

AP U.S. History Exam

Exam Overview

The AP U.S. History Exam is 3 hours and 15 minutes long and includes both a 95-minute multiple-choice and short-answer section (Section I) and a 100-minute free-response section (Section 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.

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	3 questions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Required Question 1: periods 3–8 • Required Question 2: periods 3–8 • Choose between <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Question 3: periods 1–5 OR • Question 4: periods 6–9 	40 minutes	20%
II	Part A: Document-based question	1 question: periods 3–8	60 minutes (includes a 15-minute reading period)	25%
	Part B: Long essay question	1 question, chosen from three options on the same theme: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • periods 1–3 • periods 4–6 • periods 7–9 	40 minutes	15%

ARRATIVE/
NFORMATIVE
WRITING

ANALYTICAL
WRITING

Short-Answer Questions

Section I, Part B of the AP U.S. History Exam consists of four short-answer questions. Students are required to answer the first and second questions and then answer either the third or the fourth question.

- The first question primarily assesses the practice of **analyzing secondary sources**, asking students to respond in writing to a historian's argument. This question addresses content from periods 3–8 of the course.
- The second question primarily assesses either the skill of **causation** or **comparison**, and ask students to respond in writing to a primary source (written text) or to visual sources such as images, charts, or maps. This question also addresses content from periods 3–8 of the course.
- Students choose to answer either the third or the fourth short-answer questions, which deal with periods 1–5 or 6–9, respectively. These questions ask students to respond in writing to general propositions about U.S. history, and they primarily assess the same skill, either **causation** or **comparison**; neither of them will assess the same skill as the second short-answer question.

Each short-answer question asks students to describe examples of historical evidence relevant to the source or question; these examples can be drawn from the concept outline or from other examples explored in depth during classroom instruction.

Short-Answer Questions	Primary Practice or Skill Assessed	Source Type	Periods Assessed
Students are required to answer short-answer question 1 AND short-answer question 2			
1	Analyzing Secondary Sources	Secondary source	Periods 3–8
2	Comparison or Causation	Primary source text or visual source	Periods 3–8
Students select short-answer question 3 OR short-answer question 4			
3	Comparison or Causation	No stimulus	Period 1–5
4	(Different skill from short-answer question 2)		Periods 6–9

Scoring the Response

For a short-answer question, a good response should:

- accomplish all three tasks set by the question. It should answer each task with complete sentences and must show some specific knowledge of history to receive credit.

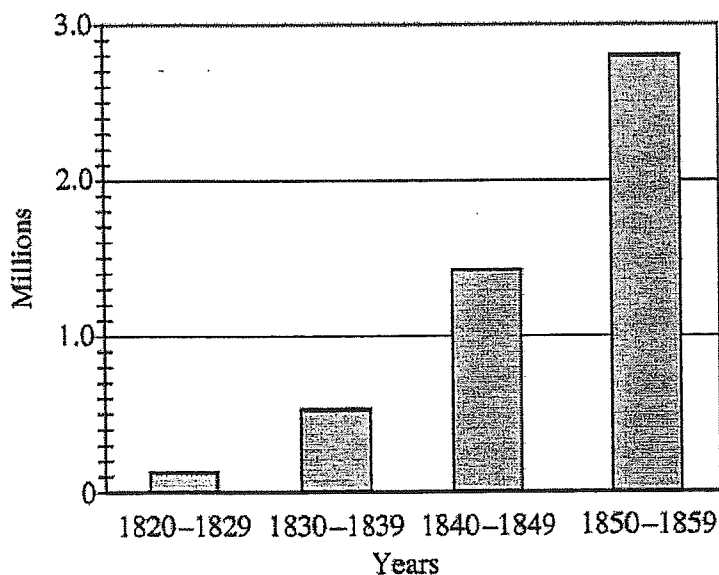
Depending on the question, a good response should:

- explain a historical interpretation, compare two interpretations, and/or explain how evidence relates to an interpretation.
- go beyond simply quoting or paraphrasing primary or secondary sources in explaining their meaning or significance.
- address causes and effects, similarities and differences, or continuities and changes over time for different historical issues, and provide specific evidence in relation to the prompt.

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Short Answer Question 1

IMMIGRATION TO THE UNITED STATES
BY DECADE, 1820–1859



Using the graph above, answer (a), (b), and (c).

- Briefly explain how ONE major historical factor contributed to the change depicted on the graph.
- Briefly explain ONE specific historical effect that resulted from the change depicted on the graph.
- Briefly explain ANOTHER specific historical effect that resulted from the change depicted on the graph.

Scoring Guide

0–3 points

- Score 3
Response accomplishes **all three** tasks set by the question.
- Score 2
Response accomplishes **two** of the tasks set by the question.
- Score 1
Response accomplishes **one** of the tasks set by the question.
- Score 0
Response accomplishes **none** of the tasks set by the question.
- Score NR
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Sample
rubric

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Short Answer Question 1 (continued)

Scoring Notes

a) Briefly explains how ONE major historical factor contributed to the change depicted on the graph.

