

AP HISTORY REASONING SKILLS



Every AP history exam question will assess one or more of these practices and skills.

Students best develop these practices and skills by investigating the past through the exploration and interpretation of a **rich array of primary sources** and **secondary texts** plus through the regular development of historical argumentation in writing.

If a work of art, a historical figure, or an event must be understood or analyzed **"in historical context,"** it means the historical circumstances of that time very much **affected the person, event or work** - its **themes**, its **techniques**, its **message**, etc.

Without an understanding of the era a full understanding of the person, event or work will be impossible.



4 AP History Reasoning Skills

1. Contextualization

2. Comparison

3. Causation

4. Continuity and Change

Who? What?
When? Where? *
Why?

Architect:

Clyde A. Ferrell

1879 - 1955

Is this a building you
might see daily?

- Historic Washington
State Park
Hempstead County, Arkansas
School 1914



over Time



< *Sheridan High School 1913
1st brick school in Grant County

*Arkansas City High School 1910 >
Desha County, Arkansas



AP HISTORY REASONING SKILLS

Skill 1: Contextualization Part 1

Describe an accurate **historical context** for a specific historical development or process

Historical context refers to the

- Beliefs
- Conditions
- Knowledge
- Attitudes
- Moods

. . . .that existed at a certain point in history –
the "setting" for the event that occurred



Skill 1: Contextualization Part 1

Example: Salem Witch Trials 1692-93

The Salem Witch Trials were a series of hearings and prosecutions of people accused of witchcraft in colonial Massachusetts between February 1692 and May 1693.

The trials resulted in the executions of twenty people, fourteen of them women, and all but one by hanging. Five others died in prison.

Beliefs: Strict Puritan New England influenced thoughts of many

Conditions: Superstitions + gossip + unusual behaviors + scare tactics = TROUBLE

Knowledge: Due to a wet winter in Salem, current theories suggest moldy grain as the probable cause of unusual behaviors among the settlers who were then seen as people possessed!

Attitudes: Evil could be eradicated by hanging “evil doers” and need for leading strict lives

Moods: Emotions were out of control, rampantly fixated on “evil doers” at fault

Skill 1: Contextualization Part 2

Explain how a relevant context influenced a specific historical development or process.

Example:

Westward Movement 1607-1890 contained many varied contexts, such as:

- Beliefs:** “Manifest Destiny” of Americans to march all the way to the Pacific
Native Americans and slaves were not considered people or citizens
Land ownership was seen as a right and most thought it was inexhaustible
- Conditions:** Broken treaties with Native Americans was rampant (except Pennsylvania)
People walked, rode horses, traveled in wagons steadily marching west
Accelerated by canal, steamboat and railroad building eras
- Knowledge:** Mostly unskilled, subsistence farmers, hunters, trappers, led others
Survival came first on the frontier over organized schooling
Speculators bought western land in hopes of making large profits
- Attitudes:** Neighbors were needed to help, but outsiders could be “tarred and feathered”
Before areas became civilized, organized and effective law and order were uncommon
- Moods:** Freedom, individualism, self-reliance, simplicity due to necessity, happiest when able to provide for large family, strict rules and values needed for survival

Skill 1: Contextualization Part 3

Use context to explain the relative historical significance of a specific historical development or process.

Social Reform Movements: Civil Rights, Women's Rights, Temperance, Universal Suffrage, Abolition

Beliefs: Oppressed people finally have “enough” and risk everything to change things for the better

Conditions: Harsh treatment, no legal rights, few opportunities for advancement combined to eventually cause people to stand up

Knowledge: Sometimes it was slow to change the power that could improve society, but **perseverance** over time prevailed

Attitudes: Long held, hard to change, sometimes took violence to correct social ills

Moods: Occasionally the right leader could read the nation's mood and worked to educate others about the plight of the oppressed

Establish historical significance

(Principles behind the selection of what and who should be remembered, researched, taught and learned).

