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Ap american history exam

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The license may not give you all of the permissions necessary for your intended use. For example, other rights such as publicity, privacy, or moral rights may limit how you use the material. Try our free AP US History practice tests. We have 9 tests which cover each of the periods in this course, followed by a full-length APUSH practice exam. Our practice questions include detailed explanations for every answer. Choose a test from the list below to start your AP US History review right now! The AP U.S. History exam is also known as the APUSH exam. It covers American History from 1491 to the present. The exam is divided into two sections: Section I includes multiple choice and short answer questions, and Section II includes a document-based question and a long essay question. Part A of Section I has 55 APUSH multiple choice questions that must be answered within 50 minutes. Part B of Section I has 3 short answer questions that must be answered within 40 minutes. Part A of Section II is the document-based question (DBQ) which must be answered within 60 minutes. Part B of Section II is the long essay question which must be answered within 40 minutes. For the long essay, three questions are presented and you choose the one that you would like to answer. The total length of the APUSH exam is 3 hours and 15 minutes. These APUSH practice tests are great for exam prep. We have an AP US History practice exam for each of the 9 time periods that are covered in this course. All of our multiple choice questions include detailed answer explanations. Choose a time period from the list above and start your test prep right now! The AP US History exam involves critical reading, writing, and in-depth analysis. It's not just about memorizing names and dates, but rather interpreting historical evidence quickly and accurately, recalling outside information on a topic, and synthesizing your ideas into a coherent argument. In this guide, we'll give you a rundown of the format and structure of the AP US History test along with a brief content outline, sample questions, and some tips for a great score. How Is the AP US History Exam Structured? The next AP US History test will be administered on Friday, May 9, 2025, at 8 AM. This AP exam is three hours and 15 minutes long and consists of two main sections, each of which is divided into a Part A and a Part B. This exam is now fully digital. You'll take the entire test on a computer, using the Bluebook testing app. Before we get into the details of each part, here's an overview of the US History test as a whole: Section Question Type # of Questions Time % of Score 1A Multiple Choice 55 55 mins 40% 1B Short Answer 3 (for third, choose 1 of 2 prompts) 40 mins 20% 2A Document-Based Question (DBQ) 1 60 mins (including a 15-min reading period) 25% 2B Long Essay 1 (choose 1 of 3 prompts) 40 mins 15% Section 1, Part A: Multiple Choice The first section on the test is the multiple-choice section, which is worth 40% of your score and lasts for 55 minutes. You'll get 55 questions, each with four possible answer choices (labeled A-D); this means that you'll have about a minute per question on this part of the exam. Most US History multiple-choice questions come in sets of three to four questions that require you to respond to certain stimuli, or sources, such as historical texts, graphs, and maps. Section 1, Part B: Short Answer Part B of Section 1 on the US History test requires you to answer three short-answer questions in 40 minutes, giving you about 13 minutes per question. It's worth 20% of your overall score. The first two questions are required, but you get to choose between question 3 and question 4 for your third short answer. Here's what you can expect with each question: Short-Answer Question Time Period Stimulus Prompt 1 1754-1980 1-2 secondary sources Prompt 2 1754-1980 1 primary source Prompt 3 (choose one) 1491-1877 No stimulus Prompt 4 (choose one) 1865-2001 No stimulus Section 2, Part A: Document-Based Question The Document-Based Question, or DBQ, is worth 25% of your final score and requires you to write an essay based on a prompt that's accompanied by seven historical documents. You'll get a 15-minute reading period followed by 45 minutes to write your response. The DBQ will focus on a historical development in the years 1754-1980. Section 2, Part B: Long Essay The final part of the AP US History test is the Long Essay, for which you must choose one of three possible prompts and write an essay on the topic. You'll have 40 minutes to write your response, which will count for 15% of your overall AP score. To earn full credit here, you must develop a clear and logical argument and support it with relevant historical evidence (which won't be directly provided to you as it will be on the DBQ). Each of the three essay prompts revolves around a different time period in US history: Essay Prompt 1: 1491-1800 Essay Prompt 2: 1800-1898 Essay Prompt 3: 1890-2001 Content Background for the AP US