Examples of responses to (a) that would earn the point:

- Expanding market economy in the United States in the antebellum period
- Opportunities for land
- Homesteading, farming, and pioneering in the West
- Domestic service and factory positions (textiles, shoes, etc.) in the East and Midwest
- Contract immigration labor also brought over in this period
- Attraction of religious freedom and/or economic opportunity for Irish and Germans
- Push factors from Europe (e.g., religious persecution, Irish potato famine, lack of opportunity)

b/c) Briefly explains ONE specific historical effect that resulted from the change depicted on the graph.

Examples of responses to (b) and (c) that would earn the points:

- Demographic concentration of immigrants in northeastern cities.
- Growing nativist (anti-immigration) movement in the United States.
- Anti-Catholic movement.
- Concerns about ethnic enclaves and political power of immigrants.
- Formation of political parties that had a nativist platform (e.g., Know-Nothings) while other parties sought to capitalize on immigrant vote, in particular urban Democrats in New York City and Boston.
- Immigrants became the labor force that built the canals and antebellum regional railroads, and they helped shaped the infrastructure of the country.
- Immigration increased divisions between the North and the South: North and Upper Midwest characterized by free, immigrant labor while South and Southwest by enslaved labor.
- Immigration helped shape a new national culture.
- Immigrants created their own ethnic cultures within the United States.
- Irish and German consumption and production of beer and wine contributed to early temperance activism.

Document-Based Question

Section II, Part A of the AP Exam consists of the document-based question—an essay question that measures students' ability to develop and support an argument using historical source material as evidence. The question focuses on topics from periods 3–8 of the course. The seven documents included in the document-based question may include charts, graphs, cartoons, and pictures, as well as written materials of varying length. These are chosen to illustrate interactions and complexities about the historical topic that is the subject of the question. In their responses, students should develop an argument about the question and utilize the documents to support this argument. Students should also explain elements of the authorship of the documents that affect their historical significance, such as point of view, purpose, historical situation, and/or audience. The document-based question also requires students to relate the documents to a historical period or theme and, thus, to focus on major periods and issues. For this reason, other knowledge about the topic being assessed, beyond the specific focus of the documents, is important and must be incorporated into students' essays to earn the highest scores.

60 min for 1 question

Long Essay Question

Section II, Part B of the AP Exam consists of a choice among three long essay questions about major topics from different time spans of the course.

- Students choose one of the three long essay questions, which deal with periods 1–3, periods 4–6, and periods 7–9 of the course, respectively.
- The three question options all address the same theme and assess the same reasoning skill (contextualization, causation, comparison, continuity and change over time).

In order to receive the highest scores, students must develop an argument and support it with an analysis of specific, relevant historical evidence of their choosing. Long essay questions ask about large-scale topics specifically mentioned in the concept outline, but they are framed to allow students to provide in-depth discussion of specific examples drawn from the concept outline or from classroom instruction.

40 min for 1 question

Historical Periods

The historical periods, from pre-Columbian contacts in North America (represented symbolically by the date 1491) to the present, provide a temporal framework for the course.

The instructional importance and assessment weighting for each period varies:

Period	Date Range	Approximate Percentage of ...	
		Instructional Time	AP Exam
1	1491–1607	5%	5%
2	1607–1754	10%	
3	1754–1800	12%	
4	1800–1848	10%	45%
5	1844–1877	13%	
6	1865–1898	13%	
7	1890–1945	17%	45%
8	1945–1980	15%	
9	1980–Present	5%	5%

SUMMER
READING

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Question 1 – Document-Based Question

Q: Explain the causes of the rise of women's rights movement in the period 1940–1975.

Maximum Possible Points: 7

Please note:

- Each point of the rubric is earned independently, e.g. a student could earn the point for argument development without earning the point for thesis.
- Unique evidence from the student response is required to earn each point, e.g. evidence in the student response that qualifies for the contextualization point could not be used to earn the point for synthesis or the point for sourcing the documents.

A. Thesis and Argument Development (2 points)

Targeted Skill: Argumentation (E1, E4, and C1)

1 point Presents a thesis that makes a historically defensible claim and responds to all parts of the question. The thesis must consist of one or more sentences located in one place, either in the introduction or the conclusion.

Scoring Note: Neither the introduction nor the conclusion is necessarily limited to a single paragraph.

1 point Develops and supports a cohesive argument that recognizes and accounts for historical complexity by explicitly illustrating relationships among historical evidence such as contradiction, corroboration, and/or qualification.

0 points Neither presents a thesis that makes a historically defensible claim and responds to all parts of the question nor develops and supports a cohesive argument that recognizes and accounts for historical complexity.

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B. Document Analysis (2 points)

Targeted Skill: Analyzing Evidence: Content and Sourcing (A1 and A2) and Argumentation (E2)

1 point Utilizes the content of at least six of the documents to support the stated thesis or a relevant argument.

1 point Explains the significance of the author's point of view, author's purpose, historical context, and/or audience for at least four documents.

0 points Neither utilizes the content of at least six of the documents to support the stated thesis or a relevant argument nor explains the significance of the author's point of view, author's purpose, historical context, and/or audience for at least four documents.