The past is everything that ever happened to anyone anywhere. We cannot remember or learn it all. We put effort into learning about and remembering that which is **historically significant**, but how are those choices made? Students who do not think about significance may simply take what is presented to them by the teachers to be significant, without any further thought.

Alternatively, but just as problematically, students may equate “significant” with “interesting to me.” **The keys to more sophisticated notions of significance lie in being able to connect particular events or trends to others in a variety of ways.** Thus, significant events include those that resulted in great change over long periods of time for large numbers of people (e.g., World War II). But there are other possible criteria for significance. **The problem of significance is complicated because it depends on perspective and purpose: what is viewed as historically significant may vary over time and from group to group.**



Skill 2: Comparison Part 1

Describe similarities and/or differences between different historical developments or processes.

American Revolution



Vietnam



Similarities

Participants in both were fighting the most powerful military in the world at the time
Fighting occurred thousands of miles from the powerful military's home
People were fighting for their own homeland and both eventually expelled the most powerful military

Decision makers of the more powerful side incorrectly gauged the will of fighters

War brought death and desolation to innocents

Multi-year efforts seen as freeing people from oppression

Both influenced by issues between competing world nations and their ideologies

Differences

The American Revolution is seen as a victory in our nation

Military power exercised in Vietnam was more advanced and massive

"Agent Orange" poison used to defoliate huge expanses of jungle from the air

Daily coverage by the press turned American people off due to the ugly visuals of war
and the count of soldiers lost reported nightly on the news on color televisions

Skill 2: Comparison Part 2

Explain relevant similarities and/or differences between specific historical developments and processes.

American Revolution

Vietnam

The American government “stood up” to communism in Vietnam to keep the whole of southeast Asia from “falling like dominoes” into a perceived communist takeover whereas the American Revolution involved the issue of a breakaway part of the British Empire that resulted in the creation of a separate, free nation. Eventually, the goal of reunification of South with North Vietnam occurred soon after the United States departed in 1973 after the former French colony of Vietnam had been separated when the French left in the 1950s.

The American leaders felt that they could win in Vietnam by exerting an escalating force by sending more soldiers and by eventually dropping more bombs than in World War II.

Both England in the 1770s and the United States in the 1960s forgot the perils of fighting wars so far from home against a group who were fighting for their lives on their own land.

The American people saw firsthand the horrors of war in print and on television which caused a further revulsion to what was taking so long to accomplish. A growing anti-Vietnam War movement especially on college campuses caused major divisions. As in the Revolution, Loyalists who counted about one-third of Americans were persecuted and many moved to Canada to continue living under the British form of government. **In Vietnam, most people did not understand nor care why the Americans were there.**

Skill 2: Comparison Part 3

Explain the relative historical significance of similarities and/or differences between different historical developments or processes.

American Revolution

Vietnam

The significance of Vietnam left generations with disrespect for the veterans, whereas after the Revolution, the young nation was filled with a patriotic zeal to be successful and be worthy of their war leaders perceived as possessing the highest character. The **reduction in discipline** during Vietnam and drug addictions experienced by a large group of soldiers who fought there, upon their return, became a long-lasting influence on the American public. Veterans reported being welcomed back not with honorable parades, but by boos from crowds of people. **The loss of morale and lessened respect for the military took many decades to restore**, lasting until the restoration of a deep sense of patriotic fervor that America experienced after the 9-11 destruction of the World Trade Center in New York City, the Pentagon attack, and the passenger takeover of the plane near Shanksville, Pennsylvania.

Similarities between the two wars suggests that **someone forgot** to remember the history of **nations trying to fight wars in distant lands** due to the expense, problems with logistics, and not having the full support of their people.

Skill 3: Causation Part 1

Describe causes or effects of a specific historical development or process.

Examples:

Social Reforms

- **Obvious needs were acknowledged to help those suffering** from mental illness, addiction to alcohol, overcrowded tenements which housed immigrants in large cities, lack of women's legal rights, health problems, denial of civil rights, pollution of the environment, and a lack of quality public education. These areas of need found **leaders who effected change** ranging from violence to successfully campaigning for legislation in order to achieve goals.

