

Possible Essay Topics

1. Religion – discuss the impact of the following on Colonial America
 - a. Puritanism
 - b. Roger Williams and Anne Hutchinson
 - c. Great Awakening
2. How democratic was colonial America? Consider following – religious freedom, rights of blacks and women, labor, who had the right to vote, power of colonial legislatures, power of royal governors, control of parliament over colonies.
3. Explain the economic, political and social differences between the New England, Middle and Chesapeake colonies. Explain the reasons why each region developed differently.
4. What were the causes and effects of the American Revolution? Consider – changes in relationship between Britain and Colonies resulting from the French and Indian War, and basic causes – development of American nationalism, taxation, enforcement of mercantilism, religious issues, westward migration, violations of rights of Englishmen. What changes did the Revolution bring to American society?
5. Articles of Confederation – did it provide an effective form of government? Consider the following – land policies, Treaty of Paris, taxation, regulation of trade, foreign policy problems, Shays' Rebellion
6. Constitutional Convention, Constitution and the Ratification Debate. Consider the following – reasons for the calling of the convention, compromises at the convention, the Beard Thesis (economic motives of framers), expansion of power of the federal government under the constitution, arguments of Federalists and Anti-Federalists during the ratification debate.
7. Reasons for the rise of political parties – Federalists and Democratic-Republicans. Consider foreign policy and Hamilton's financial program, how each view the power and role of the federal government. Also, Adams Administration – XYZ affair, Alien and Sedition Acts, Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions
8. Developments in transportation and technology. Consider the following – roads (early 19th century), canals (1820s and 30s), steamboats (19th century), railroads (1840-1900), automobile (1920s-present). Cotton Gin, Interchangeable Parts, factory system, McCormick Reaper, Telegraph, Sewing Machine, Bessemer Process, Electricity
9. Jacksonian Democracy. What factors contributed to the growth of democracy during the first quarter of the 19th century? Why is the period 1824-1840 often referred to as the era of the common man?
10. Explain the reasons for the rise of the 2nd Party System – Democrats and Whigs. Consider views of Federal Power, Economic Policies, Political Personalities
11. Manifest Destiny and the settlement of the west. What were the motives behind American expansionism during the period 1800-1860? How did the United States expand? Explain how expansionism caused sectional conflict.
12. Foreign Policy Time Periods – Know the following
 - 1790's – neutrality
 - 1800-1815 – efforts to avoid war, war of 1812
 - 1830's and 40's – expansionism, manifest destiny
 - 1890s-1914 – overseas expansion, imperialism

- 1914-1920 – Reason for U.S. entry into World War I, 14 pts., League of Nations, rejection of Versailles Treaty
- 1920-1941 – Were we isolationist? Shift from neutrality to aid for allies
- 1945 to Present – global involvement, containment, UN, etc.,

13. Growth of Sectionalism and Causes of Civil War. Consider Slavery, state's rights, extension of slavery into territories, economic differences, abolitionist activities, political leadership

14. Civil War – Lincoln's Actions – Limits on civil liberties, Emancipation Proclamation, 10% Plan

15. Reconstruction (1865-77) and New South (1877-1900) – Was it a revolution? Compare and contrast presidential and congressional reconstruction. How were rights of blacks expanded? How and why were rights of blacks limited after Reconstruction? How new was the New South? Compare and Contrast B.T. Washington and W.E.B. DuBois.

16. Organized Labor during the late 19th Century. Compare and contrast goals and tactics of Knights of Labor, American Federation of Labor, Industrial Workers of the World? What obstacles did workers face in trying to improve conditions? Why did the following strikes fail – Railroad Strike of 1877, Homestead "strike", Pullman Strike

17. Growth of Big Business. Discuss tactics used by big business during the late 19th century. Discuss the factors that encouraged industrial growth – consider government policy, geographic factors, wars, business organization. How did Big Business defend their practices – discuss social Darwinism and gospel of wealth. How did government respond to the growth of big business?

18. Compare and contrast the Political and economic reforms of Jacksonian Democrats, Populists, Progressives, and New Dealers. Discuss their goals and their reforms. Consider support for Common man and limits on special privilege.

19. Compare and Contrast the motives of social reformers during the following time periods

- b. Jacksonian Era (Abolitionists, Women's Rights, Temperance, Public Education, etc.)
- c. Progressive Era (Black Civil Rights – DuBois, Women's Suffrage, Birth Control, Prohibition)
- d. 1960's (Civil Rights, Women's Right, etc.)

