



AP[®] United States History 2005 Scoring Commentary

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Question 1

Overview

The intent of the question was to test students' understanding of the impact of the American Revolution and to identify change over time. The question required students to analyze the ways in which the American Revolution changed American society and assess the extent to which those changes were fundamental. Students were required to address social, economic, and political changes.

Sample: 1A

Score: 9

This essay has a sophisticated thesis that contrasts ideals with reality and includes an excellent analysis of all three factors. It contrasts aspirations with conditions facing the nation by examining contradictions in American society. The student incorporates outstanding outside information and uses a substantial number of documents to further the analysis. There are some minor errors ("College of Dartmouth") and overstatements that do not detract from the overall quality of the essay.

Sample: 1B

Score: 6

The thesis provides a framework for the essay, which contains a good analysis of political and social aspects and demonstrates an understanding of the westward movement and land issues. The essay presents a balanced view of women's positions and the evolution of the federal government. It explicitly uses documents and contains a good deal of outside information (Articles of Confederation, factions, Bill of Rights, etc.). There are some factual errors (Bacon's Rebellion; plow is described as a new invention).

Sample: 1C

Score: 4

This essay has a thesis that addresses all three parts of the question and goes beyond simply naming the categories. It makes better use of the documents than most essays do, though not all are analyzed, and some are misinterpreted (C, G). The student incorporates little outside information (patriarchal society, Thomas Jefferson's agrarianism). There are a few ideas that are somewhat developed.

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Question 2

Overview

The question asked students to link economic and political developments in the two colonies, emphasizing the impact of economics on politics, and to compare/contrast that pattern in the two colonies and in the period between 1607 and 1750.

Sample: 2A

Score: 9

This essay opens and closes with a strong thesis statement. The student provides substantial, specific information regarding both Virginia and Massachusetts, including references to growth and expansion of tobacco farms, the headright system (mistakenly referred to as “head start system”), the rise of a plantation class and their leadership in the House of Burgesses, Bacon’s Rebellion, the Puritans’ establishment of towns and the broad participation in “direct democracy,” and the economic development of Boston—which made it a center of later political action. There is, thus, extensive information and effective analysis. The minor errors do not detract from the excellent organization and writing.

Sample: 2B

Score: 7

This essay has a solid thesis that includes three points that partially address the ways in which economic developments affected politics in the two colonies. There is some relevant information to support the thesis, including the fee-simple plan, the headright system, and the House of Burgesses. The issue of religion is integrated clearly with economics and linked to politics. There are no serious errors, and the student presents solid links between economic development and politics in Virginia and Massachusetts. This essay also incorporates some comparison with the discussion of the “more egalitarian” politics in New England in contrast to the “stratified [*sic*] and divided” Virginia.

Sample: 2C

Score: 4

This response exemplifies a very common error found in many essays—the student focuses on the religious aspects of early Massachusetts in forming the politics of the era. Though there are essays that intertwine religion and economics successfully, this one does not. It clearly substitutes religion for economics—“The Massachusetts way of life centered more on religion than on economics.” There is sufficient relevant information to place this essay in the higher end of the “low” score category.

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Question 3

Overview

The intent of the question was to have students analyze the extent to which sectional interests shaped the debates about the Mexican War. The question also required that students connect the debates, the war, and its aftermath. Students needed to exhibit good organizational and analytical skills in answering this question.

Sample: 3A

Score: 9

In addition to containing a strong, focused thesis, this excellent essay provides a specific and balanced treatment of all three sections. From Manifest Destiny to the All-Mexico movement, from the Gadsden Purchase to the Kansas-Nebraska Act, the student covers the chronological scope of the question. The statement that Kansas joined the Union as “a slave state” is incorrect, but it does not detract from the overall argument presented in this essay.

Sample: 3B

Score: 6

The essay has a clear thesis that addresses the question. It contains solid analysis of the interests of all three sections. The student includes relevant information, although it is sometimes disorganized (Compromise of 1850 discussed after Kansas–Nebraska Act). There is some information outside of the time period (Missouri Compromise, Lecompton Constitution, Brown, Bleeding Kansas); however, it is used appropriately.

Sample: 3C

Score: 4

The essay offers a simplistic thesis that is only partially developed. The factual information is minimal (Gadsden, redefining Texas boundary), and there is little analysis. There are major errors (for example, New Mexico and Arizona choosing to enter the Union as free states). Overall, this is a general essay with just enough information and analysis to place it at the top of the “low” score category.

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Question 4

Overview

The intent of the question was for students both to provide a description of the patterns of immigration during the two time periods selected **and** to compare and contrast the responses of Americans to immigrants in both time periods. In the description of patterns of immigration, students were expected to address questions such as “Who came? Why did they immigrate?” In the contrast and comparison of American responses in both time periods, students were expected to provide specific evidence of similarities, as well as differences, in American responses.

**Sample: 4A
Score: 9**

This essay provides a clear and well-developed thesis that gives a strong, detailed description of the patterns of immigration in both time periods it addresses, 1820–1860 and 1880–1924. The student argues that different groups of immigrants faced similar treatment from native-born Americans. The essay provides an excellent comparison and contrast of the American responses to immigration. The discussion is not limited to nativism and includes information on the Social Gospel and the Settlement House movements in the later time period. Much specific factual information is given that clearly supports the thesis, particularly for the 1880–1924 time period.

**Sample: 4B
Score: 5**

This is a good example of a typical midrange essay, in that it has a partially developed thesis that describes the two time periods of 1880–1924 and 1965–2000. It compares and contrasts American responses, but this is done in a general way (for example, the idea that immigrants in the later period “were mostly accepted” in the United States and blended in quickly). More specific factual evidence would have made this a much stronger response.

**Sample: 4C
Score: 3**

This essay presents a weak thesis. It attempts to compare and contrast American responses in two time periods, 1820–1860 and 1880–1924, but does so in a very limited way. The essay contains a few relevant facts, such as the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and the post–World War I Red Scare, but these do not support the thesis adequately.

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Question 5

Overview

This question sought to assess students' knowledge of how two of three movements transformed American society in the 1960s and 1970s. The question asked students to illustrate their knowledge of the movements they selected and the impact those movements had on American society during those two decades, focusing on the changes that may or may not have occurred as a result. Though oriented toward social history, the question offered ample opportunity for students to discuss the political and economic impact of those movements.

**Sample: 5A
Score: 9**

This well-written essay has a clear, developed thesis. Analysis is woven into the body of the essay. The sections on Civil Rights and the women's movement make use of relevant information and cogent analysis to support the thesis. The comparative organization of this sophisticated essay and the extended discussion of opposition to the movements add to its quality.

**Sample: 5B
Score: 7**

This organized, well-written essay has a straightforward thesis that addresses transformation. The section on Civil Rights contains substantial relevant information with unsophisticated analysis. The less extensive section on the women's movement is limited analytically. The essay addresses the extent to which the movements transformed society; however, the lack of more effective analysis keeps this essay out of the highest category.

**Sample: 5C
Score: 4**

The essay has a clear thesis. The section on Civil Rights has relevant information, but the analysis is superficial. The section on the antiwar movement is poorly focused and lacks analysis. These deficiencies keep it out of the higher score category.