
AP[®] United States History

Sample Student Responses and Scoring Commentary Set 2

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Long Essay Question 4

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Question 4: Long Essay Question, Late Twentieth Century Economic Changes

6 points

General Scoring Notes

- Except where otherwise noted, each point of these rubrics is earned independently; for example, a student could earn a point for evidence without earning a point for thesis/claim.
- **Accuracy:** The components of these rubrics require that students demonstrate historically defensible content knowledge. Given the timed nature of the exam, essays may contain errors that do not detract from their overall quality, as long as the historical content used to advance the argument is accurate.
- **Clarity:** Exam essays should be considered first drafts and thus may contain grammatical errors. Those errors will not be counted against a student unless they obscure the successful demonstration of the content knowledge, skills, and practices described below.

Evaluate how United States society responded to economic changes from 1960 to 2000.

Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria	
Row A Thesis/Claim (0–1 points)	0 points Does not meet the criteria for one point.	1 point Responds to the prompt with a historically defensible thesis/claim that establishes a line of reasoning.
Decision Rules and Scoring Notes		
	Responses that do not earn this point: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are not historically defensible. Only restate or rephrase the prompt. Do not respond to the prompt. Do not establish a line of reasoning. Are overgeneralized. 	Responses that earn this point: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide a historically defensible thesis or claim about how United States society responded to economic changes from 1960 to 2000. The thesis or claim must either provide some indication of the reason for making that claim OR establish categories of the argument.
	Examples that do not earn this point: Provide a restatement of the prompt <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>“The United States responded to economic changes from 1960 to 2000.”</i> Provide a historically defensible claim, but do not establish a line of reasoning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>“The United States competed in the global economy in many ways after 1960.”</i> Are not historically defensible <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>“After WWII the United States returned to a policy of economic isolationism.”</i> 	Examples that earn this point: Establish a line of reasoning that evaluates the topic of the prompt <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>“United States society shifted towards a heavier reliance on technology due to changes in the economy between 1960 and 2000.”</i> Establish a line of reasoning that evaluates the topic of the prompt with analytic categories <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Americans responded to the shift from an industrial to service economy in the late 1900s by moving from the industrial Midwest to the Sun Belt and by developing new technologies to fuel their new economy.”</i> Establish a line of reasoning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>“Americans got new and different types of jobs as factories became less common during this period.”</i> [Minimally acceptable thesis/claim]
	Additional Notes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The thesis or claim must consist of one or more sentences located in one place, either in the introduction or the conclusion (which may not be limited to the first or last paragraphs). The thesis or claim must identify a relevant development(s) in the period, although it is not required to encompass the entire period. 	

Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria	
Row B Contextualization	0 points Does not meet the criteria for one point.	1 point Describes a broader historical context relevant to the prompt.
(0–1 points)	Decision Rules and Scoring Notes	
	<p>Responses that do not earn this point:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide an overgeneralized statement about the time period referenced in the prompt. • Provide context that is not relevant to the prompt. • Provide a passing phrase or reference. <p>Examples that do not earn this point:</p> <p>Do not provide context relevant to the topic of the prompt</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“The 19th Amendment was ratified in 1920.”</i> <p>Provide an overgeneralized statement about the time period referenced in the prompt</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“The economy changed a lot during the 1900s.”</i> 	<p>Responses that earn this point:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accurately describe a context relevant to economic changes and United States society from 1960 to 2000. <p>Examples of relevant context that earn this point include the following, if appropriate elaboration is provided:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gilded Age • Progressive Era • Great Depression / New Deal • Second World War • Postwar economic boom • September 11 terrorist attacks • War on terror <p>Example of acceptable contextualization:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Following the introduction of New Deal programs in the 1930s and 1940s, the critiques of the welfare state increased in the postwar period.”</i> • <i>“The United States experienced a postwar economic boom in the 1950s.”</i> [Minimally acceptable contextualization]
	<p>Additional Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The response must describe broader historical events, developments, or processes that occur before, during, or continue after the time frame of the question that are relevant to the topic of the prompt. • To earn this point, the context provided must be more than a phrase or reference. 	

Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria		
Row C Evidence (0–2 points)	0 points Does not meet the criteria for one point.	1 point Provides specific examples of at least two pieces of evidence relevant to the topic of the prompt.	2 points Supports an argument in response to the prompt using at least two pieces of specific and relevant evidence.
	Decision Rules and Scoring Notes		
	Responses that do not earn points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify a single piece of evidence. Provide evidence that is not relevant to the topic of the prompt. Provide evidence that is outside the time period or region specified in the prompt. Repeat information that is specified in the prompt. Examples that do not earn points: Provide evidence that is outside the time period <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>“After World War II the United States became the economic leader of the free world.”</i> 	Responses that earn 1 point: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify at least two specific historical examples relevant to economic changes and United States society from 1960 to 2000. Examples of evidence that are specific and relevant include the following (two examples required): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cold War Deindustrialization Military-industrial complex Suburbanization Oil crisis Rust Belt Sun Belt North American Free Trade Agreement [NAFTA] Liberalism Lyndon Johnson Great Society / War on Poverty Stagflation Economic inequality Conservatism Ronald Reagan Specific technologies [e.g., computers, cell phones, the Internet] Example of a statement that earns one point for evidence: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>“During the 1980s, some Americans argued that they should shrink the welfare state, while also increasing spending on defense during the Cold War.”</i> 	Responses that earn 2 points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use at least two specific historical examples to support an argument regarding how United States society responded to economic changes from 1960 to 2000. Examples that successfully support an argument with evidence: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>“New technologies like computers helped shift the United States further into a service economy that allowed for the growth of white-collar jobs but also made it more difficult for non-college educated workers to reach the middle class.”</i> [Uses evidence to support an argument about the ways economic change shaped class in the United States between 1960 and 2000] <i>“The United States joined Mexico and Canada in signing the North American Free Trade Agreement [NAFTA] in 1992, establishing a regional free trade alliance to help compete in the global economy, allowing businesses to open up new markets for American technologies.”</i> [Uses evidence to support an argument about how the United States turned to free trade as a way to compete in an increasingly globalized economy] <i>“The economic growth of the suburbs and the Sun Belt reoriented the United States economy, and changed the places where people lived and found jobs.”</i> [Uses evidence to support an argument about how regional economic growth shaped United States society]
Additional Notes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Typically, statements credited as evidence will be more specific than statements credited as contextualization. If a response has a multipart argument, then it can meet the threshold of two pieces of evidence by giving one example for one part of the argument and another example for a different part of the argument, but the total number of examples must still be at least two. 			

Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria		
Row D Analysis and Reasoning (0–2 points)	0 points Does not meet the criteria for one point.	1 point Uses historical reasoning [e.g., comparison, causation, continuity and change] to frame or structure an argument that addresses the prompt.	2 points Demonstrates a complex understanding of the historical development that is the focus of the prompt through sophisticated argumentation and/or effective use of evidence.
Decision Rules and Scoring Notes			
	Responses that do not earn points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> May include evidence but offer no reasoning to connect the evidence to an argument. May assert the use of historical reasoning but does not use it to frame or structure an argument. 	Responses that earn 1 point: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Must demonstrate the use of historical reasoning to frame or structure an argument about how United States society responded to economic changes from 1960 to 2000. The reasoning might be uneven or imbalanced, or the evidence may be overly general or lacking specificity. 	Responses that earn 2 points: May demonstrate a complex understanding through sophisticated argumentation that is relevant to the prompt. This may be done in a variety of ways, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explaining multiple themes or perspectives to explore complexity or nuance; OR Explaining multiple causes or effects, multiple similarities or differences, or multiple continuities or changes; OR Explaining both cause and effect, both similarity and difference, or both continuity and change; OR Explaining relevant and insightful connections within and across periods or geographical areas. These connections should clearly relate to an argument that responds to the prompt. May demonstrate a complex understanding through effective use of evidence relevant to an argument that addresses the prompt. This may be done in a variety of ways that might include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explaining how multiple pieces of specific and relevant evidence [at least four] support a nuanced or complex argument that responds to the prompt; OR Using evidence effectively to demonstrate a sophisticated understanding of different perspectives relevant to the prompt.
	Examples that do not earn points: Provide reasoning but do not address the prompt <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>“World War II helped expand the military-industrial complex in the United States.”</i> 	Using a historical reasoning process to frame or structure an argument could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussing the economic changes resulting from the introduction of the Internet and a globalized digital economy. Explaining how the end of the Cold War shifted economic interests in the United States. Example of acceptable use of historical reasoning: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>“The Oil Crisis of the late 1970s illustrated how the United States’ increasing integration in a globalized economy affected ordinary citizens.”</i> [Indicates a continuity in the United States involvement in an intricately connected global economy] 	Demonstrating a complex understanding might include any of the following, if appropriate elaboration is provided: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A response may argue that Americans welcomed the new economic opportunities of the growth of the Sun Belt. It then qualifies the argument by illustrating how Rust Belt communities and leaders struggled with deindustrialization and migration and capital flight to the Sun Belt. [Explains multiple perspectives] A response may argue that the United States shifted from an industrial economy to a post-industrial economy. It then qualifies that argument by arguing that the United States continued to manufacture some goods related to national security in the defense and aerospace industries. [Explains continuity and change]

