
AP[®] World History: Modern

Sample Student Responses and Scoring Commentary Set 2

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Long Essay Question 2

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Question 2: Long Essay Question, Impact of the Columbian Exchange in the Atlantic

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the timed nature of the exam, essays may contain errors that do not detract from their overall quality, as long as the historical content used to advance the argument is accurate.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.

In the period circa 1450 to 1750, new connections between world regions led to the movement or transfer of people, animals, plants, and pathogens.

Develop an argument that evaluates the extent to which such movements or transfers led to demographic, cultural, or social changes across the Atlantic region during this period.

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 the extent to which movements or transfers of people, animals, plants, and pathogens led to demographic, cultural, or social changes across the Atlantic region during the period 1450 to 1750. 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 transfer of people and animals in this period prompted important changes in the Atlantic region.”</i> Provide a historically defensible claim, but do not establish a line of reasoning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>“The transfer of new foods had a dramatic impact on people’s nutrition.”</i> Provide a claim that is not historically defensible <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>“Europeans used river-going steamships to explore and conquer the interior of the North and South American continents.”</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>“New connections between the Eastern and Western Hemispheres shifted the economic center of the world from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic region which in turn profoundly affected cultural and social developments.”</i> Establish a line of reasoning that evaluates the topic of the prompt with analytic categories <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>“Transfers of people, animals, plants, and pathogens in the Columbian Exchange resulted in many consequences, including catastrophic reduction in the indigenous populations, accumulation of wealth by Europe, and the disruption of African demographics due to the slave trade.”</i> Establish a line of reasoning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>“The transfer of diseases from the Eastern to the Western hemisphere reduced the Indigenous populations in the Americas.”</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 Protestant Reformation led to over 100 years of religious warfare in Europe.”</i> <p>Provide a passing phrase or reference</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>“Many enslaved Africans were brought to the Americas.”</i> 	<p>Responses that earn this point:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accurately describe a context relevant to movements or transfers of people, animals, plants, and pathogens and/or demographic, cultural, or social changes across the Atlantic region during the period 1450 to 1750. <p>Examples of relevant context that earn this point include the following, if appropriate elaboration is provided:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Age of Discovery, Columbian voyages, state-sponsored exploration Development of maritime technology and navigational skills Pre-Columbian societies of the Americas Colonization and plantation economies Rivalry between maritime empires, mercantilism Religious justification for colonization Participation of African states in maritime trading networks, including through the trade in enslaved people New labor systems in the Americas, including chattel slavery, indentured servitude, and encomienda and hacienda systems Chartered European monopoly companies Global flow of silver from Spanish colonies <p>Example of acceptable contextualization:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>“Knowledge and technology from Asia and the Islamic world facilitated trans-Atlantic travel and trade.”</i> <i>“Some European maritime empires aimed to spread Christianity to their subjects.”</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 information that is outside the time period <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>“Improved transportation technology like steamships enabled migration.”</i> 	Responses that earn 1 point: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify at least two specific historical examples relevant to movements or transfers of people, animals, plants, and pathogens and/or demographic, cultural, or social changes across the Atlantic region during the period 1450 to 1750. Examples of evidence that are specific and relevant include the following (two examples required): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Columbian Exchange Introduction of new pathogens such as smallpox, measles, malaria Introduction of crops from the Americas into Eurasian diets Populations in Afro-Eurasia benefitting nutritionally from American food crops Introduction of European farming practices, crops, livestock in the Americas Development of plantation system and export crops including sugar and cotton Trade of enslaved peoples from Africa Syncretic religious practices Creole cultures Gender and family restructuring in African states as a result of the slave trade Casta system Use of both old [<i>mit’a</i>] and new [indentured servitude, chattel slavery, hacienda and encomienda] systems of labor in the Americas Example of a statement that earns one point for evidence: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>“In the Americas new labor systems such as chattel slavery coexisted alongside older labor systems such as the <i>mit’a</i>.”</i> 	Responses that earn 2 points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use at least two specific historical examples to support an argument regarding the extent to which movements or transfers of people, animals, plants, and pathogens led to demographic, cultural, or social changes across the Atlantic region during the period 1450 to 1750. Examples that successfully support an argument with evidence: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>“The transfer of pathogens like smallpox and measles to the Americas resulted in mass death among indigenous peoples; that demographic change enabled Europeans to establish their own populations more securely in their American colonies.”</i> [Uses evidence to support an argument about demographic changes in the Atlantic region] <i>“The transfer of cash crops including sugar and cotton to the Americas led to the development of the plantation system, which in turn came to rely on new forms of coerced labor systems, including indentured servitude and chattel slavery.”</i> [Uses evidence to support an argument about social changes]

	<p>Additional Notes:</p> <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.
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Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria		
Row D Analysis and Reasoning Complex Understanding	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.
(0–2 points)	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 the extent to which movements or transfers of people, animals, plants, and pathogens led to demographic, cultural, or social changes across the Atlantic region during the period 1450 to 1750. 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.