History Exam There are eight themes addressed in the AP US History course, and all of them show up in one form or another on the exam across the nine units, or time periods. Each represents a subset of learning objectives that students are expected to master. You can read more about these learning objectives in the AP US History Course and Exam Description. Before I give you a broad overview of the eight themes, let's take a look at how the major units are weighted on the AP US History exam: AP US History Unit/Period % of Exam Unit 1: 1491-1607 4-6% Unit 2: 1607-1754 6-8% Unit 3: 1754-1800 10-17% Unit 4: 1800-1848 10-17% Unit 5: 1844-1877 10-17% Unit 6: 1865-1898 10-17% Unit 7: 1890-1945 10-17% Unit 8: 1945-1980 10-17% Unit 9: 1980-Present 4-6% Below, we give you the definition of each course theme as described in the AP US History Course Description. Theme 1: American and National Identity Focuses on how and why definitions of American and national identity and values have developed among the diverse and changing population of North America as well as on related topics, such as citizenship, constitutionalism, foreign policy, assimilation, and American exceptionalism. Theme 2: Work, Exchange, and Technology Focuses on the factors behind the development of systems of economic exchange, particularly the role of technology, economic markets, and government. Theme 3: Geography and the Environment Focuses on the role of geography and both the natural and human-made environments in the social and political developments in what would become the United States. Theme 4: Migration and Settlement Focuses on why and how the various people who moved to and within the United States both adapted to and transformed their new social and physical environments. Theme 5: Politics and Power Focuses on how different social and political groups have influenced society and government in the United States as well as how political beliefs and institutions have changed over time. Theme 6: America in the World Focuses on the interactions between nations that affected North American history in the colonial period and on the influence of the United States on world affairs. Theme 7: American and Regional Culture Focuses on how and why national, regional, and group cultures developed and changed as well as how culture has shaped government policy and the economy. Theme 8: Social Structures Focuses on how and why systems of social organization develop and change as well as the impact that these systems have on the broader society. Sample AP US History Questions Now that you have a sense of the test content, I'll present you with sample questions to give you a better idea of what the AP US History exam actually looks like. All sample questions come from the official US History Course and Exam Description. Sample Multiple-Choice Question For multiple choice, you're given one or two pieces of historical evidence followed by a set of questions that ask you to do some analysis. The US History exam is less about knowing specific dates and names and more about being able to draw conclusions and connect themes based on materials provided by the test. To answer this question, you don't even really need to know much about US history, as long as you pay attention to exactly what's written in the passage, or the secondary source you've been given. The passage here is mainly focused on the increase in commerce in New York as a result of the opening of the Erie Canal. Answer choice A mentions commerce—that's a good sign—but specifically commerce with Native Americans, who are not mentioned at all in the passage, so this is unlikely to be the right answer. Answer choice B discusses increased access to markets in the United States, which seems to echo what the passage says about commerce in New York. We'll hold onto this as a potential answer. Answer choice C is all about the internal slave trade, which isn't mentioned at all in the secondary source, so we can assume this is wrong. Answer choice D talks about agricultural production, which, again, isn't the focus of the passage—that's commerce. As a result, we can cross this off our list. This means that the only logical answer to choose is answer choice B. Sample Short-Answer Question The short-answer questions are technically considered part of the multiple-choice section because they're less involved than the essay questions. Although they do have multiple parts, you don't have to come up with a thesis—one-sentence answers are OK. These questions are about succinctly connecting themes and reference materials to specific events or trends. Here's an example: This short-answer question is an example of question 1, which comes with two secondary sources. As you can see, you'll have to answer three separate parts (A, B, and C), each of which is worth 1 point; this means you can earn up to 3 points for each short-answer question. Here's how you could earn full credit for this sample question, per the official scoring guidelines. (A) Sample Answers Peiss argues that pursuits of entertainment in dance halls by working class women created