

# AP History DBQ LEQ SEQ Rubrics



Understanding and correct use of the following guidelines will help ensure your success on AP History exams.



**Rubric** for AP U. S. and World History  
Document Basic Question (7 points)

# DBQ

**A. THESIS/CLAIM**

0-1 pt

**1 pt. Responds to the prompt with a historically defensible thesis/claim that establishes a line of reasoning.**

To earn this point, the thesis must make a claim that responds to the prompt rather than restating or rephrasing the prompt. The thesis must consist of one or more sentences located in one place, either in the introduction (preferred) or the conclusion.

**B. CONTEXTUALIZATION**

0-1 pt

**1 pt. Describes a broader historical context relevant to the prompt.**

To earn this point, the response must relate the topic of the prompt to broader historical events, developments, or processes that occur before, during, or continue after the time frame of the question. This point is not awarded for merely a phrase or reference.

## **C. EVIDENCE**

**0-3 pts**

### **Evidence from the Documents**

**1 pt** Uses the content of at least 3 documents to address the topic of the prompt.

**OR 2 pts** Supports an argument in response to the prompt using at least 6 documents.

To earn one point, the response must accurately describe—rather than simply quote—the content from at least three of the documents.

To earn two points, the response must accurately describe—rather than simply quote—the content from at least 6 documents. In addition, the response must use the content of the documents to support an argument in response to the prompt.

### **Evidence beyond the Documents**

**1 pt** Uses at least one additional piece of the specific historical evidence (beyond that found in the documents” relevant to an argument about the prompt.

To earn this point, the response must describe the evidence and must use more than a phrase or reference. This additional piece of evidence must be different from the evidence used to earn the point for contextualization.

## D. ANALYSIS AND REASONING

0-2 pts



1 pt For at least 3 documents, explains how or why the document's point of view, purpose, historical situation, and/or audience is relevant to an argument about the prompt.

To earn this point, the response must explain how or why (rather than simply identifying) the document's point of view, purpose, historical situation, or audience is relevant to an argument about the prompt for each of the three documents sourced. (It is better to include all 6 in case you miss the meaning of some.)

1pt Demonstrates a complex understanding of the historical development that is the focus of the prompt, using evidence to corroborate, qualify, or modify an argument that address the question.

A response may demonstrate a complex understanding in a variety of ways, such as:

- \* Explaining nuance of an issue by analyzing multiple variables
- \* Explaining both similarity and difference, or explaining both continuity and change, or explaining multiple causes, or explaining both cause and effect (cont.)

## ANALYSIS AND REASONING CONT. (Do NOT use bullets in AP essays)

- Explaining relevant and insightful connections within and across periods
- Confirming the **validity of an argument** by corroborating multiple perspectives across themes
- Qualifying or modifying an argument by **considering diverse** or alternative **views or evidence**

**This understanding must be part of the argument, not merely a phrase or reference.**



# AP History Long Essay Question Rubric

6 points

# LEQ

A. THESIS/CLAIM 0-1 pt Same as DBQ

B. CONTEXTUALIZATION 0-1 pt Same as DBQ

C. EVIDENCE 0-2 pts 1 pt Provides specific examples of evidence relevant to the topic of the prompt. OR 2 pts Supports an argument in response to the prompt using **specific and relevant examples of evidence.**

To earn 1 point, the response must **identify specific historical examples** of evidence relevant to the topic of the prompt. To earn 2 points the response must use specific historical evidence to support an **argument** in response to the prompt.

# LEQ Rubric Cont.

## D. ANALYSIS AND REASONING

0-2 pts

1 pt. Uses historical reasoning (e.g. comparison, causation, continuity and change over time) to frame or structure an argument that addresses the prompt.

OR 2 pts. Demonstrates a complex understanding of the historical development that is the focus of the prompt, using evidence to corroborate, qualify, or modify an argument that addresses the question.

To earn the first point, the response must demonstrate the use of historical reasoning to frame or structure **an argument**, although the reasoning might be uneven or imbalanced.

## LEQ RUBRIC Cont. ANALYSIS AND REASONING 0-2 pts

To earn the second point, the response must demonstrate a complex understanding. This can be accomplished in a variety of ways, such as:

- Explaining nuance of an issue by analyzing multiple variables
- Explaining both similarity and difference, or explaining both continuity and change, or explaining multiple causes, or explaining both causes and effects
- Explaining **relevant and insightful connections** within and across periods
- Confirming the validity of an argument by corroborating multiple perspectives across themes
- Qualifying or modifying an argument by considering diverse or alternative views or evidence

**This understanding must be part of the argument, not merely a phrase or reference.**

# Short Answer Question **SAQ**

The number of required short-answer questions has been reduced to three.

Students will be given a choice among two options for the final required short answer question, each one focusing on a different time period.