Women's Suffrage

- In the nineteenth century, women **began to question their lack of legal rights** in this nation from property ownership to voting. As women discussed their plight at conferences both here and in Europe, **women campaigned to be included** in decision making processes.

The women's rights movement truly blossomed in 1848 with the Seneca Falls Convention, July 19 and 20, 1848, at the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Seneca Falls, New York. At the meeting, Elizabeth Cady Stanton introduced the **"Declaration of Rights and Sentiments."**



Elizabeth Blackwell c. 1850

BACKGROUND: Elizabeth Blackwell's Interesting Struggle to Become a Doctor

"The idea of winning a doctor's degree gradually assumed the **aspect of a great moral struggle**, and the **moral fight** possessed immense attraction for me."

And so in 1847, Elizabeth Blackwell began **searching** for a medical school that would admit her for a full course of study. Elizabeth **was rejected** by all the leading schools to which she applied, and almost all the other schools as well. When her application arrived at Geneva Medical College at Geneva, New York, the administration asked the students to decide whether to admit her or not. **The students, reportedly believing it to be only a practical joke, endorsed her admission.**

When they discovered that she was **serious**, both **students and townspeople were horrified**. She had few allies and was an outcast in Geneva. At first, she was even kept from classroom medical demonstrations, as felt inappropriate for a woman. Most students, however, became friendly, **impressed by her ability and persistence.**

Elizabeth Blackwell graduated **first in her class** in January, 1849, becoming thereby the first woman to graduate from medical school, the first woman doctor of medicine in the modern era. After a brief stay in England, Elizabeth Blackwell entered training at the midwives course at *La Maternite* in Paris. While there, she suffered a **serious eye infection which left her blind in one eye, and she abandoned her plan to become a surgeon.** From Paris she returned to England, and worked at St. Bartholomew's Hospital with Dr. James Paget. It was on this trip that she met and became friends with Florence Nightingale.

Continued

In 1851 Elizabeth Blackwell returned to New York, where hospitals and dispensaries **uniformly refused her association**. She was even refused lodging and office space by landlords when she sought to set up a private practice, so **she purchased a house in which to begin her practice**.

She began to treat women and children in her home. As she developed her practice, she also wrote lectures on health, which were published in 1852 as *The Laws of Life; with Special Reference to the Physical Education of Girls*.

In 1853, Elizabeth Blackwell opened a dispensary in the slums of New York City. Later, she was joined at the dispensary by her sister Emily Blackwell, newly graduated with a medical degree, and by Dr. Marie Zakrzewska, an immigrant from Poland whom Elizabeth had encouraged in her medical education.

The effects of the persistence of Elizabeth Blackwell opened the door to other women to follow in today's medical profession.

In 2013, there were 38,950 women enrolled in medical school in the United States equaling 46.7% of those attempting to become doctors.



Dr. Marie Zakrzewska

THE
LAWS OF LIFE,
With special Reference
TO THE
PHYSICAL EDUCATION OF GIRLS.
BY
ELIZABETH BLACKWELL, M.D.

Skill 3: Causation Part 2

Explain the relationship between causes and effects of a specific historical development or process.

Explain the difference between primary and secondary causes and between short-and long-term effects.

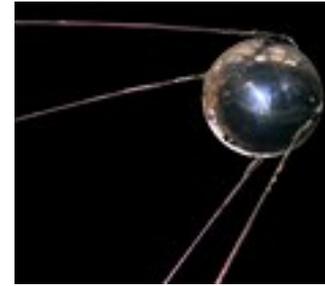
An **immediate primary cause** of the Civil War was the **firing** on Fort Sumter after states had begun seceding from the United States. The act of secession did not actually start the hostilities of war since fighting might have been avoided through compromise or tolerating the separation, had opposing factions so chosen. Other **secondary causes** were demands for **states' rights**, (which had been discussed for decades), slave owner's wanting to take their **"property" to other territories**, popularity of the **book** *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, the **abolitionist movement**, the Missouri Compromise of 1820 and the Compromise of 1850, the **Dred Scott** decision, John Brown's raid on Harper's Ferry, the election of Lincoln, and the **separate economic paths** that had established industrial development in the north versus agriculture with "cotton as king" in the south.