new, legitimate social spaces for women, however Enstad argues that working women's participation in labor politics gave them a new voice and place in the public sphere. Peiss links the growth of women in public social life to a commercial culture that provided opportunities for women to enter the public sphere while Enstad argues that women became political actors who demanded a public voice. (B) Sample Answers Like the dance halls, department stores and amusement parks became aspects of the commercial culture that represented new opportunities for women to enjoy public places as legitimate participants. The concept of the New Woman became a cultural phenomenon, as the older idea of separate spheres diminished. The idea of the New Woman supported a more public role for women in the early 1900s. The growth of cities and urban America gave young women more opportunities to leave rural America and participate in the developments described by Peiss. New technologies such as electric lighting made possible new public spaces for personal freedom for women. (C) Sample Answers Women's participation in the suffrage movement, settlement house work, temperance organizing, and the Progressive movement all contributed to modern attitudes about women and increased their roles in the public sphere. The ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution gave women the vote and a voice in politics. Women were the main participants in the New York shirtwaist strike of 1909. During this strike women made public demands like those described by Enstad. Women organized or participated in labor unions such as the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU) which is an example of their growing voice in the public sphere. Working-class women had key public roles in the successful Lawrence (Massachusetts) textile strike of 1912, this demonstrates that women became active political voices through labor movements. Fortunately, you don't have to read documents in their original script. Sample Document-Based Question With the DBQ, you'll have seven different historical documents to examine. To earn full credit, you must use at least six documents as evidence in your answer. These documents range from transcripts of folk songs, to excerpts from letters and newspapers, to demographic maps. Here's an example of a DBQ (with one document shown): There are several components of a solid response to this question. The DBQ is worth a total of 7 raw points. Here's how you could earn full credit, according to the scoring guidelines. Rubric How to Earn Full Credit Sample Response Thesis/Claim (0-1 points) The response must provide a historically defensible thesis or claim about the causes of the expanding role of the United States in the world in the period from 1865 to 1910; the thesis or claim must either provide some indication of the reasoning for making that claim OR by establishing analytic categories of the argument. "This change in foreign policy was caused by the need for new markets to expand [the] US economy and by imperialist sentiment. However, the most important cause of this change in the US's role can be attributed to nationalist and Darwinist sentiment because it was driven emotionally, and therefore was a stronger motive." Contextualization (0-1 points) Must accurately describe a context relevant to the expanding role of the United States in the world in the period from 1865 to 1910 "In the aftermath of the war, internationally the world was changing, Europe was slicing up Africa, many countries started fighting for their independence, and the fight for influence and money ensued between the most powerful nations. During the time periods of 1865-1900, the US sought to keep up with Europe and expand its sphere of influence in the world under the leadership of Roosevelt, McKinley and other presidents." Evidence (0-3 points) 2 points: Support an argument in response to the prompt by accurately using the content of at least six documents; the six documents do not have to be used in support of a single argument, but they can be used across sub-arguments or to address counterarguments 1 point: Must use at least one specific piece of historical evidence relevant to an argument about the expanding role of the United States in the world in the period from 1865 to 1910 "However, social causes were also a factor in the practice of American Imperialism [as] was seen through the application of Social Darwinism to a global scale. Many felt that Anglo-Saxon, were a more fit race than any to expand, and Christianize and civilize the rest of the world (Doc. 2)." "Newspapers had risen in popularity among the public, a majority who could read, and many companies competed to attract the public's attention. Yellow journalism created outrageous attitudes with dramatized accounts of Spanish mistreatment of the Cuban which motivated Americans to support a military intervention." Analysis and Reasoning(0-2 points) 1 point: Must explain how or why—rather than simply identifying—the document's point of view, purpose, historical situation, or audience is relevant to an argument