How to attack the AP US History Exam!

Mr. Peters – AP United States History

Part I: Content

Within each Period, several historical events, people, terms, and concepts are listed. PLEASE BE AN EXPERT ON THESE TOPICS AS YOU ARE EXPECTED TO KNOW THEM IN DETAIL. This is by no means an all-inclusive list, but if you can explain these items, you will be that much closer to success.

Period 1: When Worlds Collide 1491 – 1607 (5% of the Curriculum)

- Maize
- Geography of the Great Plains and Great Basin – nomadic lifestyle for Natives
- Columbian Exchange
- Encomienda System
- Reasons for European exploration
- Impacts of contact on Europeans, Africans, and Native Americans

Period 2: Settlements Old and New 1607 – 1754 (10% of the Curriculum)

- Characteristics of Spanish, French and Dutch, and English Colonization
- Emergence of the Atlantic Slave Trade
- Characteristics of New England Colonies, Middle Colonies, and Southern Colonies
- Native American Warfare (becoming more destructive due to guns and horses)
- Anglicization of British Colonies
- Pueblo Revolt
- The Enlightenment
- Mercantilism

Period 3: Death and Taxes 1754 – 1800 (12% of the Curriculum)

- 7 Years War (French and Indian War)
- The American Revolution
- Thomas Paine’s Common Sense
- Declaration of Independence
- Articles of Confederation
- Northwest Land Ordinance
- Constitution (including the Great Compromise, 3/5 Compromise, and the Slave Trade Compromise)
- Bill of Rights
- George Washington’s Farewell Address (Tensions between Britain and France)
- Republican Motherhood
- French Revolution and revolutions in Latin America and Haiti

Period 4: The New Republic 1800 – 1848 (10% of the Curriculum)

- Federalists and Democratic Republicans
- Whigs and Democrats
- Louisiana Purchase
- Supreme Court cases in the early 19th century that strengthened the federal government at the expense of states (John Marshall Court – be familiar with at least 2)
- Market Revolution
• Textile machinery, steam engines, interchangeable parts, canals, railroads, telegraph, and agricultural inventions
• The Second Great Awakening
• Abolitionism
• Women’s Rights
• Xenophobia
• Henry Clay’s American System
• Migrants from Europe (“Old Immigration”)
• The Missouri Compromise (Compromise of 1820)
• Tariffs, the National Bank, and Internal Improvement (debates between the North and South over these)

Period 5: North, South, and West 1844 – 1877 (13% of the Curriculum)

• Manifest Destiny
• Mexican-American War
• Debates over slavery (such as the Wilmot Proviso)
• Nativist Movement
• Slavery as a “Positive Good”
• Compromise of 1850
• Kansas-Nebraska Act
• Dred Scott Decision
• Republican Party
• Election of 1860
• Free Soil Platform
• Civil War
• Emancipation Proclamation
• The 13, 14, & 15 Amendments
• Sharecropping
• Radical Republicans
• Reconstruction

Period 6: Gilded Age and Industrialization 1865 – 1898 (13% of the Curriculum)

• Gilded Age
• Social Darwinism
• Conspicuous Consumption
• Local and National Unions (Be familiar with a few, Knights of Labor, American Federation of Labor)
• “New South”
• Sharecropping
• Tenant Farming
• Mechanized agriculture
• People’s (Populist) Party
• Political Machines
• Settlement Houses (Notably, Jane Addams’ Hull House)
• Decimation of the buffalo
• Laissez-faire economy
• Plessy v. Ferguson
• Social Gospel
• Assimilation of Native Americans
Period 7: War, Prosperity, and Depression 1890 – 1945 (17% of the Curriculum)

