. History Essays

## AP U.S. History Requires Analytical Thinking

*Making an assertion.*

*Defending the assertion with **specific, accurate, and relevant** information.*

*Anticipating and addressing counterarguments.*

# Applying Disciplinary Practices and Reasoning Skills to AP U.S. History Essays

1. **The Short-Answer Questions will assess the following:**
  - Analyzing Historical Evidence (primary and secondary sources)
  - Argument Development
  - Causation
  - Comparison
2. **The DBQ will assess the following:**
  - a. Argument Development
  - b. Analyzing Historical Evidence
  - c. Contextualization (Two Types)
3. **The Long Essay will assess Argument Development and *one* of the following reasoning skills:**
  - Contextualization
  - Causation
  - Comparison
  - Continuity and Change over Time

## Nine Time Periods for AP U.S. History

**Period 1:** 1491-1607

**Period 2:** 1607-1754

**Period 3:** 1754-1800

**Period 4:** 1800-1848

**Period 5:** 1844-1877

**Period 6:** 1865-1898

**Period 7:** 1890-1945

**Period 8:** 1945-1980

**Period 9:** 1980-Present

# Themes in U.S. History

1. **American and National Identity**
  - a. Explain how ideas about democracy, freedom, and individualism found expression in the development of cultural values, political institutions, and American identity.
  - b. Explain how interpretations of the Constitution and debates over rights, liberties, and definitions of citizenship have affected American values, politics, and society.
  - c. Analyze how ideas about national identity changed in response to U.S. involvement in international conflicts and the growth of the United States.
  - d. Analyze relationships among different regional, social, ethnic, and racial groups, and explain how these groups' experiences have related to U.S. national identity.
2. **Politics and Power**
  - a. Explain how and why political ideas, beliefs, institutions, party systems, and alignments have developed and changed.
  - b. Explain how popular movements, reform efforts, and activist groups have sought to change American society and institutions.
  - c. Explain how different beliefs about the federal government's role in U.S. social and economic life have affected political debates and policies.
3. **Work, Exchange, and Technology**
  - a. Explain how different labor systems developed in North America and the United States, and explain their effects on workers' lives and U.S. society.
  - b. Explain how patterns of exchange, markets, and private enterprise have developed, and analyze ways that governments have responded to economic issues.
  - c. Analyze how technological innovation has affected economic development and society.
4. **Culture and Society**
  - a. Explain how religious groups and ideas have affected American society and political life.
  - b. Explain how artistic, philosophical, and scientific ideas have developed and shaped society and institutions.
  - c. Explain how ideas about women's rights and gender roles have affected society and politics.
  - d. Explain how different group identities, including racial, ethnic, class, and regional identities, have emerged and changed over time.
5. **Migration and Settlement**
  - a. Explain the causes of migration to colonial North America and, later, the United States, and analyze immigration's effects on U.S. society.
  - b. Analyze causes of internal migration and patterns of settlement in what would become the United States, and explain how migration has affected American life.
6. **Geography and the Environment**
  - a. Explain how geographic and environmental factors shaped the development of various communities, and analyze how competition for and debates over natural resources have affected both interactions among different groups and the development of government policies.
7. **America in the World**
  - a. Explain how cultural interaction, cooperation, competition, and conflict between empires, nations, and peoples have influenced political, economic, and social developments in North America.
  - b. Analyze the reasons for and results of U.S. diplomatic, economic, and military initiatives in North America and overseas.

# Writing AP U.S. History Essays

## Essay Organization

1. Introduction
  - a. Provide a thesis statement that states the central argument of the essay.
    - Make sure the thesis is a single sentence that answers the question.
    - Make sure the thesis passes the “show me” test. (Someone reading your thesis should think, “show me, prove it to me.”)
  - b. The introduction may also be used to provide background information, definitions of terms, or points of validation. (optional)
2. Body
  - a. Defend the thesis with specific, accurate, and relevant historical information.
  - b. Analyze historical information.
    - Explain the significance of the information.
    - Make inferences from the information.
    - Anticipate and destroy counterarguments.
3. Conclusion
  - a. Provide a closing statement.
  - b. The conclusion may also be used to provide postscript information. (optional)

## Commonly Used Phrases in Essay Questions

1. Support, modify, or refute
2. Evaluate the relative importance
3. Compare and contrast
4. To what extent
5. Analyze, Examine, or Discuss

## Categorizing Historical Information in an Essay

1. Political
2. Economic
3. Social
4. Cultural
5. Intellectual / Ideological
6. Diplomatic
7. Legal
8. Military
9. Geographical

## Answering Short-Answer Questions

Although short-answer questions may require students to make an assertion and defend it, they will not require an overall thesis that applies to all parts of the question. The questions will ask students to “select,” “choose,” “describe,” “explain,” “provide information,” etc. Students should simply answer the question directly and write in complete sentences.