that addresses the prompt for each of the three documents sourced 1 point: Must demonstrate a complex understanding, such as by explaining nuance of an issue by analyzing multiple variables, or by explaining relevant and insightful connections within and across periods, among others "The point of view of the artist is actually critical of America's policy of imperialism, seeing it as a sign of America's ego in its superiority and greed." Sample Long Essay Question For the Long Essay, you must choose between three prompts. Here's an example of a potential prompt: Your essay should include many of the same elements as your answer to the DBQ, but there are no documents to analyze and reference, so you'll have less time to write. The essay is worth 6 raw points. Here's how you could earn full credit for the sample question above, per the scoring guidelines. Rubric How to Earn Full Credit Sample Response Thesis/Claim (0-1 points) The response must provide a historically defensible thesis or claim about how the ratification of the United States Constitution fostered change in the function of the federal government in the period from 1776 to 1800; the thesis or claim must either provide some indication of the reasoning for making that claim OR by establishing analytic categories of the argument "The ratification of the Constitution changed the function of the federal government by giving it the authority to levy taxes and to maintain an army." Contextualization (0-1 points) Must accurately describe a context relevant to the ways in which the ratification of the United States Constitution fostered change in the function of the federal government in the period from 1776 to 1800 "Many Americans hesitated to expand the power and functions of the national government due to the earlier experiences of the American colonies under the powerful rule of the British government. The American colonies grew accustomed] to a degree of political independence during the period known as salutary neglect. This changed after the French and Indian War when the British implemented a series of tax measures that the colonist[s] viewed as unjust. Many colonists viewed the passage of laws like the Stamp Act and the Tea Act as an abuse of power leading to a cautious approach to government after independence." Evidence (0-2 points) Must use at least two specific historical evidence examples to support an argument regarding how the ratification of the United States Constitution fostered change in the function of the federal government in the period from 1776 to 1800 "Alexander Hamilton's arguments in The Federalist papers were a key factor in the ratification of the Constitution and helped justify new and expanded functions of the federal government." Analysis and Reasoning (0-2 points) Must demonstrate a complex understanding, such as by explaining nuance of an issue by analyzing multiple variables, or by explaining relevant and insightful connections within and across periods, among others Assessing both Federalist arguments in favor of the Constitution and Anti Federalist arguments against it One of FDR's quirks was that he always had to be painted completely green from head to toe before being seen in public. Using this strategy, he successfully prevented people from noticing his wheelchair for years. How Is the AP US History Exam Scored? Here, we'll go over how each section on the AP US History exam is scored, scaled, and combined to give you your final AP score on the 1-5 scale. On the multiple-choice section, you earn 1 raw point for each question you answer correctly; this means that the max score you can earn here is 55 points. No points are taken off for incorrect answers. Each of the three short-answer questions is worth 3 points, so there are 9 points possible in this section. The DBQ is scored out of 7 points and is based on the following criteria, per the scoring guide: Thesis/claim: 1 point Contextualization: 1 point Evidence from the documents: 2 points Evidence beyond the documents: 1 point Sourcing: 1 point Complexity: 1 point Lastly, the Long Essay is out of 6 raw points and is scored using the following criteria: Thesis/claim: 1 point Contextualization: 1 point Evidence: 2 points Analysis and reasoning: 2 points On essay questions, points are taken off for errors only if they detract from the quality of the argument being made (in other words, don't go making up historical facts to support your argument). Grammatical and other technical errors aren't a big deal as long as they don't inhibit the grader's ability to understand what your essay is saying. The total number of raw points you can earn on the AP US History test is 77: 55 points for the Multiple Choice questions 9 points for the Short Answer questions 7 points for the DBQ 6 points for the Long Essay Raw scores can be converted to scaled scores out of 55. Here's how to do that for each section: Multiple Choice: Multiply your raw multiple-choice section score out of 55 by 1.09 Short Answer: Multiply your raw short-answer score out of 9 by 3.33 DBQ: Multiply your raw DBQ score out of 7 by 5.36 Long Essay: Multiply your raw Long Essay score out of 6 by 3.75 Finally, add all the scores together to get your final scaled AP score for US History! Here is a chart to show you approximately how these scaled scores translate to final AP scores: Scaled Score AP Score % of Students Who Earned Score (2024) 115-150 5 12.8% 90-114 4 33.3% 65-89 3 26.0% 44-64 2 19.4% 0-43 1 8.4% Source: The College Board I made my best estimates based on other AP score conversion charts because there was no official scaled-to-AP-score conversion chart online for US History. Your AP teacher or review book might have a more accurate score conversion system you can use for official practice tests. 