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Question 1 – Document-Based Question (continued)

C. Using Evidence Beyond the Documents (2 points)

Targeted Skill: Contextualization (C3) and Argumentation (E3)

Contextualization

- 1 point** Situates the argument by explaining the broader historical events, developments, or processes immediately relevant to the question.
- 0 points** Does not situate the argument by explaining the broader historical events, developments, or processes immediately relevant to the question.

*Scoring Note: Contextualization requires using knowledge not found in the documents to situate the argument within broader historical events, developments, or processes immediately relevant to the question. The contextualization point is **not** awarded for merely a phrase or reference, but instead requires an explanation, typically consisting of multiple sentences or a full paragraph.*

Evidence Beyond the Documents

- 1 point** Provides an example or additional piece of specific evidence beyond those found in the documents to support or qualify the argument.
- 0 points** Does not provide an example or additional piece of specific evidence beyond those found in the documents to support or qualify the argument.
- Is completely blank

Scoring Notes:

- This example must be different from the evidence used to earn other points on this rubric.
- This point is **not** awarded for merely a phrase or reference. Responses need to reference an additional piece of specific evidence and explain how that evidence supports or qualifies the argument.

D. Synthesis (1 point)

Targeted Skill: Synthesis (C4 or C5)

- 1 point** Extends the argument by explaining the connections between the argument and one of the following.
- a) A development in a different historical period, situation, era, or geographical area.
 - b) A course theme and/or approach to history that is not the focus of the essay (such as political, economic, social, cultural, or intellectual history).
- 0 points** Does not extend the argument by explaining the connections between the argument and the other areas listed.
- Is completely blank

*Scoring Note: The synthesis point requires an explanation of the connections to a different historical period, situation, era, or geographical area and is **not** awarded for merely a phrase or reference.*

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Question 2

Q:

Evaluate the extent to which the ratification of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments to the Constitution marked a turning point in the history of United States politics and society.

In the development of your argument, explain what changed and what stayed the same from the period immediately before the amendments to the period immediately following them. (*Historical thinking skill: Periodization*)

Maximum Possible Points: 6

Please note:

- Each point of the rubric is earned independently, e.g., a student could earn the point for synthesis without earning the point for thesis.
- Unique evidence from the student response is required to earn each point, e.g., evidence in the student response that qualifies for either of the targeted skill points, could not be used to earn the point for thesis.

A. Thesis (1 point)

Targeted Skill: Argumentation (E1)

- 1 point** Presents a thesis that makes a historically defensible claim and responds to all parts of the question. The thesis must consist of one or more sentences located in one place, either in the introduction or the conclusion.
- 0 points** Does not present a thesis that makes a historically defensible claim and responds to all parts of the question.
- Is completely blank.

B. Argument Development: Using the Targeted Historical Thinking Skill (2 points)

Targeted Skill: Argumentation (E2 and E3) and Periodization (D6)

PERIODIZATION:

- 1 point** Describes the ways in which the historical development specified in the prompt was different from OR similar to developments that preceded AND followed.
- 1 point** Explains the extent to which the historical development specified in the prompt was different from AND similar to developments that preceded AND followed.
- 0 points** Does not describe the ways in which the historical development specified in the prompt was different from and similar to developments that preceded AND followed.
- Is completely blank.

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Question 2 (continued)

Scoring Note: For both points, if the prompt requires evaluation of a turning point, then responses must discuss developments that preceded AND followed. For both points, if the prompt requires evaluation of the characteristics of an era, then responses can discuss developments that EITHER preceded OR followed.

C. Argument Development: Using Evidence (2 points)

Targeted Skill: Argumentation (E2 and E3)

- 1 point** Addresses the topic of the question with specific examples of relevant evidence.
- 1 point** Utilizes specific examples of evidence to fully and effectively substantiate the stated thesis or a relevant argument.
- 0 points** Does not address the topic of the question with specific examples of relevant evidence.
- Is completely blank.

Scoring Note: To fully and effectively substantiate the stated thesis or a relevant argument, responses must include a broad range of evidence that, through analysis and explanation, justifies the stated thesis or a relevant argument.

D. Synthesis (1 point)

Targeted Skill: Synthesis (C4 or C5)

- a) **1 point** Extends the argument by explaining the connections between the argument and ONE of the following: A development in a different historical period, situation, era, or geographical area
- b) A course theme and/or approach to history that is not the focus of the essay (such as political, economic, social, cultural, or intellectual history)
- 0 points** Does not extend the argument by explaining the connections between the argument and the other areas listed.
- Is completely blank.

Scoring Note: The synthesis point requires an explanation of the connections to different historical period, situation, era, or geographical area, and is *not* awarded for merely a phrase or reference.

On Accuracy: The components of this rubric each require that students demonstrate historically defensible content knowledge. Given the timed nature of the exam, the essay may contain errors that do not detract from the overall quality, as long as the historical content used to advance the argument is accurate.

On Clarity: These essays should be considered first drafts and thus may contain grammatical errors. Those errors will not be counted against a student unless they obscure the successful demonstration of the content knowledge and skills described above.

