

U.S. History Essay Writing / Exam Information

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. Student performance on these four parts will be compiled and weighted to determine an AP Exam score. AP Scores are 5 – 1.

Section	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	45 minutes	20%
BREAK				
II	Part A: Document-based question	1 question	60 minutes	25%
	Part B: Long essay question	1 question (chosen from a pair)	35 minutes	15%

College Board Historical Thinking Skills

Historical Argumentation: Historical thinking involves the ability to define and frame a question about the past and to address that question by constructing 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. Additionally, argumentation involves the capacity to describe, analyze and evaluate the arguments of others in light of available evidence.

Use of Relevant Historical Evidence: Historical thinking involves the ability to identify, describe and evaluate evidence about the past from diverse sources (including written documents, works of art, archaeological artifacts, oral traditions and other primary sources), with respect to content, authorship, purpose, format and audience. It involves the capacity to extract useful information, make supportable inferences and draw appropriate conclusions from historical evidence while also understanding such evidence in its context, recognizing its limitations and assessing the points of view that it reflects.

Historical Causation: Historical thinking involves the ability to identify, analyze and evaluate multiple cause-and-effect relationships in a historical context, distinguishing between the long-term and proximate.

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 relating these patterns to larger historical processes or themes.

Periodization: Historical thinking involves the ability to describe, analyze, evaluate and construct models of historical periodization that historians use to categorize events into discrete blocks and to identify turning points, recognizing that the choice of specific dates favors one narrative, region or group over another narrative, region or group; therefore, changing the periodization can change a historical narrative. Moreover, the particular circumstances and contexts in which individual historians work and write shape their interpretations and modeling of past events.

Compare and Contrast: 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.

Contextualization: Historical thinking involves the ability to connect historical developments to specific circumstances in time and place, and to broader regional, national or global processes.

Interpretation: Historical thinking involves the ability to describe, analyze, evaluate and create diverse interpretations of the past — as revealed through primary and secondary historical sources — through analysis of evidence, reasoning, contexts, points of view and frames of reference.

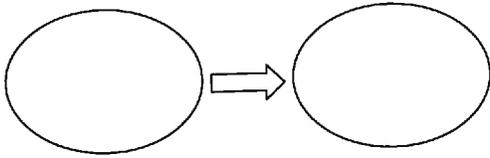
Synthesis: Historical thinking involves the ability to arrive at meaningful and persuasive understandings of the past by applying all the other historical thinking skills, by drawing appropriately on ideas from different fields of inquiry or disciplines and by creatively fusing disparate, relevant (and perhaps 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.

The Big Four Model Arch-Types – Simple and Complex

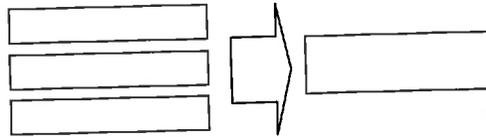
I. Historical Causation (Cause and Effect): CE

Pre-Write Conceptual Framework: Cause and Effect Chart (some typical examples below, but not a complete list)

Simple:



Complex:



Essay Examples:

Simple:

Explain the major causes and consequence of the American Civil War.

Evaluate the extent to which westward expansion led to the development of sectionalism prior to 1860.

Explain the three most important causes leading to the Regan Revolution in 1980.

Complex:

Explain the major political and economic causes and consequences for the growth of big business in American society from 1870 to 1900.

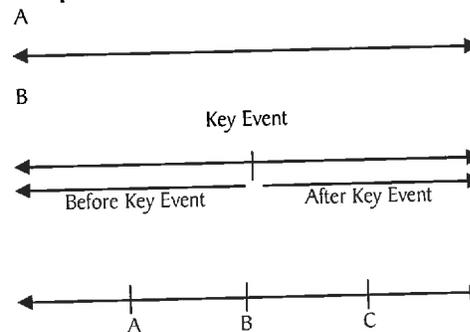
2. Continuity and Change over Time: COT

Pre-Write Conceptual Framework: Timeline (some typical examples below, but not a complete list)

Simple:



Complex:



Essay Examples:

Simple:

Identify and analyze the changing role of women within American society from the American Revolution to the Civil War.

Evaluate the extent to which trans-Atlantic interactions from 1600 to 1763 contributed to maintaining continuity as well as fostered change in labor systems in the British North American colonies.

Evaluate the extent to which increasing integration of the U.S. into the world economy contributed to maintaining continuity as well as fostering change in U.S. society from 1945 to the present.