	<p>Examples that do not earn points:</p> <p>Provide evidence but offer no reasoning to connect the evidence to an argument</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“The plantation system relied on the slave trade.”</i> 	<p>Using a historical reasoning process to frame or structure an argument could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explaining the demographic changes caused in the Americas by the introduction of Afro-Eurasian pathogens, which decimated indigenous populations and enabled Europeans to establish themselves in settler colonies in the Americas. • Discussing the continued use of pre-Columbian labor systems, like the Incan <i>mit’a</i>, by Spanish colonial rulers who also introduced new labor systems like the <i>encomienda</i>. <p>Example of acceptable use of historical reasoning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“The transfer of Eurasian pathogens to American populations that had no immunity to them resulted in mass deaths that drastically altered the demographic balance in the Americas.”</i> [Indicates an effect of the transfer of pathogens as a result of the Columbian Exchange] 	<p>Demonstrating a complex understanding might include any of the following, if appropriate elaboration is provided:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explaining that the Columbian Exchange caused demographic changes not only in the Americas, where new pathogens catastrophically reduced indigenous populations, but also in Africa, where some societies saw depopulation because of the slave trade that provided labor for European plantations in the Americas. [Explains nuance by exploring multiple effects] • Explaining that although Europeans brought their religious practices and beliefs to the Western Hemisphere, often with the intention of converting indigenous peoples, indigenous Americans reacted to those new cultures in various ways, sometimes accepting European religions, sometimes rejecting them, and sometimes mixing them with traditional practices to create syncretic religions. The same was true of Africans and descendants of enslaved Africans in the Americas, who often syncretized Christian beliefs and practices to create their own unique religious traditions. [Explains nuance by exploring multiple perspectives] • Explaining that the crucial role played by pathogens in changing demographics in the Americas during this period was replicated, albeit on a smaller scale, in the period 1750–1900, when European colonizers encountered populations that had been relatively isolated from Eurasian diseases—for example, the native populations of Australia and Polynesia were severely impacted by smallpox and other European diseases, just as Native American populations had been in the period 1450–1750. [Explains relevant and insightful connections between regions]
<p>Additional Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. 			

Leading up to the period 1450 - 1750 many states rose to power. Such states desired more economic power and wanted their presence to be felt in the global stage. Additionally, they adopted a mercantilist ideology, to gain more exports than imports and maintain their precious metals. The Indian ocean trade was thriving, and the development of technology such as the Chinese Junks, Dutch Flyuts, or further developments of maps and the discovery of the Americas in 1492 led to many nations wanting to participate in global trade. Such exchanges like the Trans-Atlantic trade led to the movement of people, cultures, animals and pathogens. Such movements greatly led to demographic, cultural, and social changes in across the Atlantic region with the spread of diseases like measles and smallpox wiping out enormous populations of natives, or the vast population spike Europe gained due to the immense new crops obtained from the new world.

Discovery of the Americas and the Trans-Atlantic Slave trade was one of the major and most impactful networks of exchange for many nations. The discovery of the Americas, and the raw materials they held led to many nations to race over to gain as much power as they could. Spain discovered the Americas first, but the Dutch, France, Great Britain, and Portugal also jumped in to gain as much territory and goods as they could. The Americas contained vast amounts of raw materials and goods that could be used. These nations that went to the Americas enslaved the natives there and forced them to work for them. The natives were forced to work brutal conditions on plantations known as Haciendas and were treated as less than humans. Along with the Europeans, there came diseases such as measles and small pox. These diseases wiped out the indigenous populations and millions died over the span of a few years leading the native population demographic declining vastly.

Additionally, the rising demand for cash-crops led to the development of the plantations on which the Natives worked, but with so many natives dying under the harsh conditions, European powers began enslaving Africans and taking them to the Americas to work. They set up ports on the west side of Africa and worked deals with African Kingdoms to sell men to them. As there were brutal and laborious jobs, the men were mainly taken which led to there being too many women in Africa. This led to Polygyny, where men in Africa married and reproduced with many different women. The enslaved men in the Americas were treated very harshly and worked under the same brutal conditions as the natives.

The Americas contained many new plants and animals as well, Such plants and animals were brought back to Europe and many European plants and animals were sent to the Americas, the crops from the Americas, such as squash, caused a surge in population for Europe, as more food allowed more people to eat and in the end Europe's population grew largely due to the crops imported from the Americas.

