
AP[®] United States History

Sample Student Responses and Scoring Commentary Set 1

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Short-Answer Question 2

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Question 2: Short Answer Primary Source**3 points****General Scoring Notes**

- Each point is earned independently.
- **Accuracy:** These scoring guidelines require that students demonstrate historically defensible content knowledge. Given the timed nature of the exam, responses may contain errors that do not detract from their overall quality, as long as the historical content used to advance the argument is accurate.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 responses 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.
- **Describe:** Provide the relevant characteristics of a specified topic. Description requires more than simply mentioning an isolated term.
- **Explain:** Provide information about how or why a historical development or process occurs or how or why a relationship exists.

A Briefly describe one purpose of political leaders in promoting ideas such as Webster's. **1 point**

Examples of acceptable responses may include the following:

- One purpose was to promote patriotic unity during a time of growing sectionalism in the United States.
- Webster hoped to inspire all parts of the country to work together for the common good.
- One purpose was to promote the belief that the government had the power to fund internal improvements.

B Briefly explain one development from 1820 to 1848 that contributed to the political ideas debated in the speech. **1 point**

Examples of acceptable responses may include the following:

- Webster wanted to unify the country, and during the period political leaders debated plans to unify the United States economy, such as the American System.
 - Political parties debated the powers of the federal government, such as passing tariffs.
 - The Second Great Awakening helped contribute to the individualistic and democratic fervor of the period between 1820 and 1848 and increased some Americans' commitment to their country and government.
 - The growth of an antislavery movement in the North intensified regional differences between the North and the South, and some politicians tried to bridge those differences by finding ways to bring the country together.
 - The market revolution intensified economic differences between the industrial North and agrarian South and encouraged some politicians to try to find ways to unify the country.
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- Attempts to compromise over the expansion of slavery between 1820 and 1848 sought to create national unity.
- Territorial expansion increased sectional tensions, which threatened national unity.

C	Briefly explain how one political debate between 1848 and 1865 was similar to the debate in the speech.	1 point
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Examples of acceptable responses may include the following:

- Later debates over whether the federal government could regulate slavery during the 1850s were similar to the debate in Webster’s speech about internal improvements because both involved questions of the extent of federal powers.
 - Continued debates over the expansion of slavery were similar to those regarding internal improvements because both often divided along sectional lines.
 - Debates around the Dred Scott decision were similar to Webster’s discussion of sectional tensions and the need for national unity.
 - Debates over secession were similar because they questioned whether the United States was one country or a collection of states.
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A. One purpose of political leaders promoting the ideas expressed by Webster includes the idea of keeping a peaceful union. With Whigs promoting the use of a political system that promoted the use of a national bank, and the implementation of taxes and tariffs to address the economic state of the country, the Democratic party greatly opposed the use of the National bank. Webster and other Whig party members argue that the government's rule in banking would benefit the country as a whole, despite Democrats disagreeing with the role of the federal government in economic policies.

B. One development from 1820 to 1848 that contributed to the political ideas debated in the speech is the Missouri Compromise. After the annexation of Missouri, a large debate surrounding whether it should be a free or slave state emerged, with the balance of the Senate and House of Representatives being a main concern of Southern states. In order to keep the balance of power, the government decided to allow Missouri in as a slave state, and Maine as a free state, drawing a proclamation line deeming territories North of the Proclamation line being Free and south, as slave states. Additionally, the ideas of popular sovereignty was greatly debated, with some slave states threatening secession from the Union if more free states emerged. The speech argues that northern and southern states had different ideals regarding political policies, with the South often threatening secession if the Union continued implementing ideas for the abolition of slavery, a major institution of the south.

C. One political debate between 1848 and 1865 that was similar to the debate in the speech is the Dred Scott case. After the Northwest ordinance, which banned slavery in the Northern states, Dred Scott, a slave, and his master moved to Illinois, a free state. Dred Scott then sued his master deeming that because Illinois was a free state, he should be freed, too. However, the court ruled that slaves were not citizens, but property. This connects to the speech because Webster argues that the southern states believed themselves to have different governments from the rest of the Union, and so, the development of stricter laws in the South than the north, thus different political values regarding slavery connects to his argument.