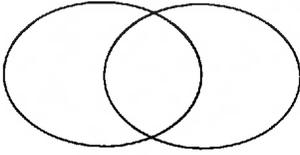
Complex:

Evaluate major changes and continuities in the social and economic experiences of African Americans who migrated from the rural South to urban areas in the North in the period 1910–1930.

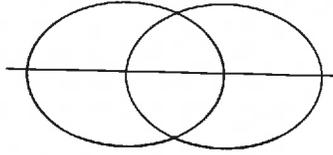
3. Compare and Contrast: CC

Pre-Write Conceptual Framework: Venn diagram (some typical examples below, but not a complete list)

Simple:



Complex:



Essay Examples:

Simple:

Compare and contrast the New England colonies with the colonies in the Chesapeake.

Immigration has always played an important role in the history of the United States, compare immigration during the 1840's / 50's with immigration during the 1870's / 80's.

Complex:

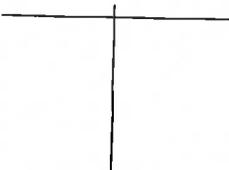
Compare and contrast the New England colonies with the colonies in the Chesapeake. Be sure to address two of the three characteristics in your answer: political, economic, and social patterns.

Immigration has always played an important role in the history of the United States. Compare and contrast immigration during the 1840's / 50's with immigration during the 1870's / 80's. Be sure to address two of the three in your answer: patterns of settlement, reasons for immigrating, reactions of nativist.

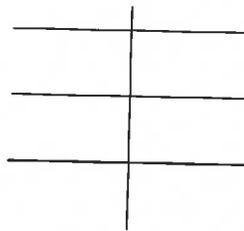
4. Periodization: P or Take a Position: TAP

Pre-Write Conceptual Framework: T-Chart (some typical examples below, but not a complete list)

Simple:



Complex:



Essay Examples:

Simple:

To what extent were the Articles of Confederation successful in dealing with the problems faced by the new nation after the American Revolution?

Evaluate the extent to which the Spanish-American War was a turning point in foreign policy in the United States.

Complex:

To what extent was the Containment Doctrine, after the Second World War, successful in dealing with the problems during the Cold War. Be sure to address both domestic and foreign issues.

Historians have argued that the Era of Good Feelings was a misnomer. To what extent is this true politically and economically?

The Thesis Statement – What Is It?

The Thesis Formula: X. However, A, B, and C. Therefore, Y.

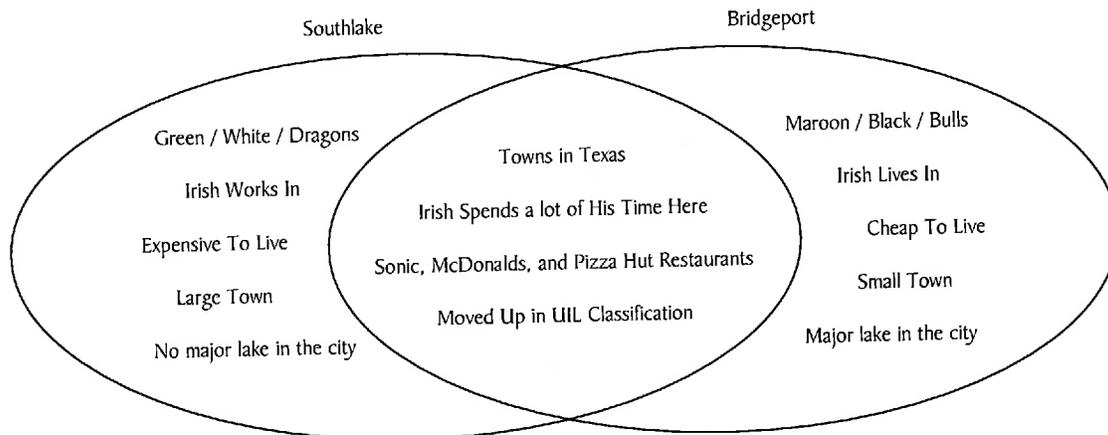
'X' represents the strongest point against your argument. We call this the counter-argument.

'A, B, and C' represent the three strongest points for your argument. We call these your organization categories.

'Y' represents the position you will be taking – in other words, your stand on the prompt.

Let's take a look at a basic prompt, a simple way to set up the essay, and a sample of a thesis statement. In a compare / contrast essay your argument is whether there are more similarities or more difference between the two things under investigation.

