

THE NEW AP US HISTORY EXAM

THEMES – Essay questions and short answer responses will address at least ONE of the following themes.

Identity - This theme focuses on the formation of both American national identity and group identities in U.S. history. Students should be able to explain how various identities, cultures, and values have been preserved or changed in different contexts of U.S. history, with special attention given to the formation of gender, class, racial, and ethnic identities. Students should be able to explain how these subidentities have interacted with each other and with larger conceptions of American national identity

Work, exchange, and technology - This theme focuses on the development of American economies based on agriculture, commerce, and manufacturing. Students should examine ways that different economic and labor systems, technological innovations, and government policies have shaped American society. Students should explore the lives of working people and the relationships among social classes, racial and ethnic groups, and men and women, including the availability of land and labor, national and international economic developments, and the role of government support and regulation.

Peopling -

This theme focuses on why and how the various people who moved to, from, and within the United States adapted to their new social and physical environments. Students examine migration across borders and long distances, including the slave trade and internal migration, and how both newcomers and indigenous inhabitants transformed North America. The theme also illustrates how people responded when “borders crossed them.” Students explore the ideas, beliefs, traditions, technologies, religions, and gender roles that migrants/immigrants and annexed peoples brought with them and the impact these factors had on both these peoples

Politics and power – Students should examine ongoing debates over the role of the state in society and its potential as an active agent for change. This includes mechanisms for creating, implementing, or limiting participation in the political process and the resulting social effects, as well as the changing relationships among the branches of the federal government and among national, state, and local governments. Students should trace efforts to define or gain access to individual rights and citizenship and survey the evolutions of tensions between liberty and authority in different periods of U.S. history

America in the world - In this theme, students should focus on the global context in which the United States originated and developed as well as the influence of the United States on world affairs. Students should examine how various world actors (such as people, states, organizations, and companies) have competed for the territory and resources of the North American continent, influencing the development of both American and world societies and economies. Students should also investigate how American foreign policies and military actions have affected the rest of the world as well as social issues within the United States itself.

Environment and geography — physical and human - This theme examines the role of environment, geography, and climate in both constraining and shaping human actions. Students should analyze the interaction between the environment and Americans in their efforts to survive and thrive. Students should also explore efforts to interpret, preserve, manage, or exploit natural and man-made environments, as well as the historical contexts within which interactions with the environment have taken place

Ideas, beliefs, and culture - This theme explores the roles that ideas, beliefs, social mores, and creative expression have played in shaping the United States. Students should examine the development of aesthetic, moral, religious, scientific, and philosophical principles and consider how these principles have affected individual and group actions. Students should analyze the interactions between beliefs and communities, economic values, and political movements, including attempts to change American society to align it with specific ideals.

HISTORICAL THINKING SKILLS

The exam requires students to demonstrate the following historical thinking skills. Students will be asked to demonstrate one or more of these skills on both the FRQ and DBQ.

- Causation
- Continuity and Change over time
- Periodization
- Comparison
- Contextualization
- Argumentation

Causation - This skill asks students to identify and compare basic causes and/or effects and to distinguish between both short- and long-term causes and effects. *Example – Evaluate the impact of the French and Indian War on the relationship between Great Britain and the Thirteen American colonies. Confine your answer to the time period 1750 to 1776.*

Continuity and Change - This skill asks students to recognize, describe, and analyze instances of historical patterns of continuity and change over time. *Example – Discuss the continuities and changes of the social, economic and political conditions confronting African Americans in the American South during the period 1850 to 1900.*

Periodization of history - historians identify turning points and recognize that the choice of specific dates gives a higher value to one narrative, region, or group than to other narratives, regions, or groups. How a historian defines historical periods depends on what the historian considers most significant — political, economic, social, cultural, or environmental factors. Changing periodization can change a historical narrative. *Example - To what extent does the label “Era of the Common Man” capture the political, economic, and social developments that occurred during the time period 1824 to 1840?*

Comparison This skill asks students to compare related historical developments and processes across place, time, or different societies (or within one society). *Example – Compare the response of rural and urban workers to the rise of big business during the period 1865-1900.*

Contextualization - This skill asks students to recognize and explain ways in which historical phenomena or processes connect to broader regional, national, or global processes. The “context” for world history is the world as a whole; for European history, it is Europe as a whole; and for U.S. history, it is primarily the United States itself. *Example - How did late 19th century imperialism reflect the economic, social, and ideological developments and values of that time period?*

Argumentation - This skill asks students to be able to describe commonly accepted historical arguments about the nature of the past and then explain how such arguments have been constructed from historical evidence. *Example – Discuss how and why views of the Reconstruction period in American history (1865-1877) changed over the course of the 20th century.* Argumentation is a skill that can be (and often should be) applied in an essay addressing one of the other skill areas.