

# APUSH – AP Exam Study Guide

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## Part I: What to Study

### The Content

In addition to your textbook, review videos, and class notes, study the released curriculum by the College Board. (You can download the curriculum [here](#)). Within each time period, several historical events, people, terms, and concepts are listed. ***PLEASE BE AN EXPERT ON THESE TOPICS AS YOU ARE EXPECTED TO KNOW THEM IN DETAIL.***

Here are some examples of what you should know for each time period. (Note, this is by no means an all inclusive list, but if you can explain these items, you will be that much closer to success). \*\*If a term is underlined, clicking on it will take you to a video describing the term.\*\*

#### Period 1: 1491 – 1607 (5% of the Curriculum)

- Maize
- Geography of the Great Plains and Great Basin – nomadic lifestyle for Natives
- [Columbian Exchange](#)
- [Encomienda System](#)
- Reasons for European exploration
- Impacts of contact on Europeans, Africans, and Native Americans

#### Period 2: 1607 – 1754 (10% of the Curriculum)

- Characteristics of Spanish, French and Dutch, and English Colonization
- Emergence of the Atlantic Slave Trade
- Characteristics of New England Colonies, Middle Colonies, and Southern Colonies
- Native American Warfare (becoming more destructive due to guns and horses)
- Anglicization of British Colonies
- [Pueblo Revolt](#)
- [The Enlightenment](#)
- Mercantilism

#### Period 3: 1754 – 1800 (12% of the Curriculum)

- [7 Years War \(French and Indian War\)](#)
- [The American Revolution](#)
- [Thomas Paine's Common Sense](#)
- Declaration of Independence
- [Articles of Confederation](#)
- Northwest Land Ordinance
- [Constitution](#) (including Constitutional Compromises such as the Great Compromise, 3/5 Compromise, and the Slave Trade Compromise)
- Bill of Rights
- George Washington's Farewell Address (Tensions between Britain and France)

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- Republican Motherhood
- French Revolution and revolutions in Latin America and Haiti

## **Period 4: 1800 – 1848 (10% of the Curriculum)**

- [Federalists and Democratic Republicans](#)
- Whigs and Democrats
- Louisiana Purchase
- Supreme Court cases in the early 19th century that strengthened the federal government at the expense of states ([John Marshall Court](#) – be familiar with at least 2)
- Market Revolution
- Textile machinery, steam engines, interchangeable parts, canals, railroads, telegraph, and agricultural inventions
- [The Second Great Awakening](#)
- Abolitionism
- Women’s Rights
- Xenophobia
- [Henry Clay’s! American System](#)
- Migrants from Europe (“[Old Immigration](#)”)
- [The Missouri Compromise \(Compromise of 1820\)](#)
- Tariffs, the National Bank, and Internal Improvement (debates between the North and South over these)

## **Period 5: 1844 – 1877 (13% of the Curriculum)**

- [Manifest Destiny](#)
- [Mexican-American War](#)
- Debates over slavery (such as the Wilmot Proviso)
- [Nativist Movement](#)
- Slavery as a “Positive Good”
- [Compromise of 1850](#)
- [Kansas-Nebraska Act](#)
- [Dred Scott Decision](#)
- Republican Party
- [Election of 1860](#)
- Free Soil Platform
- [Civil War](#)
- Emancipation Proclamation
- [The 13, 14, and 15 Amendments](#)
- Sharecropping
- Radical Republicans
- [Reconstruction](#)

## **Period 6: 1865 – 1898 (13% of the Curriculum)**

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- Gilded Age
- Social Darwinism
- Conspicuous Consumption
- [Local and National Unions](#) (Be familiar with a few, Knights of Labor, American Federation of Labor)
- “New South”
- Sharecropping
- Tenant Farming
- Mechanized agriculture
- People’s (Populist) Party
- [Political Machines](#)
- Settlement Houses (Notably, Jane Addams’ Hull House)
- Decimation of the buffalo
- Laissez-faire economy
- [Plessy v. Ferguson](#)
- Social Gospel
- [Assimilation of Native Americans](#)

## **Period 7: 1890 – 1945 (17% of the Curriculum)**

- [“Closing of the Frontier” \(Know Frederick Jackson Turner’s Thesis\)](#)
- [Spanish American War](#)
- [Progressive Era \(Including Key Progressive Reformers\)](#)
- Transition from Rural to Urban Society
- Harlem Renaissance
- [World War I](#)
- [The Treaty of Versailles and the League of Nations](#) (Including Woodrow Wilson’s 14 Points)
- Great Migration
- [Red Scare](#)
- [Restrictive Immigration Quotas \(of the 1920s\)](#)
- Great Depression
- [New Deal](#)
- [World War II](#)
- [Japanese Internment](#)
- Decision to drop the atomic bombs on Japan