## Answering the Document-Based Question

1. Follow a six-step process in planning the DBQ essay.
  - a. Read the question, making sure you understand all parts of the question and can break it down into its component parts and categories.
  - b. Construct a *preliminary* thesis statement. The thesis statement should be a single sentence that answers the question.
  - c. Create a “Yes / But” chart for each component part and category of the question. Use the Yes / But chart to test your thesis against each of the component parts and categories.
  - d. Read and analyze every document. Identify the “**Main Idea**” and the “**Significance**” for each document. Decide whether you can apply anything from the acronym “**HAP-P**” to each document. Fill in the “Yes / But” chart as you analyze each document.
    - Historical Context** – Where and when was the document created?
    - Audience** – For whom was the document created?
    - Purpose** – Why was the document created?
    - Point of View** – Who created the document?
  - e. Put everything together. Make final adjustments to your thesis. Make sure the thesis addresses all parts of the question and does more than restate the question. Select information from the documents that you will use to defend the thesis. Identify information from outside the documents that will help you defend your thesis
  - f. Write the Essay. The DBQ takes 60 minutes to answer. Spend 15-20 minutes on the first five steps. Writing the essay should then take 40-45 minutes.
2. Elements of a good DBQ essay.
  - a. Refers to documents by citing relevant information in the text of the essay (“FDR’s speech to the 1936 Democratic Convention demonstrates ...”).
  - b. Includes an analysis of the documents used to support the thesis.
  - c. Includes outside information (information not taken from the documents).
  - d. Avoids quoting long passages from the documents.
  - e. Avoids a laundry-list description of the documents.

## Answering Long Essay Questions

1. Students will choose one of two long essay questions to answer. Students should choose the question that best allows them to demonstrate their knowledge of U.S. history at a high level of analysis of that knowledge.
2. The long essay requires that students demonstrate their ability to use historical evidence in crafting a thoughtful historical argument and address a specific historical thinking skill.
3. Students should take 5-10 minutes to jot down all historical information they can remember about the topic of the question.
4. After examining the historical information they have jotted down, students should form a thesis statement that they can defend and develop.
5. Students should give themselves 30-35 minutes to write the essay.

# DBQ Rubric

Maximum Possible Points: 7

## A. THESIS AND ARGUMENT DEVELOPMENT (Skills Assessed: Argumentation)

\_\_\_\_\_ 1 POINT

- 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, either in the introduction or the conclusion.

*Scoring Note: Neither the introduction nor the conclusion is necessarily limited a single paragraph.*

\_\_\_\_\_ 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.

## B. DOCUMENT ANALYSIS (Targeted Skill: Analyzing Evidence: Content and Sourcing and Argumentation)

\_\_\_\_\_ 1 POINT

- Utilizes the content of at least six of the documents to support the stated thesis or a relevant argument.

\_\_\_\_\_ 1 POINT

- Explains the significance of the **historical context**, **audience**, author's **purpose**, and/or author's **point of view** for at least four documents.
- Contains at least one of the following for the majority of the documents:
  - intended audience
  - purpose
  - historical context
  - the author's point of view

## C. USING EVIDENCE BEYOND THE DOCUMENTS (Targeted Skill: Contextualization and Argumentation)

\_\_\_\_\_ 1 POINT

- **Contextualization:** Situates the argument by explaining the broader historical events, developments, or processes immediately relevant to the question.

*Scoring Note: Contextualization requires using knowledge not found in the documents to situate the argument within broader historical events, developments, or processes immediately relevant to the question. The contextualization point is not awarded for merely a phrase or reference, but instead requires an explanation, typically consisting of multiple sentences or a full paragraph.*

\_\_\_\_\_ 1 POINT

- **Evidence beyond the Documents:** Provides an example or additional piece of specific evidence beyond those found in the documents to support or qualify the argument.

*Scoring Notes: This example must be different from the evidence used to earn other points on this rubric. This point is not awarded for merely a phrase or reference. Responses need to reference an additional piece of specific evidence and explain how that evidence supports or qualifies the argument.*

## D. SYNTHESIS (Target Skill: Synthesis)

\_\_\_\_\_ 1 POINT

- Extends the argument by explaining the connections between the argument and ONE of the following:
  - f) A development in a different historical period, situation, era or geographical area.
  - g) A course theme and/or approach to history that is not the focus of the essay (such as political, economic, social, cultural, or intellectual history).