Additional Notes:

- To earn the first point for analysis and reasoning, the response must use historical reasoning to structure a response to the prompt, although the reasoning might be uneven or imbalanced, or the evidence may be overly general or lacking in specificity.
- This complex understanding must be part of the argument and may be demonstrated in any part of the response.

While it is not necessary for this complex understanding to be woven throughout the response, it must be more than merely a phrase or reference.

American society from 1960 to 2000 responded to the economic changes such as the great society, and Reaganomics either through mass praise, or protest depending on the political leaning of the individual.

Prior to this period, the United States economy was fueled by the ideas of FDR's New Deal. The New Deal was implemented to help heal America's society that was wounded by the Great Depression. This did its job through programs like the CCC and TVA. While more conservative opposition believed that the programs of the new deal bordered too closely to their great fear of communism, more liberal viewers believed that they were the only way for the country to get out of the depression, and even advocated for more governmentally invasive programs. This clash in ideology between American society shaped the way that viewed the economic policies of the future such as the Great Society and Reaganomics.

The economic aid aimed at poor and old individuals during the Great Society under Medicare and Medicaid was met with happy response from liberal viewers, but critical response from conservatives. Medicare and Medicaid were created under President Johnson's "Great Society". This Great Society aimed to help fight America's poverty issue, implement greater education, and help push the civil rights movement. The poverty section was what Medicare and Medicaid were created under, aiming to help change the economy for the better by helping poor and elderly individuals and giving them a share of money. In terms of society, liberals saw this as an incredible economic shift, that would help pull America's most economically disadvantaged out of the gutters and therefore help the country's economy as a whole. However, societal opposition out of this economic aid arose from conservatives. They believed that these policies were too much of a federal intervention within American life, and therefore labeled as "communist" or "socialist". This rebuttal shows the nuance in the societal responses to the economic changes provided by the Great Society.

Flipping to the opposite perspective, the economic change provided by Reaganomics produced liberal protest, and conservative content. President Reagan's implemented Reaganomics, also known as supply-side economics, or new federalism. This aimed to fix the struggling economy through the "trickle down" theory. This believed that if tax cuts were made to the rich, this high wealth at the top would essentially trickle down to the lower classes, providing economic prosperity for all. Conservative society loved this idea because it not only involved less federal intervention in the average American life, unlike the previously mentioned Great Society, but it cut heavy amounts of federal funding to programs that conservatives viewed as unnecessary, like the EPA, in turn helping the economy of the time. However liberals criticized this methodology, claiming that trickle down economics didn't sufficiently work, and would take money from the hands of those who needed it the most, therefore placing it into the pockets that needed it the least. Evidently, this proves that the economic changes provided by Reaganomics were societally responded with great conservative joy, and liberal unrest.

In the aftermath of WW2, America was on top of the world. America was the global superpower as there was far less economic burden from the war for America compared to the rest of the world. As the war comes to an end and soldiers are returning home, the GI bill is introduced, which provided resources and financial aid to those soldiers who had just returned home. This led to further economic prosperity in the United States and the growth of the suburbs, with white Americans flocking to these new homes outside of the city; which is commonly referred to as white flight. This set the stage for America to have some freedom in how they choose to act as there was a booming economy and a pleased society in which the people are flooded with nationalism and pride for their country. This scene while the country and world are still recovering from WW2 means that the United States society had a significant response to the economic changes seen in American economics from 1960 to 2000.