20. Compare and Contrast the following – Square Deal, New Freedom, New Deal, Great Society

21. Civil Rights Movement – Goals, tactics, organizations, court decisions, legislation. Compare and contrast SCLC with Black Power organizations in terms of goals and tactics.

22. Women's Rights. Consider Seneca Falls Convention, Eliz. Cady Stanton, S.B. Anthony, NAWSA, expansion of voting rights in the west, Cady Chapman Catt, Alice Paul, impact of WWI, 19th Amendment, Margaret Sanger, Betty Friedan, NOW, Roe v. Wade

23. Immigration – reasons for rise of nativism during following periods – 1840s and 50s, 1880-1930. Be able to discuss arguments for and against restrictions and actual restrictions on immigration

24. Vietnam War – reasons for US involvement, impact of war on American society, politics, and economy, expansion of presidential power, lessons of Vietnam.

25. Decades – Discuss the important social, political, and economic developments of the following decades: 1920's, 1950's, 1960's.

26. Elections – Significance of the following – 1800, 1824, 1828, 1844, 1860, 1877, 1912, 1932, 1968

AP US HISTORY FREE RESPONSE QUESTIONS, 1980-2000
Arranged according to topic

I. Colonial Time 1607 - 1775

1. In the seventeenth century, New England Puritans tried to create a model society. What were their aspirations, and to what extent were those aspirations fulfilled during the seventeenth century? (83)
2. Throughout the colonial period, economic concerns had more to do with the settling of British North America than did religious concerns. Assess the validity of this statement with specific reference to economic and religious concerns. (90)
3. To what extent and why did religious toleration increase in the American colonies during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries? Answer with reference to Three individuals, events, or movements in American religion during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. (81)
4. From 1600 – 1763, several European nations vied for control of the North American continent. Why did England win the struggle? (73)
5. The American Revolution should really be called the “British Revolution” because marked changes in British colonial policy were responsible for final political division than were American actions. Assess the validity of this statement for the period 1763 – 1776. (82)
6. Britain’s wars for empire, far more than its mercantilist policies, dictated the economic fortunes of Britain’s North American colonies in the eighteenth century. Assess the validity of this statement. (87)
7. In the two decades before the outbreak of the American Revolutionary War, a profound shift in the way many Americans thought and felt about the British government and their colonial governments. Assess the validity of this statement in view of the political and constitutional debates of these decades. (89)
8. For the period before 1750, analyze the ways in which Britain’s policy of salutary neglect influenced the development of American society as illustrated in the following:
Legislative assemblies
Commerce
Religion (95)
9. Analyze the extent to which religious freedom existed in the British North American colonies prior to 1700. (98)
10. Analyze the cultural and economic responses of TWO of the following groups to the Indians of North America before 1750.
British French Spanish (00)

II. American Revolution – Early Republic (1776 – 1800)

1. Despite the view of some historians that the conflict between Great Britain and its thirteen North American colonies was economic in origin, in fact the American Revolution had its roots in politics and other areas of American life. Assess the validity of this statement. (86)
2. This history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpation, all having in direct object, the establishment of an absolute tyranny over these States. Evaluate this accusation made against George III in the Declaration of Independence. (88)
3. Analyze the extent to which the American Revolution represented a radical alteration

in American political ideas and institutions. Confine your answer to the period 1775 to 1800. (97)

4. Analyze the degree to which the Articles of Confederation provided an effective form of government with respect to any TWO of the following:
Foreign relations
Economic conditions Western lands (96)
5. Evaluate the relative importance of domestic and foreign affairs in shaping American politics in the 1790's. (94)
6. The Bill of Rights did not come from a desire to protect the liberties won in the American Revolution, but rather from a fear of the powers of the new federal government. Assess the validity of the statement. (91)
7. Evaluate the relative importance of the following as factors prompting Americans to rebel in 1776:
Parliamentary taxation British military measures
Restriction of civil liberties The legacy of colonial religious and political ideas (92)
8. What evidence is there for the assertion that the basic principles of the Constitution were firmly grounded in the political and religious experience of America's colonial and revolutionary periods? (84)
9. Between 1783 and 1800, the new government of the United States faced the same political, economic, and constitutional issues that troubled the British government's relations with the colonies prior to the Revolution. Assess the validity of this generalization. (80)
10. In the two decades before the outbreak of the American Revolutionary War, a profound shift occurred in the way many Americans thought and felt about the British government and their colonial governments. Assess the validity of this statement in view of the political and constitutional debate of these decades. (89)
11. What evidence is there for the assertion that the basic principles of the Constitution were firmly grounded in the political and religious experience of America's colonial and revolutionary periods. (84)