*Scoring Note: The synthesis point requires an explanation of the connections to different historical period, situation, era, or geographical area, and is not awarded for merely a phrase or reference.*



# Long Essay Rubric

Maximum Possible Points: 6

## A. THESIS (Targeted Skill: Argumentation)

\_\_\_\_\_ 1 POINT

- 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, either in the introduction or the conclusion.

## B. ARGUMENT DEVELOPMENT: USING THE TARGETED HISTORICAL THINKING SKILL (Targeted Skills: Argumentation and the Targeted Skill)

### COMPARISON

\_\_\_\_\_ 1 POINT

- Describes similarities AND differences among historical individuals, events, developments, or processes.

\_\_\_\_\_ 1 POINT

- Explains the reasons for similarities AND differences among historical individuals, events, developments, or processes, OR, DEPENDING ON THE PROMPT, evaluates the relative significance of historical individuals, events, developments, or processes.

### CAUSATION

\_\_\_\_\_ 1 POINT

- Describes causes AND/OR effects of a historical event, development, or process.

\_\_\_\_\_ 1 POINT

- Explains the reasons for the causes AND/OR effects of a historical event, development or process.

*Scoring Note: If the prompt requires discussion of both causes and effects, responses must address both causes and effects in order to earn both points.*

### CONTINUITY AND CHANGE OVER TIME (CCOT)

\_\_\_\_\_ 1 POINT

- Describes historical continuity and change over time.

\_\_\_\_\_ 1 POINT

- Explains the reasons for historical continuity AND change over time.

### PERIODIZATION

\_\_\_\_\_ 1 POINT

- Describes the ways in which the historical development specified in the prompt was different from and similar to developments that preceded AND/OR followed.

\_\_\_\_\_ 1 POINT

- Explains the extent to which the historical development specified in the prompt was different from and similar to developments that preceded AND/OR followed.

*Scoring Note: For both points, if the prompt requires evaluation of a turning point, then responses must discuss developments that preceded AND followed. For both points, if the prompt requires evaluation of the characteristics of an era, then responses can discuss developments that EITHER preceded OR followed.*

## C. ARGUMENT DEVELOPMENT: USING EVIDENCE (Targeted Skill: Argumentation)

\_\_\_\_\_ 1 POINT

- Addresses the topic of the question with specific examples of relevant evidence.

\_\_\_\_\_ 1 POINT

- Utilizes specific examples of evidence to fully and effectively substantiate the stated thesis or relevant argument.

*Scoring Note: To fully and effectively substantiate the stated thesis or a relevant argument, responses must include a broad range of evidence that, through analysis and explanation, justifies the stated thesis or a relevant argument.*

## D. SYNTHESIS (Skill Assessed: Synthesis)

\_\_\_\_\_ 1 POINT – Extends the argument by explaining the connections between the argument and ONE of the following:

- h) A development in a different historical period, situation, era, or geographical area.
- i) A course theme and/or approach to history that is not the focus of the essay (such as political, economic, social, cultural, or intellectual history).

*Scoring Note: The synthesis point requires an explanation of the connections to different historical period, situation, era, or geographical area, and is not awarded for merely a phase or reference.*

## Resources for Helping Students Prepare for the AP U.S. History Exam

1. [http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/ap/history\\_us/samp.html?ushist](http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/ap/history_us/samp.html?ushist)  
Sample AP questions and scoring guides from the College Board.
2. <http://books.google.com/books?q=AP+US+history+study+guide>  
A list of AP U.S. History study guides for purchase through Amazon and other vendors.
3. <http://ap.gilderlehrman.org>  
AP U.S. History study guides from the Gilder-Lehrman Institute of American History. Highly recommended!
4. <http://www.apushreview.com>  
Provides excellent videos and other documents created by an AP U.S. History teacher to help students review for exams.
5. <http://www.apstudent.com/ushistory/cards.php>  
Provides over 1600 notecards for AP U.S. History students.
6. <http://memorize.com>  
A website for creating lists of questions and answers that will help students memorize historical information.
7. <http://www.kitzkikz.com/flashcards/>  
A website for creating flash cards as a PDF file that can then be printed and folded with questions on one side and answers on the other.
8. <http://leitnerportal.com/LearnMore.aspx>  
Provides information about the Leitner System, an efficient method of studying flash cards.

Note: AP U.S. History Flash Cards can be purchased from Kaplan AP, Barron's AP, and CliffNotes.