## **Period 8: 1945 – 1980 (15% of the Curriculum)**

- [Containment \(Including the Truman Doctrine and Marshall Plan\)](#)
- [Korean War](#)
- [Military Industrial Complex](#)
- Baby Boom
- Suburbanization (Make the connection to Levittown and the Interstate Highway System, as well as automobiles)

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- Civil Rights Activists (Videos on the [1950s](#) and [1960s](#))
- [Brown v. Board of Education](#)
- Sunbelt
- [Great Society](#)
- Immigration Laws of 1965 (It ended the restrictive quota systems of the 1920s and favored Asian and Latin American immigrants)
- [Vietnam War](#)
- Counterculture
- Detente
- Environmental Problems (Think Rachel Carson and *Silent Spring*)

## **Period 9: 1980 – Present (5% of the Curriculum)**

- Foreign Policy “failures”
- Taxation and deregulation victories for Conservatives
- Denouncing “Big Government”
- Reagan Administration
- Mikhail Gorbachev
- Bellicose rhetoric (speaking in hostile language/being aggressive) by Reagan initially towards the Soviet Union
- September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon
- Conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq
- War on terrorism
- Free Trade Agreements (Especially NAFTA – North American Free Trade Agreement)
- Concerns over climate change

## **What to Study**

### Documents

Although it is impossible to predict what documents will be on the exam (including political cartoons, diary entries, letters, laws, charts, graphs, etc.), these documents will be based on information found in the curriculum.

Here are a couple of examples you could see:

- A letter from someone that moved West during the 1860s as a result of the Homestead Act. Note: The Homestead Act is NOT mentioned in the curriculum, but is an example of the federal government encouraging westward expansion
  - Answers could include the US supporting westward expansion, this helped contribute to the perception that the frontier was “closed”
- A graph showing immigration from 1890 – 1920.
  - This time period is known as “New” immigration. Answers could focus on reasons for immigration (economic opportunities), where immigrants tended to

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- settle (cities), tensions between native born Americans and immigrants, immigration quotas of the 1920s, and even the Red Scare of 1919 – 1920
- A poster of “Rosie the Riveter”
  - Answers could include this is an example of the US mobilizing its economy during WWII and contrasting the role of women during the war with other time periods

## Part II: The Exam:

### Multiple Choice Questions

The multiple-choice question format for the exam is brand new, and likely vastly different from questions you have encountered before. Gone are the 80 multiple-choice questions that test your knowledge with five answer choices. The new questions are based on a document (an excerpt from a reading, chart, political cartoon, etc.) and one must answer a series of questions based on that document. Although this can seem overwhelming, there are tips you can use to successfully navigate these new questions. This accounts for 40% of your score on the APUSH exam.

### Tip #1: Read the new curriculum!

I can't stress how important this is. Many multiple-choice answers will be stated in the new curriculum. For example: Key Concept 3.1, II, C states “Despite considerable loyalist opposition, as well as Great Britain’s apparently overwhelmingly military and financial advantages, the patriot cause succeeded because of the colonists’ greater familiarity with the land, their resilient military and political leadership, their ideological commitment, and their support from European Allies” (page 43 of the framework, which can be found [HERE](#).) A potential multiple-choice question could state:

All of the following were reasons for the patriot victory in the Revolutionary War except:

1. Greater familiarity with the land
2. Ideological commitment
3. Superior military and financial advantages
4. Support from European allies

Notice that all of the answer choices are straight from the curriculum framework, (as most answers are). The correct answer is c) since that was NOT a reason for the patriot victory, but an advantage by Great Britain

### Tip #2: If a document is in the new curriculum, read at least a portion of it and be able to explain its message.

For example, Thomas Paine’s *Common Sense* is specifically mentioned in the new curriculum. You do NOT need to memorize the entire writing to do understand its importance. Be familiar with a couple passages and be able to recognize the main argument. Chances are the readings

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will either be the items mentioned in the new curriculum, or other authors writing about them. Perhaps you could encounter a secondary source that analyzes the impact of *Common Sense*. You may not encounter the parts of the Missouri Compromise passed by Congress, but you could encounter a politician from that time period writing about the Compromise.