III. Jeffersonian Democracy 1800 – 1825

1. Early United States foreign policy was primarily a defensive reaction to perceived or actual threats from Europe. Assess the validity of this generalization with reference to United States foreign policy on TWO major issues during the period from 1789 – 1825. (83)

IV. Jackson and American Life 1825 – 1860

1. In the first half of the nineteenth century, the American cultural and intellectual community contributed to the development of a distinctive American national consciousness. Assess the validity of this statement. (86)
2. American reform movements between 1820 and 1860 reflected both optimistic and pessimistic views of human nature and society. Assess the validity of this statement in reference to reform movements of THREE of the following areas:
Education Utopian experiments
Temperance Penal Institutions (88)
Women's Rights
3. Analyze the ways in which Two of the following influenced the development of American society.
Puritanism during the seventeenth century
The Great Awakening during the eighteenth century

The Second Great Awakening during the nineteenth century (94)

4. In what ways did the early nineteenth-century reform movements for abolition and women's rights illustrate both the strengths and weaknesses of democracy in the early American republic? (93)
5. Analyze the extent to which Two of the following influenced the development of democracy between 1820 and 1840.

Jacksonian economic policy	Changes in electoral politics
Second Great Awakening	Westward movement

 (96)
6. How did Two of the following contribute to the reemergence of a two party system in the period 1820 to 1840?

Major political personalities	States' rights	Economic issues
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 (99)
7. In the period 1815 to 1860, improvements in transportation and increased inter-regional trade should have united Americans, but instead produced sectional division and finally disunion. Discuss with reference to the impact of improved transportation and increased inter-regional trade on the Northeast (New England and Middle Atlantic states), the South, and the West. (80)
8. Developments in transportation, rather than in manufacturing and agriculture, sparked American economic growth in the first half of the nineteenth century. Assess the validity of this statement. (89)

V. Manifest Destiny 1840–1860

1. Although Americans perceived Manifest Destiny as a benevolent movement, it was in fact an aggressive imperialism pursued at the expense of others. Assess the validity of this statement with specific reference to American expansionism in the 1840's. (90)
2. Although historically represented as distinct parties, the Federalists and the Whigs in fact shared a common political ideology, represented many of the same interest groups, and proposed similar programs and policies. Assess the validity of the statement. (91)
3. Compare the expansionist foreign policies of Presidents Thomas Jefferson and James K. Polk. To what extent did their policies strengthen the United States? (93)
4. Discuss the impact of territorial expansion on national unity between 1800 and 1850. (97)

VI. Slavery and Pre Civil War Issues 1840 – 1860

1. Slavery was the dominating reality of all southern life. Assess the validity of this generalization for TWO of the following aspects of southern life from about 1840 to 1860: political, social, economic, and intellectual life. (84)
2. At various times between 1789 and 1861, Americans changed their positions on the constitutional question of loose construction or strict construction as best suited their economic or political interests. Discuss this statement with reference to any TWO individuals or groups who took positions on this constitutional question. (81)
3. Throughout our history, the Supreme Court has acted as a partisan political body rather than a neutral arbiter of constitutional principles. Assess the validity of this generalization for the period 1800 – 1860. (84)
4. Analyze the ways in which supporters of slavery in the nineteenth century used legal, religious, and economic arguments to defend the institution of slavery. (95)