The mix of African slaves, native populations and European populations also created social changes in the Americas, the Spaniards set of the Caste System, which was a caste system based on the race / ethnicity you were. This pure spaniards / europeans were at the top while the african native mixes were at the bottom, this segregated the people and brought numerous differences among those populations.

Finally, due to the many different races and ethnicities present in the Americas, there were a lot of cultural traditions and changes brought to each area. The Spaniards brought their architecture and also used Native drawings and designs as inspirations in their own architecture. The natives utilized the newer Spaniard farmign and agricultural methods. There were also many religious transfers and conversions as well, as the Spaniards attempted to convert the Natives and Africans, and some natives kept their own religions and some had syncretized religions.

In the time period circa 1450 to 1750 Europe desired to expand their empires so they could trade so they sailed the seas and formed maritime empires. Spain, a big maritime empire, sent Christopher Columbus to sail west to find a new route to India. Instead of finding India he found new land, America, and thus began the Columbus exchange. The Columbus exchange led to many demographic, cultural, and social changes across the Atlantic region during this period.

One of the main things that was spread along the Columbus exchange was diseases. When the British started colonizing North America, they transferred their germs to the Natives. Since Afro-Eurasia was all connected, everyone was already immune to the disease they had, however since the Americas were isolated, they had no immunity. This resulted in the deaths of millions by European diseases, namely malaria, measles, smallpox. This had an immense effect on the Native American demographics because millions dead meant that they were easier to conquer and therefore, more European colonies were established. In Afro-Eurasia however, they were getting crops from the Americas that improved their diet and allowed them to live longer.

Another thing spread across the Columbus exchange was slaves from Africa. African slaves were taken to the Americas by the Europeans for free labor. As a result, African culture diffused into the Americas. In North America, slaves introduced new African foods, languages, and music. In addition, Europeans were spreading Christianity to the Americas. Both of these greatly changed culture in the Americas.

Lastly, in South America, certain hierarchies came into place as a result of the Columbus exchange. Spain conquered land in South America in order to extract silver. To do that, they established colonies there. As a result of colonies in South America, a new social hierarchy came into fruition. This hierarchy placed Europeans on top and others below them. The more European blood one had, the higher they were in the hierarchy. Ultimately, this had enormous social changes in the Americas.

Movements and transfers across the Atlantic region led to several things including, demographic, cultural, and social changes. Transferring goods from one continent to another changed the demographic by introducing other societies to new things. When traveling across the Atlantic region, the other religions spread their knowledge and attempted to recruit more people to their beliefs. This changed their social because the people transferring to new areas spread their influence and their way of living. The demographic changed because of people reproducing. For instance, when Spain conquered Mexico and began to reproduce with the Mexicans and Natives, it changed the demographic. Another example is the Columbian Exchange, where they transferred goods like corn, but also transferred diseases like

Long Essay 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

Thesis Score: 1

Contextualization Score: 1

Evidence Score: 2

Analysis and Reasoning Score: 2

Total Score: 6

Thesis/Claim (0–1 points): 1

The response earned 1 point for thesis. The response makes a historically defensible claim that economic motivations increased trade across the Atlantic Ocean, and that trade harmed American populations through the spread of disease but benefitted Europeans by providing them access to new crops. The thesis, found at the end of the first paragraph, states, “Such movements greatly led to demographic, cultural, and social changes in across the Atlantic region with the spread of diseases like measles and smallpox wiping out enormous populations of natives, or the vast population spike Europe gained due to the immense new crops obtained from the new world.”

Contextualization (0–1 points): 1

The response earned 1 point for contextualization by situating the topic of the prompt in the context of the economic rivalry between maritime empires and mercantilism. In the first paragraph, the response notes that “states desired more economic power and wanted their precense to be felt in the global stage. Additionally, they adopted a mercantilist ideaology, to gain more exports than imports and maintian their precious metals.”

Evidence (0–2 points): 2

The response earned 1 point for using evidence. The response provides multiple pieces of accurate evidence related to the impact of the Columbian Exchange with diseases transmitted by Europeans, the movement of enslaved peoples from Africa to the Americas, and plants from the Americas that proved to be beneficial to Europeans. The response also includes references to other maritime empires joining Spain in attempting to “gain as much territory and goods as they could,” and the development of “a caste system based on the race / ethnicity,” as additional pieces of acceptable evidence.