Due to the **short term firing** on Fort Sumter that ignited the Civil War, its **long-term** effect was to propel the two regions into a **war lasting much longer than expected**. **Often cited long-term effects** were the **superior capability of Southern generals, early ineffective Union commanders, and Southerners fighting on home soil**. The war eventually was settled due to the **Union's superior numbers of soldiers available and its industrial and monetary advantages**.

Skill 3: Causation Part 2

Continued.....Causes and Effects of historical developments, short and long-term

Examples: **Sputnik**



History changed October 4, 1957, when the Soviet Union successfully launched Sputnik I. The world's first artificial satellite was about the size of a beach ball (22.8 inches in diameter), weighed 183.9 pounds, and took about 98 minutes to orbit the Earth on its elliptical path. **That launch ushered in new political, military, technological, and scientific developments.** While the Sputnik launch was a single event, it marked the start of the space age and the U.S.-U.S.S.R. space race.

This event caused the United States to “wake up” and immediately call for additional math and science emphasis in public schools. It was a shock in the late 1950s to the notion that the United States was the world leader in most fields. After the exhausting work to win World War II, the nation seemed to be coasting in the years following, but after being awakened, NASA was created by President Eisenhower and then President Kennedy pledged to “place a man on the moon and safely return by the end of the decade.” **That event unleashed a tremendous growth in science, engineering, and computer technologies that would revolutionize the last decades of the 20th century.** Therefore, the primary cause of the “space race” was the launching of Sputnik. The secondary causes were awakened in the U.S. (need for math/science education) that eventually led it to be the first and only nation to send 12 men on six separate missions to the moon and have them return safely.

skill 3: Causation Part 3

Explain the relative historical significance of different causes and/or effects.

(Causation: Considered in relation or in proportion to something else.)

Example:



Original Supreme Court Chamber

President Andrew Jackson refused to abide by the Supreme Court's decision permitting the Cherokee to remain in North Carolina. His famous comment: "Now the Court has made its decision, let them enforce it" demonstrated the President felt his status as Commander in Chief of the military superseded the Supreme Court's power.

He therefore ordered the removal of thousands of Native Americans to the west in the forced march known as the Trail of Tears, resulting in deaths of innocent people. This act emboldened his image as exerting strong leadership to the detriment of the rights of Native Americans and showed indifference to the idea of equal branches of federal government. This event provided lands for further settlement by citizens from the East Coast states. The Indian Territory eventually became the State of Oklahoma.

Additional examples of explaining the relative historical significance of different causes and/or effects.

The Spanish American War of 1898

(Began Monday, April 25 and ended Friday, August 12.)

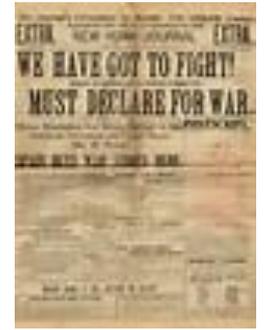
Causes: “Yellow Journalism,” practiced by newspaper editors Pulitzer and Hearst, saw facts printed without regard to truth as “inflamed stories” sold more newspapers. Plus, the U. S. government was seeking to expand its footprint on the world stage.

Historical Significance:

The idea that Spain was “harshly treating” Cubans led the U. S. government to invade Cuba which was won with relative ease. Our ships entered another Spanish possession, the Philippines, and took over the country without firing a shot after its ships entered Manila Bay.