IX. Intellectual, Cultural and Social Trends 1860 – 1900

1. Although the United States is widely regarded as the home of free enterprise, business values, and materialism, American fiction since 1865 has generally been critical of business behavior and values. Assess the validity of this generalization with reference to the work of at least TWO writers who have treated the behavior and values of businessmen in their fiction since 1865. (80)
2. Most major religious movements reflect significant shifts in religious beliefs and produce important social changes. Apply this generalization to TWO of the following:
Seventeenth century Puritans The Second Great Awakening
The First Great Awakening The Social Gospel Movement (85)
3. Assess the validity of this statement in view of the experience of TWO of the following:
The Scotch-Irish on the eighteenth century Appalachian frontier
The Irish in the nineteenth century urban Northeast
The Chinese in the nineteenth century west (87)
4. From the 1840's through the 1890's, women's activities in the intellectual, social, economic and political spheres effectively challenged traditional attitudes about women's place in society. Assess the validity of this statement. (91)
5. Americans have been a highly mobile people. Describe and account for the dominant Population Movements between 1820 and 1900. (82)

X. Politics 1877 –1900

1. Although the economic growth of the United States between 1860 and 1900 has been attributed to a governmental policy of laissez-faire, it was in fact encouraged and sustained by direct governmental intervention. Assess the validity of this statement. (88)
2. In what ways were the late nineteenth century Populists the heirs of the Jacksonian Democrats with respect to overall objectives AND specific proposals for reform? (89)
3. Analyze the reasons for the emergence of the Populist movement in the late nineteenth century. (95)
4. How were the lives of the Plains Indians in the second half of the nineteenth century affected by technological developments and government actions? (99)

XI. Expansionism 1890's – 1914

1. United States foreign policy between 1815 and 1910 was determined less by economic than strategic, moral, or political interests. Assess the validity of this generalization with reference to at least TWO major episodes (for example: treaties, wars, proclamations, annexations, etc.) in the foreign policy of the United States between 1815 and 1910. (80)
2. How and why did the Monroe Doctrine become the cornerstone of United States foreign policy by the late nineteenth century? (85)
3. Both the Mexican War and the Spanish American War were premeditated resulting from deliberately calculated schemes of robbery on the part of a superior power against weak and defenseless neighbors. (86)

4. Compare the debates that took place over American expansionism in the 1840's with those that took place in the 1890's, analyzing the similarities and differences in the debates of the two eras. (92)

XII. The Progressives 1900 –1920

1. Analyze and evaluate Booker T. Washington's program for American Blacks and W.E.B. DuBois's challenge to that program.
2. In American politics the most significant battles have occurred within the major parties rather than between them. Discuss this statement with reference to the periods 1850 –1861 and 1900 –1912. (81)
3. The Progressive movement of 1901 to 1917 was a triumph of conservatism rather than a victory for liberalism. Assess the validity of this generalization. (87)
4. Analyze the ways in which state and federal legislation and judicial decisions, including those of the Supreme Court, affected the efforts of any TWO of the following groups to improve their position in society between 1880 and 1920.
African Americans Farmers Workers (93)

XIII. World War I 1914 - 1920

1. Assess the relative influence of THREE of the following in the American decision to declare war on Germany in 1917.
German naval policy Allied propaganda
American economic interests America's claim to world power
Woodrow Wilson's idealism (95)
2. To what extent did the United States achieve the objectives that led it to enter the First World War? (00)

XIV. The 1920's

1. In what ways did economic conditions and developments in the arts and entertainment help create the reputation of the 1920's as the Roaring Twenties? (99)
2. The economic policies of the federal government from 1921 to 1929 were responsible for the nation's depression of the 1930's. Assess the validity of this generalization. (83)

XV. The New Deal 1932 - 1945

1. The New Deal secured the support of labor and agriculture after 1932 as the Republican party had secured the support of industry and commerce since 1920 – with special interest programs giving financial aid, legal privileges, and other types of assistance. Assess the validity of this statement, giving attention to both periods (1920 –1932 and 1932 – 1940). (81)
2. Despite often brutal clashes between labor and capital in the United States during the period 1865-1940, collective working-class protest did not constitute a basic attack on the capitalistic system. Assess the validity of this statement. (82)
3. During the past four decades, historians have consistently have rated Washington,

Lincoln, and FDR as the greatest presidents. Assess the greatness of any TWO of these, making clear the criteria on which you base your judgement. (85)

4. Reform movements of the twentieth century have shown continuity in their goals and strategies. Assess the validity of this statement for ONE of the following pairs of reform movements.

Progressivism and the New Deal
Women's suffrage and post-Second World War Feminism
The New Deal and the Great Society (86)

5. Why did socialism fail to become a major force in American politics between 1900 and 1940 despite widespread dissatisfaction with the social and economic order and significant support for radical movements during that time period? (88)

6. Analyze the ways in which the Great Depression altered the American social fabric in the 1930's. (96)

7. Identify Three of the following New Deal measures and analyze the ways in which each of the three attempted to fashion a more stable economy and a more equitable society.