- “Closing of the Frontier” (Know Frederick Jackson Turner’s Thesis)
- Spanish American War
- Progressive Era (Including Key Progressive Reformers)
- Transition from Rural to Urban Society
- Harlem Renaissance
- World War I
- The Treaty of Versailles and the League of Nations (Including Woodrow Wilson’s 14 Points)
- Great Migration
- Red Scare
- Restrictive Immigration Quotas (of the 1920s)
- Great Depression
- New Deal
- World War II
- Japanese Internment
- Decision to drop the atomic bombs on Japan

Period 8: Times they are a Changin’ 1945 – 1980 (15% of the Curriculum)

- Containment (Including the Truman Doctrine & Marshall Plan)
- Korean War
- Military Industrial Complex
- Baby Boom
- Suburbanization (Make the connection to Levittown and the Interstate Highway System, as well as automobiles)
- Civil Rights Activists (Videos on the 1950s and 1960s)
- Brown v. Board of Education
- Sunbelt
- Great Society
- Immigration Laws of 1965 (It ended the restrictive quota systems of the 1920s favored Asian & Latin American immigrants)
- Vietnam War
- Counterculture
- Détente
- Environmental Problems (Think Rachel Carson and Silent Spring)

Period 9: End of the 20th and Beyond   1980 – Present (5% of the Curriculum)

- Foreign Policy “failures”
- Taxation and deregulation victories for Conservatives
- Denouncing “Big Government”
- Reagan Administration
- Mikhail Gorbachev
- Bellicose rhetoric (speaking in hostile language/being aggressive) by Reagan initially towards the Soviet Union
- September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon
- Conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq
- War on terrorism
- Free Trade Agreements (Especially NAFTA – North American Free Trade Agreement
- Concerns over climate change
Although it is impossible to predict what documents will be on the exam (including political cartoons, diary entries, letters, laws, charts, graphs, etc.), these documents will be based on information found in the curriculum.

Here are a couple of examples you could see:

- A letter from someone that moved West during the 1860s because of the Homestead Act. Note: The Homestead Act is NOT mentioned in the curriculum, but is an example of the federal government encouraging westward expansion.
- Answers could include the US supporting westward expansion; contributed to the perception that the frontier was “closed.”
- A graph showing immigration from 1890 – 1920.
- This time-period is known as “New” immigration. Answers could focus on reasons for immigration (economic opportunities), where immigrants tended to settle (cities), tensions between native-born Americans and immigrants, immigration quotas of the 1920s, and even the Red Scare of 1919 – 1920.
- A poster of “Rosie the Riveter.”
- Answers could include this is an example of the US mobilizing its economy during WWII and contrasting the role of women during the war with other time-periods.

Part II: The Exam

Multiple Choice Questions - The new questions are based on a document (an excerpt from a reading, chart, political cartoon, etc.) and one must answer a series of questions based on that document. Although this can seem overwhelming, there are tips you can use to navigate these new questions. This accounts for 40% of your score on the APUSH exam.

Tip #1: Read the new curriculum (Your Student Mastery Checklists for each Period!)

Many multiple-choice answers will be stated in the new curriculum. For example: Key Concept 3.1, II, C states “Despite considerable loyalist opposition, as well as Great Britain’s apparently overwhelmingly military and financial advantages, the patriot cause succeeded because of the colonists’ greater familiarity with the land, their resilient military and political leadership, their ideological commitment, and their support from European Allies.” A potential multiple-choice question could state:

All of the following were reasons for the patriot victory in the Revolutionary War except:

- Greater familiarity with the land
- Ideological commitment
- Superior military and financial advantages
- Support from European allies

Notice that all of the answer choices are straight from the curriculum framework, (as most answers are). The correct answer is c) since that was NOT a reason for the patriot victory, but an advantage by Great Britain

Tip #2: If a document is in the new curriculum, read at least a portion of it and be able to explain its message.

For example, Thomas Paine’s Common Sense is specifically mentioned in the new curriculum. You do NOT need to memorize the entire writing to do understand its importance. Be familiar with a couple passages and be able to recognize the main argument. Chances are the readings will either be the items mentioned in the new curriculum, or other authors writing about them. Perhaps you could encounter a secondary source that analyzes the impact of Common Sense. You may not encounter the parts of the Missouri Compromise passed by Congress, but you could encounter a politician from that time-period writing about it.