The U. S. also received ownership of Puerto Rico and Guam, which remain possessions today. Cuba (May 20, 1902) and the Philippines (July 4, 1946) were granted their freedom.

This brief war was of benefit to the U. S. because lessons were learned about inadequate supplies and problems with war readiness, especially the continued use of cavalry and the use of woolen uniforms in the tropics. Solutions to these problems later helped when the U. S. entered the First World War in 1917.



skill 4: Continuity and Change over Time Part 1

Describe patterns of continuity and/or change over time.

Example:

American Farming



Patterns of Continuity: Need for maintaining and improving soil, dependence on good weather to produce large crops, labor intensive, family farms still exist, basic tools remain, heritage animal and plant species survive in areas, farm animals as pets, pride in self-sufficiency, experimentation and sharing seed banks to upgrade products, habitat loss

Change over time: Tractors that now use GPS and the Internet to plant and harvest, Hybridization, GMO: A genetically modified organism is an organism that has had its DNA altered or modified in some way through genetic engineering. In most cases, GMOs have been altered with DNA from another organism, be it a bacterium, plant, virus or animal; these organisms are sometimes referred to as "transgenic" organisms. A gene from a spider that helps the arachnid produce silk, for example, could be inserted into the DNA of an ordinary goat. Sounding far-fetched, the exact process was used to breed goats that produce silk proteins in their goat milk. The milk is then harvested and the silk protein is isolated to make a lightweight, ultra-strong silk with a wide range of industrial and medical uses. Large scale farming operations by corporations, huge feed lots of thousands of hogs, cattle, and poultry. Airplanes fertilize, spray pre and post-emergent insecticides.

Skill 4: Continuity and Change over Time Part 2

Explain patterns of continuity and/or change over time.

The Transcontinental Railroad – completed 1869

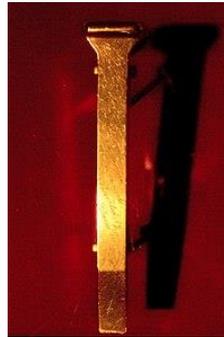
- Costly venture was approved by Congress during the Civil War
- Gov't paid two companies, Union Pacific and Central Pacific, with expansive land grants
- Companies were given over 200,000,000 acres of land (the size of Texas) and government bonds to build the railroad

Union Pacific Company

- Built from the east
- For every mile of track that was laid the company was given 20 acres of land
- 20,000 workers (mainly Irish “Paddies”)

Corrupt:

- Bribed government officials
- Overcharged (Credit Mobilier scandal)
- Built the railroad more curved to charge more money



Ceremonial Golden Spike 1869



Central Pacific Company

- Built from the west (through the Sierra Nevada mountains)
- Used 10,000 Chinese laborers Paid around \$491 a month

Corrupt: •Bribed •Overcharged



Skill 4: Continuity and Change over Time Part 3

Explain the relative historical significance of specific historical developments in relation to a larger pattern of continuity and/or change.

The First Transcontinental Railroad (known originally as the "Pacific Railroad" and later as the "Overland Route") was a 1,907-mile (3,069 km) contiguous railroad line constructed in the United States between 1863 and 1869 west of the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers to connect the Pacific coast at San Francisco Bay with the existing eastern U.S. rail network at Council Bluffs, Iowa.

The significance of the building of the first transcontinental railroad was its joining the nation from east to west to improve travel, shipping, and communication. It was a natural step because of the heavy development of rail in the northeast during the first half of the 1800s. Although approved by Congress during the Civil War, its construction did not seriously happen until the war had ended with thousands of jobless veterans hired for construction, as well as immigrant Chinese on the Union Pacific and Irish on the Central Pacific. Rail was one of the wonder industries, as was the steamboat on rivers. Transportation by rail and installation of the telegraph would replace the famous Pony Express, another attempt at gaining faster communication with California. The Gold Rush of 1849 had given that region statehood in 1850 and a new importance for the nation, therefore the desire for building a transcontinental railroad that would secure connections to the far west.