### **Tip#3: Familiarize yourself with question stems.**

There question stems that you could encounter regardless of the document you will be expected to understand. Some of these questions include:

- The sentiments described most contributed to..... (In other words, the ideas represented in the document led, or contributed to.....)
- The sentiments described most directly resulted from..... (In other words, what influenced the ideas represented in the document)
- The ideas expressed in the above cartoon/excerpt most directly reflect which of the following continuities in US history? (In other words, the message of the document is most similar to what theme in history?)
- Based on the excerpt, the author would most likely support? (This requires you to connect the authors beliefs to a similar topic. For example, a supporter of the New Deal would most likely support Progressive Reforms)
- A person who agreed with (the person in the excerpt's views) would most likely have advocated..... (In other words, if you were a supporter of the views in the document, what would you favor. For example, if you agreed with William Lloyd Garrison's *The Liberator*, you would favor the immediate end to slavery)
- Opponents of (the person that authored the excerpt) would most likely have argued that.... (In other words, how would someone counteract the argument or message of the author?)

### **Tip #4: You Must Know Certain Vocabulary Terms**

Please don't let certain words in question stems trip you up. Knowing the definitions of the following terms will greatly help you. Plus, if you can incorporate them into Short Answer Questions or Essays, they will strengthen your writing!

- **Abridge** – to shorten, or curtail
  - Example of Abridge in a Sentence – The rights of African Americans were abridged in many areas of Antebellum America
- **Autonomy** – self government, independent.
  - Example of Autonomy in a Sentence – Native Americans and Africans sought to preserve their autonomy after contact with Europeans
- **Advocate** – to favor, or to support
  - Example of Advocate in a Sentence – William Lloyd Garrison advocated the immediate and uncompensated end to slavery
- **Ambivalent** – to have mixed feelings about an issue

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- Example of Ambivalent in a Sentence – Mexicans immigrants faced ambivalent United States government policies during the Great Depression
- **Sedentary** – Inactive, not mobile
  - Example of Sedentary in a Sentence – Some Native American societies developed permanent, sedentary lifestyles
- **Sentiments** – idea, opinion, or view.
  - Example of Sentiments in a Sentence – Thomas Jefferson’s sentiments regarding the Missouri Compromise warned of danger for the United States
- **Subjugation** – to gain control of, or to conquer
  - Example of Subjugation in a Sentence – Native Americans and Africans were often subjugated by Europeans in the 16th – 19th centuries
- **Waning** – to decrease, or become weaker (Note, the word waning is specifically mentioned in the curriculum)
  - Example of Waning in a Sentence – The North’s resolve towards Reconstruction began to wane in the 1970s
- **Watershed** – a turning point
  - Example of Watershed in a Sentence – The Supreme Court’s ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education* was a watershed moment in Civil Rights History

## Short Answer Questions

Short Answer questions are a new part of the exam and count for 20% of your total score. Every Short Answer question will have three parts to answer. Each part (a, b, and c) should be answered in 2-3 sentences with specific historical evidence. Do not write too much info or you could run out of time and space. Furthermore, make sure you label your answers a, b, and c.

### Short Answer Type #1: No documents

This type of Short Answer will have three different tasks related to a similar theme. This could include: briefly explaining a cause of an event (a), briefly explaining a short-term event of the event (b), and briefly explaining a long-term cause of an event (c).

Here’s an example of this type of question:

Answer all 3 parts:

1. Briefly explain one reason for European exploration in the 15th – 17th centuries
2. Briefly explain one impact of European contact on the Americas
3. Briefly explain one impact of European contact on Europe

### Short Answer Type #2: No documents, but three events from which to choose

This type of Short Answer will provide 3 bulleted events/terms/people to choose from that relate to a similar theme. This could have you: explain why one of the choices is the most significant event related to the theme (a), providing historical evidence to back up your assertion (b), and

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contrasting your choice against another one, explaining why the other is not as good of a choice (c).

Here's an example of this type of question:

a) Briefly explain why one of the following could be seen as a major reason for calls for significant revisions to the Articles of Confederation:

- Difficulties over trade
- Difficulties over finances
- Internal Unrest

b) Support your choice with at least one piece of historical evidence

c) Contrast your choice against another and briefly explain why it is not as good of a choice

Short Answer Type #3: 1 document, most likely a political cartoon/illustration

This type of Short Answer will provide a visual related to a historical theme. After briefly examining the theme you could be asked to: explain the point of view of the author – potentially the view on different themes (a), how the visual expressed that point of view (b), and one piece of historical evidence that either supports or opposes the view (c).