A. The purpose of political leaders in promoting ideas such as Webster's was to promote unity among the states over individual state rights. Generally, the North was more supportive of centralized power, while the South believed that state's rights trumped all. This shows the developing differences in the regions that political leaders were trying to suppress.

B. One development from 1820 to 1848 was the Tariff of Abominations and the Nullification Crisis. The Tariff of Abominations was high tariffs to protect US goods, but it severely hurt the South. This led to South Carolina insisting that they could nullify federal laws they saw as unconstitutional. This shows the debate with the North and the South over state's rights vs federal rights.

C. One political debate that was similar to this debate is the problem of admitting new states into the US, and the balance of free vs slave states. While few wanted total abolition of slavery, many, especially in the North were against the spread of slavery into these new territories. The South was for slavery in the territories. In 1820, there was a perfect balance of free versus slave states in the Senate. Missouri, however, was to be added and debates grew over whether it was a slave state or a free state. The Missouri Compromise led to Missouri being added as a slave state, Maine as a free state to balance the power, and slavery being prohibited above the 36 30 line in the Louisiana Purchase. While stopping the debate for a little, as new states kept being added the debate about slavery in the new states only grew.

a) The purpose of political leaders like Webster promoting ideas of having central government is so that the country is united and everyone is held to the same standards. The union is essential to the success of the US and it needs to be supported by all states.

b) During the 1820s-40s the government was not united and the laws in each state differed greatly. States would also not follow federal laws and put their own priorities over the federal priorities.

c) In the 1850s, there were debates over the power of the federal government and many wanted to limit the power of the federal government and leave more rights up to the states. In the supreme court case in maryland, the court decided that federal laws override state laws. This caused the US to be connected and more united.

Short Answer Question 2

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: 2A

SAQ Part A Score: 1

SAQ Part B Score: 1

SAQ Part C Score: 1

Total Score: 3

The response to Part A earned 1 point by describing the purpose of Webster’s speech as an attempt to promote “a peaceful union” through government action to fund internal improvements for the benefit of the whole country.

The response to Part B earned 1 point by explaining how the Missouri Compromise contributed to the political debate in Webster’s speech. The response explains how sectional division over slavery contributed to compromises being developed to bring the country together.

The response to Part C earned 1 point by explaining how the Dred Scott decision created similar sectional tensions to those evident in the debate in Webster’s speech. The response explains how sectional debates over slavery threatened the country’s unity.

Sample: 2B

SAQ Part A Score: 1

SAQ Part B Score: 1

SAQ Part C Score: 0

Total Score: 2

The response to Part A earned 1 point by describing how the purpose of Webster’s speech was to promote national unity over growing sectionalism.

The response to Part B earned 1 point by explaining how the debates over the federal government’s power to enact tariffs caused division in the nation, as seen through the threat from South Carolina to nullify the Tariff of 1828 (Tariff of Abominations).

The response to Part C did not earn a point because it does not explain a similar debate which occurred between 1848 and 1865. The response contains a broad discussion of debates over the admission of free and slave states, but its usage of the Missouri Compromise of 1820 to demonstrate the growing division in the country does not fit the time frame of the prompt.

Short Answer Question 2 (continued)

Sample: 2C

SAQ Part A Score: 1

SAQ Part B Score: 0

SAQ Part C Score: 0

Total Score: 1

The response to Part A earned 1 point by providing a basic description of how the purpose of Webster's speech was to promote the national unity of the United States.

The response to Part B did not earn a point because it does not explain a development from 1820 to 1848 that contributed to the political ideas of the speech. The response's discussion of states prioritizing their own needs over the federal government is too vague to earn the point.

The response to Part C did not earn a point because it does not explain how a political debate from 1848 to 1865 was similar to the debate in Webster's speech. The mention of the Supreme Court case *McCulloch v. Maryland* is outside of the time period of the question.