Prompt: Compare and contrast the cities of and Irish's experiences with Bridgeport and Southlake.



Thesis Statement: Southlake and Bridgeport are both towns in Texas, which have similar eating restaurants, and will face the same challenges of moving up in UIL classifications this year. However, the locations and size of each city varies greatly, both have different mascots and school colors, and Irish spends different parts of his day in different capacities within each town. Therefore, despite some common features, Southlake and Bridgeport are very different cities.

Levels of Specificity / Developing a Summary Statement – How Much Do I Say?

How much specificity to include in the Summary Statement should be a balancing act, on the one hand, you don't want to be too general (Level Three Generalization), but on the other hand you don't want to be too specific (Level One Specification). Let them know where you are going, but don't give away all your information. We want the reader to keep reading! We will call the right amount of specificity **Level Two Specificity**.

Consider the following prompt:

Evaluate the extent to which the Articles of Confederation were effective in solving the problems that confronted the new nation.

Level Three Thesis (not enough): The Articles of Confederation was successful as a first attempt at building a government. However, the Articles of Confederation was weak politically, socially, and economically. Therefore, the Articles of Confederation did not provide an effective answer to the problems facing the new nation.

Level Two Thesis (just right): The Articles of Confederation created a well organized system for dealing with newly acquired territories and providing a financial means to increase needed revenue. However, it established a loose confederation of states that lacked a sense of national unity, it created internal gridlock that failed to establish a system of checks and balances, and it created a government that did not have the powers to conduct basic governmental business. Therefore, the Articles of Confederation was not effective in solving many of the problems faced by the newly formed United States.

Level One Thesis (too much): Under the Articles of Confederation, the Land Ordinance of 1785 and Northwest Ordinance of 1787 created a well organized system for dealing with newly acquired territories and a plausible means to increase government revenue in a time in which the country was facing massive debt. However, it established a decentralized government with limited sovereignty, creating a league of friendship, with limited effectiveness; it was unable to foster any sense of nationalism; it contained a lack of leadership and a lack of independent judiciary; it lacked provisions for raising revenues and collecting taxes from the states, as well as failing to handle the abuses of paper money, with no control over interstate commerce; and could not protect the country from rebellions like Shays' Rebellion. Therefore, the Articles of Confederation proved unable to handle the problems faced by the country after the American Revolution.

Putting It All Together – What Are the X, A, B, C, and Y's?

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, why

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

Y = your assertion statement

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

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

Periodization | 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

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." 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 one of the levels of analysis must be employed):

H: Historical Context

I: Intended Audience

P: Purpose

P: Point of View

Here is what it would look like: "The historical context of the Clayton Antitrust Act was passed under Wilson's administration when progressives 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."

An Opportunity for Synthesis – Where Does It Go?

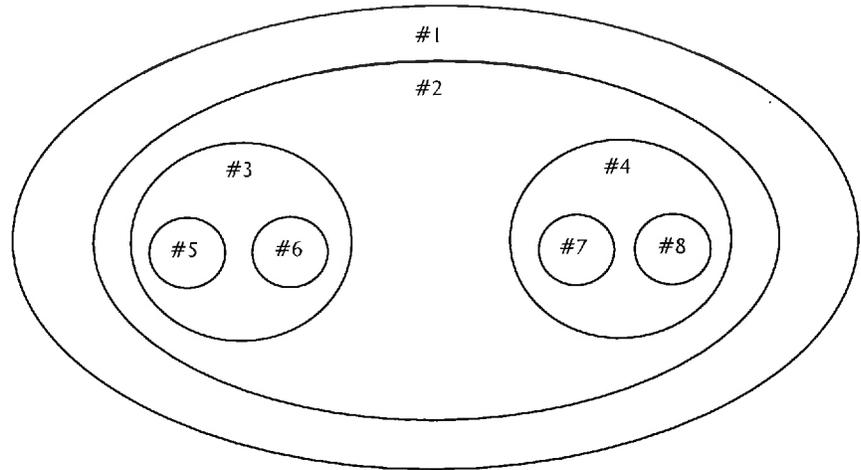
There are several ways of getting the Synthesis Point in the LE or the DBQ. For the **DBQ** it can involve the following: 1. Extending or modifying the thesis or argument, 2. Recognizing and accounting for contradictory evidence in crafting a coherent argument, or 3. Connecting the topic to other historical periods, geographical areas, contexts, or circumstances. For the **LE** it can involve the following: 1. Extending or modifying the thesis or argument, 2. Employing an additional category or analysis beyond that called for in the prompt, or 3. Connecting the topic to other historical periods, geographical areas, contexts, or circumstances.