Long Essay Question 2 (continued)

The response earned 1 point for supporting an argument with evidence. In the second paragraph, the response supports an argument that American populations were harmed by the Columbian Exchange by describing how the introduction of smallpox and measles killed millions of indigenous people. It also supports that argument in the third paragraph by describing how the demand for cash crops led to the development of plantations, stating, “The natives were forced to work brutal conditions on plantations known as Haciendas and were treated as less than humans.” The response supports the argument that Europeans benefitted from the changes of this time period in the fourth paragraph by describing how the introduction of new foods to Europe like squash helped lead to the demographic change of an increasing population. The response also supports the argument that the mixture of African slaves, Native Americans, and Europeans led to social changes with the use of the caste system in the New World.

Analysis and Reasoning (0–2 points): 2

The response earned 1 point for historical reasoning. The response explains how new diseases caused population decline among the Native Americans. The response also discusses how new crops introduced to Europe were the cause of a population explosion and discusses how the mixture of people from different geographic regions caused the formation of the caste system in the New World.

The response earned 1 point for complex understanding. The response demonstrates a complex understanding by explaining relevant connections across geographic areas by explaining multiple detailed effects both in the Americas and in Afro-Eurasia, including the impact of the development of plantations in both the Americas and Africa, the unbalanced effects of the Columbian Exchange, and the ways in which architecture, agriculture, and religious practices changed due to transfers across the Atlantic.

Sample: 2B

Thesis Score: 0

Contextualization Score: 1

Evidence Score: 2

Analysis and Reasoning Score: 1

Total Score: 4

Thesis/Claim (0–1 points): 0

The response did not earn the point for thesis. The response does not offer a historically defensible claim; it only restates information from the prompt.

Contextualization (0–1 points): 1

The response earned 1 point for contextualization by situating the topic of the prompt in the context of the expansion of European maritime empires. In the first paragraph, the response states, “Europe desired to expand thier empires so they could trade so they sailed the seas and formed maritime empires,” noting how Spanish voyages to the Americas began the Columbian Exchange.

Long Essay Question 2 (continued)**Evidence (0–2 points): 2**

The response earned 1 point for using evidence. The response provides several pieces of accurate evidence relevant to how the movement of pathogens, people, and plants led to changes across the Atlantic region through discussion of the spread of specific diseases, the movement of enslaved Africans to the Americas, and the development of new social hierarchies.

The response earned 1 point for supporting an argument with evidence. The response supports the argument in the second paragraph that Native Americans' lack of immunity "resulted in the deaths of millions by European diseases" with three pieces of evidence (malaria, measles, smallpox). In the third paragraph, the response also supports the argument that "African culture diffused into the Americas" with evidence that "slaves introduced new African foods, languages, and music." In the fourth paragraph the response supports the argument that a new social hierarchy came into existence in the Americas with the evidence that "The more European blood one had, the higher they were in the hierarchy."

Analysis and Reasoning (0–2 points): 1

The response earned 1 point for historical reasoning. The response explains in the second paragraph that the introduction of European diseases into the New World caused the deaths of millions of Native Americans, which had the effect of making them easier to conquer.

The response did not earn the point for complex understanding. There was no attempt to demonstrate a complex understanding of how the movement or transfer of people, animals, plants, and pathogens led to demographic, cultural, or social changes across the Atlantic region in the period circa 1450–1750.

Sample: 2C**Thesis Score: 0****Contextualization Score: 0****Evidence Score: 1****Analysis and Reasoning Score: 0****Total Score: 1****Thesis/Claim (0–1 points): 0**

The response did not earn the point for thesis. The response does not offer a historically defensible claim; it only restates information from the prompt and makes the generalized claim that "Transferring goods from one continent to another changed the demographic by introducing other societies to new things."

Contextualization (0–1 points): 0

The response did not earn the point for contextualization. There was no attempt to describe a broader historical context relevant to the prompt.

Long Essay Question 2 (continued)

Evidence (0–2 points): 1

The response earned 1 point for using evidence. The response provides two pieces of accurate evidence relevant to the prompt by discussing the movement of agricultural goods (corn) and diseases (smallpox).

The response did not earn the point for supporting an argument with evidence. The last sentence includes relevant pieces of evidence but does not use them to support an argument.

Analysis and Reasoning (0–2 points): 0

The response did not earn the point for historical reasoning. Although the response does reference change on two occasions with “This changed their social because the people transferring to new areas spread their influence and their way of living,” and “The demographic changed because of people reproducing,” the changes listed are overly vague.

The response did not earn the point for complex understanding. There is no attempt to demonstrate a complex understanding of how the movement or transfer of people, animals, plants, and pathogens led to demographic, cultural, or social changes across the Atlantic region in the period circa 1450–1750.