Tip #3: Familiarize yourself with question stems.

There question stems that you could encounter regardless of the document you will be expected to understand. Some of these questions include:
• The sentiments described most contributed to... (In other words, the ideas represented in the document led to....)
• The sentiments described most directly resulted from...(In other words, what influenced the ideas in the document)
• The ideas expressed in the above cartoon (or excerpt) most directly reflect which of the following continuities in US history? (In other words, the message of the document is most similar to what theme in history.)
• Based on the excerpt, the author would most likely support... (This requires you to connect the author’s beliefs to a similar topic. For example, a supporter of the New Deal would most likely support Progressive Reforms).
• A person who agreed with (the person in the excerpt’s views) would most likely have advocated... (In other words, if you were a supporter of the views in the document, what would you favor? For example, if you agreed with William Lloyd Garrison’s The Liberator, you would favor the immediate end to slavery).
• Opponents of (the person that authored the excerpt) would most likely have argued that... (In other words, how would someone counteract the argument or message of the author?)

Tip #4: You Must Know Certain Vocabulary Terms

Please don’t let certain words in question stems trip you up. Knowing the definitions of the following terms will greatly help you. Plus, if you can incorporate them into Short Answer Questions or Essays, they will strengthen your writing!

• **Abridge** – to shorten, or curtail (The rights of African Americans were abridged in many areas of Antebellum America.)
• **Autonomy** – self-government, independent. (Native Americans and Africans sought to preserve their autonomy after contact with Europeans.)
• **Advocate** – to favor, or to support (William Lloyd Garrison advocated the immediate and uncompensated end to slavery)
• **Ambivalent** – to have mixed feelings about an issue (Mexican immigrants faced ambivalent United States government policies during the Great Depression)
• **Sedentary** – Inactive, not mobile (Some Native American societies developed permanent, sedentary lifestyles)
• **Sentiments** – idea, opinion, or view. (Thomas Jefferson’s sentiments regarding the Missouri Compromise warned of danger for the United States)
• **Subjugation** – to gain control of, or to conquer (Native Americans and Africans were often subjugated by Europeans in the 16th – 19th centuries)
• **Waning** – to decrease, or become weaker (The North’s resolve towards Reconstruction began to wane in the 1970s)
• **Watershed** – a turning point (The Supreme Court’s ruling in Brown v. Board of Education was a watershed moment in Civil Rights History)

Short Answer Questions

Short Answer questions count for 20% of your total score. Every Short Answer question will have three parts to answer. Each part (a, b, and c) should be answered in 2-3 sentences with specific historical evidence. Do not write too much information (you could run out of time and space). Furthermore, make sure you label your answers a, b, and c.

Short Answer Type #1: No documents

This type of Short Answer will have three different tasks related to a similar theme. This could include briefly explaining a cause of an event (a), briefly explaining a short-term event of the event (b), and briefly explaining a long-term cause of an event (c).

Here’s an example of this type of question:

Answer all three parts:

• Briefly explain one reason for European exploration in the 15th – 17th centuries
• Briefly explain one impact of European contact on the Americas
• Briefly explain one impact of European contact on Europe
Short Answer Type #2: No documents, but three events from which to choose

This type of Short Answer will provide 3 bulleted events/terms/people to choose from that relate to a similar theme. This could have you: explain why one of the choices is the most significant event related to the theme (a), providing historical evidence to back up your assertion (b), and contrasting your choice against another one, explaining why the other is not as good of a choice (c).