John Gast  
*American Progress*  
1872

## Sample Short-Answer Question Focused on Causation

Use the image and your knowledge of United States history to answer parts A, B, and C. (Label each answer: A, B, and C.)

A) Describe the **point of view** reflected in the image regarding ONE of the following:

Migration

Technology

American Indians

B) Explain ONE **historical cause** for the rise of the **point of view** you identified in Part A.

C) Explain **how the point of view** you identified in Part A helped to shape **ONE specific United States government action** between 1845 and 1900.

## 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.

## **Example** of Short Answer Question Response:

# SAQ

**What was the Compromise of 1850? To what extent was it really a compromise? Which events were directly linked to the passage of the compromise?**

**A. In 1849, a sectional rift broke out in Congress over President Zachary Taylor's demand that California and New Mexico be admitted to the Union as free states--a move that Southerners objected to vociferously. Senator Henry Clay attempted to end the rancor by proposing a series of measures that would balance the interests of the free and slave states. He suggested admitting California as a free state but organize the rest of the southwestern territory without restrictions on slavery; require Texas to give up its claims to parts of New Mexico, but have the federal government assume Texas's preannexation debt; abolish the slave trade in Washington, D.C., but confirm slavery in the capital; and reinforce Congress's inability to regulate the interstate slave trade and enact a stronger fugitive slave law.**

**B. The measures all passed only because Senator Stephen A. Douglas broke them into their component parts and put together a different majority for each one. Because there had not been real agreement or compromise on the measures, the question of slavery in the territories had been avoided only and not solved.**

**C. Within four years, citizens of Kansas and Nebraska territories became involved in high levels of violence between pro and anti-slavery forces. This made it easier for states to think about violence as an answer to national issues resulting in war in 1861.**

## **Example** of Short Answer Question Response:

# **SAQ**

**What were the basic issues in the Dred Scott case of 1857? How did the Supreme Court's decision in the case undermine the Democratic Party? What were effects of the case?**

- A. Dred Scott was a slave who sued for his own and his family's freedom on the grounds that his master had taken them to live first in a free state and then in a free territory. The Supreme Court's majority decision ruled that Scott could not claim that his constitutional rights had been violated by his enslavement because no black person, whether free or enslaved, was a citizen. The ruling also held that the laws of Scott's home state of Missouri determined his status, that Congress could not prohibit slavery in the territories, and that the Missouri Compromise was unconstitutional.**
- B. The decision harmed the Democrats by casting doubts on the effectiveness of popular sovereignty, the idea that had held the northern and southern factions in the party together; if Congress could not ban slavery, neither could a territorial government, which was essentially a creation of Congress. Slavery could not be excluded until a state constitution had been drafted, by which time the system already could have taken root.**
- C. The decision led to greater divisions in the nation over slavery. This case is cited as one of the reasons for the acts of secession and then the American Civil War.**

## **Example of Short Answer Question Response:**

# **SAQ**

**What was Stephen A. Douglas's Freeport Doctrine? How did it attempt to address the issues raised by the Dred Scott decision? How did Southerners respond to the doctrine?**

- A. Stephen A. Douglas formulated the Freeport Doctrine at a debate with Abraham Lincoln in 1858. Lincoln attempted to force Douglas to admit that the Dred Scott decision had made his solution to slavery in the territories--popular sovereignty--untenable. This occurred in Illinois during the famous Lincoln-Douglas Debates in their campaign for the United States Senate.**
- B. Douglas responded with the argument that while settlers could not pass legislation barring slavery, they could keep it out of a territory by refusing to enact protective laws. This action would not permit slaves to be returned, if lost.**
- C. Southerners were appalled by the Freeport Doctrine, which they saw as Douglas's attempt to deny them the victory they had gained with the Dred Scott decision by allowing settlers to ban slavery from a territory. Increasingly, leaders of the states' rights movement fanned the flames of dissent based on the Dred Scott case.**

# For additional information, resources, and hints helpful in achieving a qualifying score for college credit:

**Access:** <https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/pdf/ap-us-history-course-and-exam-description> = Key Concepts Per Time Period

<https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/pdf/rubrics-ap-histories.pdf?course=ap-united-states-history> = 2017-18 Rubrics for AP History Essays

<https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/ap-united-states-history/course?course=ap-united-states-history> = Information and complete copy of an AP U. S. History Exam

<https://apstudent.collegeboard.org/apcourse/ap-united-states-history> =

## Student resources

**Hernando de Soto**, Conquistador  
b. 1495 Badajoz, Spain  
d. 1542 Desha County, Arkansas



**Pocahontas** b. 1595 Werowocomoco in present-day Tidewater, Virginia  
d. 1617 Gravesend, England, UK



**Thomas Edison**, first electric light bulb  
1879, Menlo Park, NJ