

CLEP® History of the United States I: Early Colonization to 1877

AT A GLANCE

Description of the Exam

The History of the United States I: Early Colonization to 1877 exam covers material that is usually taught in the first semester of a two-semester course in United States history. The exam covers the period of United States history from early European colonization to the end of Reconstruction, with the majority of the questions on the period of 1790–1877. In the part covering the 17th and 18th centuries, emphasis is placed on the British colonies. The exam includes a small number of questions on the Americas before 1500.

The exam contains approximately 120 questions to be answered in 90 minutes. Some of these are pretest questions that won't be scored. Any time test takers spend on tutorials and providing personal information is in addition to the actual testing time.

Knowledge and Skills Required

Questions on the History of the United States I exam require candidates to demonstrate one or more of the following abilities:

- Identify and describe historical phenomena
- Analyze and interpret historical phenomena
- Compare and contrast historical phenomena

The subject matter of the History of the United States I exam is drawn from the following topics. The percentages next to the main topics indicate the approximate percentage of exam questions on that topic.

TOPICAL SPECIFICATIONS

30% Political institutions, political developments, and public policy

30% Social developments

10% Economic developments

20% Cultural and intellectual developments

10% Diplomacy and international relations

CHRONOLOGICAL SPECIFICATIONS

30% 1500–1789

70% 1790–1877

The following themes are reflected in a comprehensive introductory survey course:

- The nature of Indigenous societies in North America. The theme includes a small number of questions on the Americas before 1500.
- The impact of European discovery and colonization upon indigenous societies. The focus is placed on the British colonies, but this theme includes a small number of questions on Spanish, French, and Dutch colonization, and the Columbian Exchange.
- The origins and nature of slavery and resistance to it
- Immigration and the history of ethnic minorities
- The history of women, changing gender roles, and family structures
- The development and character of colonial societies
- British relations with the Atlantic colonies of North America
- The changing role of religion in American society
- The causes, events, and consequences of the American Revolution
- The content of the Constitution and its amendments, and their interpretation by the United States Supreme Court
- The development and expansion of participatory democracy
- The growth of and changes in political parties
- The changing role of government in American life
- The intellectual and political expressions of nationalism
- Major movements and individual figures in the history of American literature, art, and popular culture
- Abolitionism and reform movements
- Long-term demographic trends (immigration and internal migration)
- The motivations for and character of American expansionism
- The process of economic growth and development
- The causes and consequences of conflicts with Native Americans, the War of 1812, the Mexican-American War, and the Civil War and Reconstruction

Study Resources

Most textbooks used in college-level United States history courses cover the topics in the outline above, but the approaches to certain topics and the emphases given to them may differ. To prepare for the History of the United States I exam, it's advisable to study one or more college textbooks, which can be found in most college bookstores. When selecting a textbook, check the table of contents against the knowledge and skills required for this test. Additional details and differing interpretations can be gained by consulting readers and specialized historical studies. Pay attention to visual materials (pictures, maps, and charts) as you study.

A survey conducted by CLEP found that the following anthologies are among those used by college faculty who teach the equivalent course. You might find one or more of these online or at your local college bookstore.

Berkin, <i>Making America</i> (Wadsworth)
Boydston, <i>Making a Nation</i> (Prentice Hall)
Boyer, <i>The Enduring Vision</i> (Wadsworth)
Brinkley, <i>American History: A Survey</i> (McGraw-Hill)
Carnes and Garraty, <i>The American Nation</i> (Longman)
Davidson, <i>Nation of Nations: A Concise Narrative of the American Republic</i> (McGraw-Hill)
Divine, <i>The American Story</i> (Penguin/Prentice Hall)
Faragher et al., <i>Out of Many: A History of the American People</i> (Prentice Hall)
Foner, <i>Give Me Liberty!</i> (W. W. Norton)
Goldfield, <i>American Journey</i> (Prentice Hall)
Henretta, <i>America's History</i> (Bedford/St. Martin's)
Jones, <i>Created Equal: A History of the United States</i> (Prentice Hall)
Kennedy, <i>Brief American Pageant: The History of the Republic</i> (Wadsworth)
Martin, <i>America and Its Peoples</i> (Longman)
Murrin, <i>Liberty, Equality and Power</i> (Wadsworth)
Nash, <i>The American People: Creating a Nation and a Society, Concise Ed.</i> (Prentice Hall)
Tindall and Shi, <i>Essential America</i> (W. W. Norton)

The online resources below, compiled by the CLEP test development committee and staff members, may help you study for your exam. However, none of these sources are designed specifically to provide preparation for a CLEP exam. College Board has no control over their content and cannot vouch for accuracy.

Annenberg's A Biography of America telecourse:
<https://www.learner.org/series/a-biography-of-america/>

Digital History at the University of Houston:
<http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/>

Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History:
gilderlehrman.org/

HippoCampus textbooks and courses:
hippocampus.org

History Matters: The U.S. Survey Course on the Web:
historymatters.gmu.edu/

Khan Academy®
[superscript] U.S. History:
khanacademy.org/humanities/us-history

U.S. History Pre-Columbian to the New Millennium:
ushistory.org/us/

You can also find suggestions for exam preparation in Chapter IV of the *CLEP Official Study Guide*. In addition, many college faculty members post their course materials on their schools' websites.