Here’s an example of this type of question:

a) Briefly explain why one of the following could be seen as a significant reason for revisions to the Articles of Confederation:

- Difficulties over trade
- Difficulties over finances
- Internal Unrest

b) Support your choice with at least one piece of historical evidence

c) Contrast your choice against another and briefly explain why it is not as good of a choice

Short Answer Type #3: 1 document, most likely a political cartoon/illustration

This type of Short Answer will provide a visual related to a historical theme. After briefly examining the theme, you could be asked to explain the point of view of the author – potentially the view on different themes (a), how the visual expressed that point of view (b), and one piece of historical evidence that either supports or opposes the view (c).

Short Answer Type #4: 2 documents, most likely opposing views of an event/time period

This type of Short Answer will provide two different readings about a similar event/time period/topic. After reading both documents, you could be asked to: summarize the differences between the points of view of the authors (a) – please make sure you specifically state how the authors views are DIFFERENT, provide one piece of historical evidence that supports one author (b), and provide one piece of historical evidence that supports the other author (c).

With all Short Answer Questions, please pay special attention to the dates. Figure out what time-period it relates to and include information from THOSE YEARS ONLY!

Part III: The Document Based Question (DBQ)

The DBQ accounts for 25% of your score on the APUSH Exam. Every DBQ will have 6-7 documents and will not only test your content knowledge, but also your understanding of historical skills and themes.

There are 7 points available for the DBQ and you want to get as MANY AS POSSIBLE. Here’s how the points break down:

- 1 point is awarded for a thesis statement that is more than a restatement of the question. Make sure your thesis directly answers the prompt, but is in your own words and not a restatement
- 1 point is awarded for analyzing a majority of the documents and using this analysis to support the thesis
- 1 additional point is awarded for completing ONE (You DO NOT need to address more than one per document) of the following for a majority of the documents. Providing historical context (background of what is going on at the time); discussing the intended audience of the document; discussing the author’s purpose in creating the document (why did the author create the document); or discussing the author’s point of view (for example, are they supporting the New Deal? Are the criticizing the New Deal?). Again, you ONLY NEED TO CHOOSE ONE OF THOSE FOR EACH DOCUMENT. If you want, you could do the intended audience for each document
- 1 additional point is awarded for including the historical context, intended audience, purpose, or point of view for ALL of the documents, or ALL BUT ONE. If one of the documents is giving you a hard time, skip it! But you cannot skip more than one to be eligible to earn full credit.
Part IV: The Long Essay

Once you have made it here, you have completed 85% of your APUSH exam. The Long Essay is 15% of your exam score. You are almost done. This could be the difference between passing and not passing.

The Long Essay grading is similar to the DBQ. Here’s how you will earn your points:

- 1 point is awarded for the thesis. Just like the DBQ, MAKE SURE IT IS NOT SIMPLY A RESTATEMENT OF THE QUESTION.
- 2 points are awarded by using specific evidence that supports your thesis AND stating how the evidence supports the thesis
- 1 point is awarded based on which skill the essay is targeting. For example:
  - **Change and Continuity** – Describe how circumstances changed AND remained the same during a time-period. For example – how did the treatment of Africans Americans change AND remain the same between 1850 and 1870
  - **Comparing and Contrasting** two different events. For example, compare and contrast government under the Articles of Confederation and the Constitution. Make sure you don’t just state how they are different, explain how they are similar.
  - **Causation** – Explain, in detail, the causes AND effects of a historical development. For example, explain the causes and consequences of British imperial changes after the 7 Years’ War. Make sure to explain what led up to the changes, and the impact of the changes.
  - **Periodization** – Describe how the topic was different OR similar to events prior to and after the event. For example, evaluate the extent to which the Progressive Era (1890 – 1920) was a turning point in American History
- 1 additional point is awarded for each skill by providing detailed, specific historical evidence.
- Finally, 1 synthesis point is awarded the same way as the DBQ. Extending or modifying the thesis or argument; accounting for contradictory evidence (for example, do two of the documents contradict each other? Explain it away!); Connecting the topic to another time-period (Do debates over expansion during Manifest Destiny remind you of Debates about overseas expansion in the late 19th/early 20th centuries? Make that connection and there’s your final point)