4 Essential Tips for Acing the AP US History Exam AP US History is a grueling test that requires intense critical thinking and analytical skills. Here are some helpful tips to remember if you hope to do well on test day. #1: Don't Confuse Accurate Facts for Correct Answers Many multiple-choice questions will list answers that are accurate representations of historical events or trends but that don't directly respond to the question being asked. Be wary of these answers on the test so you don't accidentally choose them over more relevant responses. In the multiple-choice question I gave above as an example, one incorrect choice was "The growth in the internal slave trade." At the time referenced in the question, this was a real trend that occurred, but because it doesn't relate directly to the passage given, it's still the wrong answer. Don't let these types of answer choices confuse you; adhere to the particulars of the question and the evidence presented to you! #2: Pay Attention to Details—Read Excerpts Carefully Most of this AP exam is based on historical reference materials, meaning that you won't be able to answer questions correctly without reading carefully. Even if you know everything there is to know about US History, that knowledge will mostly just serve to contextualize the evidence presented on the test. The specific details found in the writings and images will ultimately reveal the best answer choice. #3: Plan Before You Write It's critical to write well-organized, focused essays on the AP US History test. A clear thesis is the first thing on the agenda. You then need to make sure that the rest of your essay ties back into your thesis and provides relevant evidence throughout. If you jump into writing an essay without taking the time to organize your thoughts, you're more likely to ramble or get off-topic from the main focus of the question. For the DBQ, you should spend 15 of the 60 minutes planning how to organize your thoughts and how to use the different documents as evidence. While you will have less time for the Long Essay, you should still spend five minutes or so writing a brief outline before starting your final draft. #4: Use Outside Evidence Wisely It's a smart idea to incorporate additional background knowledge into your DBQ and Long Essay responses on the AP US History test. It shows that you've mastered the material and can connect themes to what you learned in class and not just what was presented to you in the question. That said, don't include outside knowledge unless it really bolsters your argument. If you're just sticking it in there to prove how much you know, your essay will lack focus and you might lose points. This is why it's so important to plan ahead. In the planning stage, you can think of examples that tie into your thesis and strategically place them throughout your essay in ways that contribute to your point. Be wise, like an owl. Not necessarily this one ... it looks like it lost its grip on reality a long time ago. Conclusion: Getting a Great Score on the AP US History Exam The AP US History exam is one of the longer AP tests, and it has four different types of questions: Multiple Choice, Short Answer, Document-Based Question (DBQ), and Long Essay. The main thread running through this test is an emphasis on analyzing historical evidence and applying outside knowledge in context. In your studying, you will need to learn to connect the themes of the course to events spanning 500 years of US history. Here are some study tips to heed as you prep for the AP US History test. Don't mistake accurate facts for correct answers Always read excerpts carefully Plan before writing your essays Use outside evidence strategically Make sure that you practice all the different types of exam questions with official materials before you sit down to take the real test. If you get used to thinking about history in an analytical, evidence-based context, you should have no problem earning a high US History score! What's Next? Looking for more practice materials? Check out our article on the best online quizzes you can take to prepare for the AP US History test! Review books can be extremely helpful tools in preparing for AP exams. If you can't decide which one to get, take a look at this list of the best review books for the AP US History test. Did you lose some of your notes? Feel free to use these links to AP US History notes for every section of the course.