Agricultural Adjustment Act Wagner National Labor relations Act
Securities and Exchange Commission Social Security Act (93)

8. Although American writers of the 1920's and 1930's criticized American society, the nature of their criticisms differed markedly in the two decades. Assess the validity of this statement with specific reference to writers in both decades. (90)

XVI. Isolationism and War 1921 - 1945

1. Prior to American involvement in both the First and Second World Wars, the United States adopted an official policy of neutrality. Compare the policy and its modifications during the period 1914-17 to the policy and its modifications during 1939-41. (82)
2. To what extent and why did the United States adopt an isolationist policy in the 1920's and 1930's? (98)

XVII. Postwar Years 1945 -1960

1. Harry S. Truman was a realistic, pragmatic President who skillfully led the American people against the menace posed by the Soviet Union. Assess the validity of this generalization for President Truman's foreign policy. (84)
2. The size, character, and effectiveness of the organized labor movement changed significantly during the late nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century. Apply this statement to TWO of the periods:
1870 -1915 1915 - 1935 1935 - 1950 (85)
3. In 1945 Winston Churchill said that the United States stood at the summit of the world. Discuss the developments in the thirty years following Churchill's speech which called the global preeminence of the United States into question. (92)
4. Analyze the influence of TWO of the following on American-Soviet relations in the decade following the Second World War.
Yalta Conference Communist Revolution in China
Korean War McCarthysim (96)
5. To what extent did the decade of the 1950's deserve its reputation as an age of political, social, and cultural conformity? (94)

6. How do you account for the appeal of McCarthyism in the United States in the era following the Second World War? (97)
7. Although the 1960's are usually considered the decade of the greatest achievement for Black civil rights, the 1940's and 1950's were periods of equally important gains. Assess the validity of this statement. (91)

XVIII. 1960's to 1990

1. A presidential election that results in defeat of the party in power usually indicates the failure of the party in power to have dealt effectively with the nation's problems, rather than indicating the positive appeal of the winning candidate and his party platform. Assess the validity of this generalization with reference to TWO of the elections in which the party in power was defeated: 1912, 1920, 1932, 1952, 1960, 1968. (80)
2. Compare the goals and strategies of Black reform movements in the period 1890 – 1910 to the goals and strategies of Black reform movements in the period 1950-1970. (82)
3. What accounted for the growth between 1940 and 1965 of popular and governmental concern for the position of Blacks in American society? (85)
4. Shifts in party control of the presidency during the twentieth century have typically NOT brought major shifts in domestic policy. Assess the validity of this statement. Illustrate your argument by discussing the extent to which TWO of the following presidents adopted the DOMESTIC programs of the previous presidential administrations given in parentheses beneath their names.
 - Woodrow Wilson
(administration of William H. Taft and Theodore Roosevelt)
 - Franklin D. Roosevelt
(administration of Herbert Hoover)
 - Dwight D. Eisenhower
(administration of Franklin D. Roosevelt and Harry S. Truman)
 - Richard M. Nixon
(administration of Lyndon B. Johnson and John F. Kennedy) (83)
5. Vice -Presidents who have succeeded to the presidency on the death of the President have been less effective in their conduct of domestic AND foreign policy than the men they have replaced. Assess the validity of this statement for any TWO of the following pairs.
 - William McKinley and Theodore Roosevelt
 - Franklin D. Roosevelt and Harry S. Truman
 - John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson (89)
6. Social dislocations resulting from wartime conditions frequently bring lasting change within a society. Evaluate the relevance of this generalization to American society in the twentieth century in view of the experience of Blacks AND women. (87)
7. 1968 was a turning point for the United States. To what extent is this an assessment? In your answer, discuss TWO of the following:
 - National Politics
 - Vietnam War
 - Civil Rights (98)
8. In what ways did the Great Society resemble the New Deal in its origins, goals, and social and political legacy? Cite specific programs and policies in support of your arguments. (92)
9. Describe THREE of the following and analyze the ways in which each of the three has affected the status of women in American society since 1940.
 - The persistence of traditional definitions of women's roles
 - Advances in reproductive technology