Short Answer Type #4: 2 documents, most likely opposing views of an event/time period

This type of Short Answer will provide two different readings about a similar event/time period/topic. After reading both documents, you could be asked to: summarize the differences between the points of view of the authors (a) – please make sure you specifically state how the authors views are DIFFERENT, provide one piece of historical evidence that supports one author (b), and provide one piece of historical evidence that supports the other author (c).

With all Short Answer Questions, please pay special attention to the dates. Figure out what time period it relates to and include information from THOSE YEARS ONLY!

## **Part III: The Document Based Question (DBQ)**

The DBQ has been revamped with the new curriculum as well. This accounts for 25% of your score on the APUSH Exam. Every DBQ will have 6-7 documents and will not only test your content knowledge, but also your understanding of historical skills and themes.

There are 7 total points available for the DBQ and you want to get as MANY AS POSSIBLE. Here's how the points break down:



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- 1 point is awarded for a thesis statement that is more than a restatement of the question. Make sure your thesis directly answers the prompt, but is in your own words and not a restatement
- 1 point is awarded for analyzing a majority of the documents and using this analysis to support the thesis
- 1 additional point is awarded for completing **ONE** (You DO NOT need to address more than one per document) of the following for a majority of the documents: providing historical context (background of what is going on at the time); discussing the intended audience of the document; discussing the author's purpose in creating the document (why did the author create the document); or discussing the author's point of view (for example, are they supporting the New Deal? Are they criticizing the New Deal?). Again, you **ONLY NEED TO CHOOSE ONE OF THOSE FOR EACH DOCUMENT**. If you want, you could do the intended audience for each document
- 1 additional point is awarded for including the historical context, intended audience, purpose, or point of view for **ALL** of the documents, or **ALL BUT ONE**. If one of the documents is giving you a hard time, skip it! But you cannot skip more than one to be eligible to earn full credit.
- 1 point is awarded for outside information. As you examine a document, is there information that is **NOT** mentioned in the documents that could support your argument? Include it! There's your point
- 1 point is awarded for contextualization. Connect the historical ideas to broader historical events or processes. For example, connect the Missouri Compromise to the broader idea of debates over slavery during Antebellum America
- The last point could be awarded based on one of the following: Extending or modifying the thesis or argument; Accounting for contradictory evidence (for example, do two of the documents contradict each other? Explain it away!); Connecting the topic to another time period (Do debates over expansion during Manifest Destiny remind you of Debates about overseas expansion in the late 19th/early 20th centuries? Make that connection and there's your final point)

## **Part IV: The Long Essay**

Once you have made it here, you have completed 85% of your APUSH exam. The Long Essay is 15% of your exam score. You are almost done, make sure you finish strong. This could be the difference between passing and not passing.

The Long Essay grading is similar to the DBQ. Here's how you will earn your points:

- 1 point is awarded for the thesis. Just like the DBQ, **MAKE SURE IT IS NOT SIMPLY A RESTATEMENT OF THE QUESTION**. Sorry to yell like that, I just can't stress it enough
- 2 points are awarded by using specific evidence that supports your thesis **AND** stating how the evidence supports the thesis
- 1 point is awarded based on which skill the essay is targeting. For example:

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- Change and Continuity – Describe how circumstances changed AND remained the same during a time period. For example – how did the treatment of African Americans change AND remain the same between 1850 and 1870
- Comparing and Contrasting two different events. For example compare and contrast government under the Articles of Confederation and the Constitution. Make sure you don't just state how they are different, explain how they are similar.
- Causation – Explain, in detail, the causes AND effects of a historical development. For example, explain the causes and consequences of British imperial changes after the 7 Years' War. Make sure to explain what led up to the changes, and the impact of the changes.
- Periodization – Describe how the topic was different OR similar to events prior to and after the event. For example, Evaluate the extent to which the Progressive Era (1890 – 1920) was a turning point in American History
- 1 additional point is awarded for each skill by providing detailed, specific historical evidence
- Finally, 1 synthesis point is awarded the same way as the DBQ. Extending or modifying the thesis or argument; Accounting for contradictory evidence (for example, do two of the documents contradict each other? Explain it away!); Connecting the topic to another time period (Do debates over expansion during Manifest Destiny remind you of Debates about overseas expansion in the late 19th/early 20th centuries? Make that connection and there's your final point)

That's how the exam is set up. Please spend time familiarizing yourself with the curriculum. Review your textbook, notes, old tests, essays, and review videos to help you prepare. Although this can seem overwhelming, it is very possible to do well. You are taking APUSH for a reason, and that is because you are smart. DON'T FORGET THAT! Good luck! Thanks for your support and I hope the resources at [APUSHReview.com](http://APUSHReview.com) has been helpful.