As America is in the thick of the Cold War, there is a rise of international agreements and policies. America joins into a trade agreement with Mexico and Canada, NAFTA, which allows for American businesses to move their manufacturing to Mexico where the labor is cheaper. This causes outrage within America because all of these factory workers are left without a job. As American companies see just how profitable it was for some to move their manufacturing to Mexico, companies begin to explore other foreign countries for further cost cutting. The movement of American based companies with simple unskilled labor jobs to other countries cuts the work force in half. Along with the rise of the suburbs came the rise of white collar, *skilled* jobs. Since the factory jobs were just labor, many Americans are left without a job and with no job opportunities. This leads to high unemployment rates among these former blue collar workers.

As Americans voice their frustrations with the lack of jobs available, politicians begin to attempt to resolve the inequities. In the 1980's, President Reagan began to use trickle-down economics, or Reganism. This allowed the government to heavily fund American banks, which would fund the business', which would create jobs, which would allow for people to accumulate wealth and spend money, which would grow the economy while also providing jobs for the American people. This policy was widely admired by Americans as they had been struggling with the loss of jobs caused by the movement of factories and this policy did immediately provide more jobs for Americans. While trickle down economics did have the desired effect at the beginning, it quickly began to instead create a drastic wage gap since business's received the vast majority of this money from the government. As time goes on, the problems from earlier will begin to appear again and the wage gap will once again only continue to grow, just as it did with the factories and industrial business's.

The historical event happening before this was the industrial revolution causing new Job opportunities for the American people. The way this connects with the way the United states society responded to the economic changes from 1960 to 2000 because the industrial revolution made the jobs for men to work and had a stigma for women to be at home so when world war 2 ended women still needed jobs but were instead fired making women protest and another way the industrial revolution connects to the way American society responded is one of the main jobs industrial revolution caused was factories making military weapons which had low business after the wars causing the American citizens to lose jobs and protested against wars because even though the industrial revolution gave American people jobs and trading wars would effect the jobs and trading causing American people to poverty. The last way the industrial revolution connects to political changes being changed as a response was because the industrial revolution made jobs specifically for whites like office jobs or the owners of factories and jobs specifically made for colored people that were labor jobs and railroad workers. One event was the end of world war 2 and womens jobs being taken away for men this cause American women to respond by protesting for their rights. Another event is the end of the wars caused American citizens to lose jobs and they responded by going job hunting. Overall the society responded to the economic changes from 1960 to 2000 by protesting for their equal rights, job hunting, protest for anti-war system, and changing their beliefs politically.

One way the United states society responded to the economic change during 1960 to 2000 was protesting. After world war 2 men came back from the war and women had less job opportunities and were just fired. This caused Women to protest during 1960-2000 because they wanted to have equal rights with working for their household

Another way the united states society responded to the economic change during 1960 to 2000 was go job hunting. After the world wars and another example is the proxy wars the military weapon factories lost sales. This cause lots of American citizens to lose their jobs and made them go job hunting to go find jobs because the economic changes the wars caused were some factories running out of business.

A third way the united states society responded to the economic changes during 1960 to 2000 was protest against wars. Because of the great depression this caused citizens to start protesting against wars because it would lead to the economic system to go down. This caused the American Citizens to start protesting after the wars were over to stop because they would also be effected with losing family members who were their source of income or be paid with a minimum wage and barely making ends meet.

The last way the united states society responded to the economic changes during 1960-2000 was changing their beliefs politically. The Civils act movement was based on being racially discriminated this was also effected by economically some jobs were only for whites and other jobs were only for colored this made colored Americans to change their beliefs so they can vote politically or become

someone who works in the goveremnt so they can have the rights the deserved. This caused the economic of United states to help colored people and change political views and colored people being seen and chnaging perspectives of others.

Long Essay Question 4

Note: Student samples are quoted verbatim and may contain spelling and grammatical errors.

Overview

NEW for 2025: The question overviews can be found in the *Chief Reader Report on Student Responses* on [AP Central](#).

Sample: 4A

Thesis Score: 1

Contextualization Score: 1

Evidence Score: 2

Analysis and Reasoning Score: 2

Total Score: 6

A. Thesis/Claim (0–1 points): 1

The response earned 1 point for the thesis. The response establishes a line of reasoning in the opening sentence: “American society from 1960 to 2000 responded to the economic changes such as the great society, and reagonomics either through mass praise, or protest depending on the political leaning of the individual.”