Sample Test Questions

The following sample questions do not appear on an actual CLEP exam. They are intended to give potential test takers an indication of the format and difficulty level of the exam and to provide content for practice and review. For more sample questions and info about the test, see the *CLEP Official Study Guide*.

1. Which of the following crops was most important to the early development of the Chesapeake Bay colonies?
 - A. Cotton
 - B. Sugar
 - C. Tobacco
 - D. Rice
 - E. Wheat
2. Which of the following most characterized the First Great Awakening?
 - A. The spread of religious evangelicalism
 - B. An emphasis on Christian humanism
 - C. The revival of the Calvinist concept of predestination
 - D. A stress on strengthening the authority of traditional churches
 - E. A rising secularization of American society
3. Which of the following best describes how Bacon's Rebellion contributed to the transition from indentured servitude to slavery in seventeenth-century Virginia?
 - A. Elites consciously encouraged racism to destroy interracial cooperation in the lower classes.
 - B. Indentured servants' inability to acquire land caused many to return home, thus creating a labor shortage.
 - C. Landless indentured servants collaborated with Native Americans to disrupt the fur trade.
 - D. Skilled indentured servants created job competition after gaining their freedom.
 - E. The execution of indentured servants for their part in the rebellion discouraged interest in the signing of indentured contracts.

4. The Proclamation of 1763 was intended to do which of the following?
 - A. Raise taxes on North American colonists
 - B. End the French and Indian War
 - C. End slavery in colonies above the Mason-Dixon Line
 - D. Restrain colonial settlement along the Appalachian Mountains
 - E. Increase fur trading between British and French colonists

5. In the nineteenth century, rural laborers new to factory work had difficulty adjusting to the
 - A. racial and gender integration of the workplace.
 - B. absence of children in the workplace.
 - C. relative abundance of leisure time in the manufacturing system.
 - D. rigid system of timetables and life by the clock.
 - E. work rules imposed by unions.

6. The Erie Canal was significant to the development of the early United States because it
 - A. replaced covered wagon travel to the Oregon Territory.
 - B. demonstrated the necessity of developing railroad transportation.
 - C. instigated development of the area around Washington, D.C.
 - D. spurred innovations in steam engine technology.
 - E. expanded trade between New York and the Midwest.

QUESTIONS 7–9 REFER TO THE EXCERPT BELOW.

“[T]he said annexation of Texas to the United States tramples on the conservative principles of society, attacks all the rights that Mexico has to that territory, is an insult to her dignity as a sovereign nation, and threatens her independence and political existence; ...

“That the United States, having trampled on the principles which served as a basis to the treaties of friendship, commerce and navigation, and more especially to those of boundaries fixed with precision, even previous to 1832, they are considered as inviolate by that nation.

“And, finally, that the unjust spoliation of which they wish to make the Mexican nation the victim, gives her the clear right to use all her resources and power to resist, to the last moment, said annexation ...”

– Proclamation by José Joaquín de Herrera,
President of Mexico, 1845

7. Mexico’s grievances in the excerpt failed to acknowledge which of the following important realities?
 - A. Mexico did not properly administer its northern territories and allowed settlers to be attacked by Native Americans.
 - B. Most people in Texas supported either independence or annexation by the United States.
 - C. Mexico had illegally nullified settlers’ titles to property in Texas.
 - D. Texans had unsuccessfully petitioned Mexico for relief from high taxes paid only by foreigners.
 - E. Mexico had also appropriated land from Native Americans and violated sovereign rights.

8. Which of the following reasons best explains the argument in the proclamation for Mexico’s resisting the annexation of Texas by the United States?
 - A. Texas should remain independent as a buffer between Mexico and the United States.
 - B. Mexico should fulfill its own Manifest Destiny and push back the boundaries of the United States.
 - C. The United States was setting a dangerous precedent in disregarding the sovereignty of other nations.
 - D. The United States and Mexico should negotiate a fair treaty to settle the disagreement over Texas.
 - E. The United States should fulfill the Monroe Doctrine and protect Mexico from European annexation.

9. Herrera saw Mexico as a victim of aggression primarily because
- A. while Mexico abided by all treaties, the United States did not.
 - B. the United States planned to regain land it lost to Mexico in the Texas Revolution of 1835–1836.
 - C. the United States refused to honor previous treaties and pay for the rights to oil reserves.
 - D. members of the United States Congress had financial interests in Mexican territory.
 - E. Mexico planned to expand slavery in Texas and surpass United States cotton exports.
10. The United States Supreme Court made which of the following rulings in *Dred Scott v. Sandford*?
- A. African Americans had the right to sue in federal courts.
 - B. Public facilities could be segregated by race if equality of service was maintained.
 - C. African Americans were not citizens of the United States.
 - D. Newly admitted states should vote on the legality of slavery.
 - E. Local governments had to provide schools for African American students.

Credit Recommendations

The American Council on Education has recommended that colleges grant 3 credits for a score of 50, which is equivalent to a course grade of C, on the CLEP History of the United States I exam. Each college, however, is responsible for setting its own policy. For candidates with satisfactory scores on the History of the United States I exam, colleges may grant credit toward fulfillment of a distribution requirement, or for a particular course that matches the exam in content. Check with your school to find out the score it requires for granting credit, the number of credit hours granted, and the course that can be bypassed with a passing score.

Answers to Sample Questions:

1-C; 2-A; 3-A; 4-D; 5-D; 6-E; 7-B; 8-C; 9-A; 10-C.