Type of Essay	Synthesis Type	Where Does It Go?	Example
DBQ	1	After the Opening Paragraph	X paragraph, pointing out the counter-example to your thesis
LE	1	After the Opening Paragraph	X paragraph, pointing out the counter-example to your thesis
DBQ	2	Anywhere in the Essay	Combining (rectifying) contradictory evidence to support your argument
LE	2	Last Body Paragraph	Additional paragraph expanding the categories of analysis
DBQ	3	In the Conclusion Paragraph	Conclusion paragraph, reaching back or forward, or beyond the given
LE	3	In the Conclusion Paragraph	Conclusion paragraph, reaching back or forward, or beyond the given

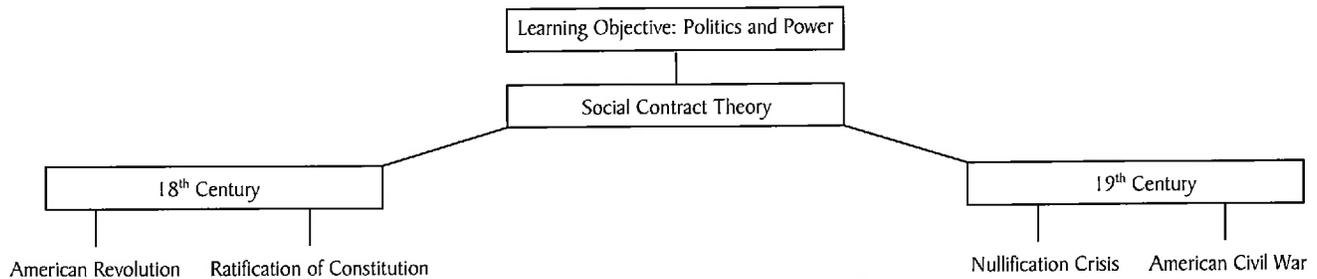
DBQ Historical Context – Broader, Other, and Local Historical Events / Periods?

Think of the Historical Context in Part C of the DBQ rubric in terms of concentric circles. Suppose you have a DBQ on the American Revolution (circle #5).

- Circle #1 = Learning Objective: Politics and Power
- Circle #2 = Social Contract Theory
- Circle #3 = Time Period of the 18th Century
- Circle #4 = Time Period of the 19th Century
- Circle #5 = American Revolution
- Circle #6 = Ratification of Constitution
- Circle #7 = Nullification Crisis
- Circle #8 = American Civil War
- Part C satisfied by connecting #5 to #2
- Part D (3rd column) satisfied by connecting #5 to #8



OR



Contextualization is achieved by connecting it to the **BROADER** historical period by situating it within the Social Contract Theory of the Enlightenment. Synthesis (3rd column on the rubric) is achieved by connecting it to an **OTHER** historical period by connecting it to the Southern argument during the Civil War. **LOCAL** is related to specific documents and typically would involve the HIPP analysis.

Forms of Analysis and the Learning Objectives – BAGPIPE

Belief Systems: Ideas, Ideologies, Culture

- Ideas
- Religion and Philosophy
- Art and Literature
- Cultural Values
- Science
- Morality and Moral Values

America in the World: Global Context

- Competition for Resources
- Foreign Policy and Diplomacy
- Expansionism and Imperialism
- Global Conflicts (World Wars)
- Military and Economic

Geography & Environment: Physical and Human

- Climate, Environment, and Geography
- Natural Resources
- Exchanges: plants, disease, animals

Peopling: Movement & Migrations

- Movement to, from, within the U.S.
- Nativism
- Immigrant groups impact on Society

Identify: Gender, Class, Racial, Ethnic Identities

- Gender
- Class
- Racial and Ethnic Identities
- National and Regional Identities
- Nationalism and Patriotism
- Assimilation

Politics and Power

- Role of State in Society
- Political Process
- Role of Political Parties
- Struggles over / for Freedom
- Federalism
- Liberty and Rights
- Citizenship
- Authority and Power

Economy: Work, Exchange, Trade, Technology

- Agriculture and Manufacturing
- Commerce and Trade
- Technology and Innovations
- Labor Systems
- Transportation
- Land Distribution