B. Contextualization (0–1 points): 1

The response earned 1 point for contextualization. In the second paragraph, the response describes economic developments prior to the period of the prompt, including the New Deal and conservative opposition to the New Deal.

C. Evidence (0–2 points): 2

The response earned 1 point for evidence. Beginning in the second paragraph, the response identifies a variety of examples relevant to the prompt, including the Great Society programs and Reaganomics.

The response earned 1 point because it used historical evidence to support an argument. The response argues that Lyndon Johnson’s Great Society programs were praised by liberal politicians and members of society, as they helped elevate the social standing of the people experiencing poverty. Conversely, Ronald Reagan’s “Reaganomics” is used as evidence of the conservative response to the growth of government from liberal policies, resulting in “liberal protest and conservative content.”

D. Analysis and Reasoning (0–2 points): 2

The response earned 1 point for using historical reasoning to frame an argument in relation to the prompt. The response discusses the effects of liberal and conservative government policies with reference to how they led to political criticism depending on the background of the group.

The response earned 1 point because it demonstrates a complex understanding through its effective use of evidence in paragraphs three and four, showing a sophisticated understanding of different perspectives relevant to the prompt.

Long Essay Question 4 (continued)**Sample: 4B****Thesis Score: 0****Contextualization Score: 1****Evidence Score: 2****Analysis and Reasoning Score: 1****Total Score: 4****A. Thesis/Claim (0–1 points): 0**

The response did not earn the point for thesis/claim. The response attempts a thesis statement at the end of the first paragraph, but the language is a restatement of the prompt: “United States society had a significant response to the economic changes seen in American economics from 1960 to 2000.”

B. Contextualization (0–1 points): 1

The response earned 1 point for contextualization. In the beginning of the first paragraph, the response describes information immediately prior to the prompt period from 1960 to 2000, discussing the return of soldiers after the Second World War and the accompanying growth of suburbs.

C. Evidence (0–2 points): 2

The response earned 1 point for using evidence because it describes multiple pieces of relevant historical evidence. The response describes NAFTA, suburbanization, and the election of Ronald Reagan.

The response earned 1 point for using at least two specific historical examples to support an argument in response to the prompt. The response supports an argument about how many Americans responded with “outrage” against United States companies that sought to increase their profitability by relocating factories to foreign countries. Additionally, the response supports an argument that the rise of suburban areas accompanied the rise of skilled white collar jobs and subsequently saw a corresponding reduction in factory jobs utilizing unskilled labor, leading to high unemployment among blue collar workers.

D. Analysis and Reasoning (0–2 points): 1

The response earned 1 point for using historical reasoning because of the discussion of Ronald Reagan’s trickle-down economics. The response demonstrates historical reasoning through continuity and change in arguing that, “While trickle down economics did have the desired effect at the beginning, it quickly began to instead create a drastic wage gap.”

The response did not earn the point for demonstrating a complex understanding because it makes no attempt at sophisticated argumentation or effective use of evidence.

Long Essay Question 4 (continued)**Sample: 4C****Thesis Score: 1****Contextualization Score: 1****Evidence Score: 0****Analysis and Reasoning Score: 0****Total Score: 2****A. Thesis/Claim (0–1 points): 1**

The response earned 1 point for the thesis statement at the end of the first paragraph. The response addresses the prompt with a historically defensible claim by asserting that society responded to economic changes with protests over various issues.

B. Contextualization (0–1 points): 1

The response earned 1 point for contextualization because of the description in the first paragraph of the broader historical context of the industrial revolution and post–Second World War events relevant to the prompt.

C. Evidence (0–2 points): 0

The response did not earn either point for providing specific examples of evidence relevant to the topic of the prompt. The response provides multiple pieces of evidence, but they are either inaccurate or outside the time period of the prompt.

D. Analysis and Reasoning (0–2 points) 0

The response did not earn 1 point for using historical reasoning. The response attempts to frame a causation argument that economic changes in the period helped to change peoples' political beliefs, but it does not meet the threshold to effectively establish a structured argument.

The response did not earn the point for demonstrating a complex understanding because it makes no attempt at sophisticated argumentation or effective use of evidence.