



Chief Reader Report on Student Responses: 2025 AP[®] United States History Set 1 Free-Response Questions

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|-----------------------------|------------|---------|------|
| • Number of Students Scored | 518,247 | | |
| • Number of Readers | 3274 | | |
| • Score Distribution | Exam Score | N | %At |
| | 5 | 73,277 | 14.1 |
| | 4 | 187,347 | 36.2 |
| | 3 | 120,884 | 23.3 |
| | 2 | 95,172 | 18.4 |
| | 1 | 41,567 | 8.0 |
| • Global Mean | 3.30 | | |

The following comments on the 2025 free-response questions for AP[®] United States History were written by the Chief Reader, Hilary Green, James B. Duke Professor, Davidson College. They give an overview of each free-response question and of how students performed on the question, including typical student errors. General comments regarding the skills and content that students frequently have the most problems with are included. Some suggestions for improving student preparation in these areas are also provided. Teachers are encouraged to attend a College Board workshop to learn strategies for improving student performance in specific areas.

Short Answer Question 1

Task: Short Answer Question

Topic: Historians on Early United States Politics

| | Max Points: | Mean Score: |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Part A | 1 | 0.60 |
| Part B | 1 | 0.27 |
| Part C | 1 | 0.34 |
| Overall Mean Score: 1.2 | | |

What were the responses to this question expected to demonstrate?

- Responses were expected to describe one major difference between arguments about United States politics in the early national period made by Sean Wilentz and Terry Bouton. The first excerpt, by Sean Wilentz, argues that early United States politics moved to enhance egalitarianism, increase democratic participation, and remove obstacles for popular participation in government. The second excerpt, by Terry Bouton, argues that elite men had maintained positions of power in government after 1800 and that even after the election of Jefferson ushered in the rule of Democratic-Republicans, Federalist policies remained influential.
- Responses were expected to explain how one piece of historical evidence in the period from 1789 to 1820 supports the argument of Sean Wilentz and how one piece of historical evidence in the period from 1789 to 1820 supports the argument of Terry Bouton.
- The question primarily addressed Topics 3.4, 3.5, 3.6, 3.8, 3.9, 3.10, 3.11, 3.12, and 3.13.
- Skills needed to respond to this question were Historical Thinking Skills 1, 2, and 3 and the Reasoning Process of Comparison.

How well did the responses address the course content related to this question? How well did the responses integrate the skill(s) required on this question?

- Responses reflected familiarity with the early national period, including Federalist and Democratic-Republican rule up to 1820. Responses generally understood that opportunities to participate in the political process increased for some men who were not property owners, while also recognizing that those opportunities were denied to other groups. Responses were also knowledgeable about key Federalist policies, such as the national bank, and were able to identify ways that Democratic-Republicans wielded the powers of the federal government expansively, such as through the Louisiana Purchase.
- Responses were able to use the Reasoning Process of Comparison to describe at least one major difference between the arguments of the secondary sources. Many responses were able to identify at least one piece of evidence that could support either argument but often struggled to explain how it did so. Many responses attempted to explain how a piece of evidence from outside of the time period of the prompts could be used to support the arguments of the sources.

What common student misconceptions or gaps in knowledge were seen in the responses to this question?

| <i>Common Misconceptions/Knowledge Gaps</i> | <i>Responses that Demonstrate Understanding</i> |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some responses had difficulty correctly describing differences between Wilentz’s and Bouton’s historical interpretations of the groups that held influence in early United States politics. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better responses identified the key differences between Wilentz’s and Bouton’s interpretations and then described the groups that held influence in early United States politics. <p>“One major difference between Wilentz’ and Bouton’s historical interpretations of early United States Politics was their view on the inclusion of the people in government. For example, Wilentz believes that the American Revolution caused a great number of people, people who were previously barred from politics, to now be able to involve themselves in politics and even hold offices. Meanwhile, Bouton believes that all the American revolution did was allow for elite men to create a government that prevented ordinary people from government involvement.”</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A common issue was that some responses misinterpreted the claims of Wilentz and Bouton as being focused on which political party won or lost elections or which historian supported one or the other party. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better responses described the differences between the historians’ perspectives accurately and clearly. <p>“Wilentz claims that after the Democratic-Republicans beat the Federalists in 1800 they were able to reform the political system and remove the filters of democracy placed on the system by the Federalists. In contrast, Bouton claims that although the Democratic-Republicans were victorious because they said they would reform the system set up by the Federalists, they did not change it that much and left it mostly the same. The difference is that Wilentz says that the Democratic-Republicans tore down the rules set up to limit democracy, Bouton says that the Democratic-Republicans promised to do so, but did not do that much to change it.”</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many responses had difficulty identifying evidence and explaining how it could be used to support Wilentz’s argument. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better responses explained how changes in the period reflected growing egalitarianism, an |

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| | <p>increase in democracy, or a change in participation in government.</p> <p>“One event that can be used to support Wilentz is that suffrage started to expand in the new country as some states started to let go of property requirements for White males when it came to voting. This shows how the democratic values of inclusion were promoted in the early US and that an action such as voting wasn’t always restricted to the landed elites. This lends credence to Wilentz’s interpretation that the US was becoming more democratic as the nation grew and after the Federalists fell out of power.”</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many responses had difficulty identifying and explaining evidence that could support Bouton’s argument that fit within the time period. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better responses explained how historical events from the period support Bouton’s argument about elite wealthy men maintaining power, despite the change in the governing party after 1800. <p>“A development that supports Bouton's argument about the elitist nature of the early United States is the failure of the Whiskey Rebellion to fight against federal power. The Whiskey Rebellion was organized by disgruntled farmers who despised the federal government’s excise tax on whiskey, which was often fermented by wheat farmers to make extra money. However, it was swiftly put down by President Washington’s show of military force. While the American Revolution preached freedom and liberty for all (‘all men are created equal’), the Whiskey Rebellion demonstrates how the voices of the common farmers and laborers were still suppressed by a government largely run by the ultra-wealthy and powerful.”</p> |

Based on your experience at the AP[®] Reading with student responses, what advice would you offer teachers to help them improve student performance on the exam?

- Teachers could help students practice periodization. Students struggled with periodization, often finding examples that are outside of the time period, such as citing Jackson as someone who provided voting rights.
 - Students could create timelines that plot out significant dates, studying major landmarks to understand what happens before and after those dates.
- Teachers could help students better understand the differences between the terms “describe” and “explain” when they are presented with them in the Short Answer Question.
 - Teachers can refer to the definitions of these terms in the [AP U.S. History Course and Exam Description](#).
 - An activity could be to have students bring in candy (or any favored item) and practice using a command term on that item. Practice explaining or describing the piece of candy they have could be a valuable opportunity to wrestle with the expectations of the prompts they will see in a constructive and fun way.
 - Other “describe” activities: provide the relevant characteristics of a specified topic. Description requires more than simply mentioning an isolated term. As practice, students could be asked to describe a friend, describe their daily routine, or describe their favorite piece of art.
- Students could use more practice reading secondary source selections chosen by their teacher. They could highlight/underline the author’s claims and use their textbook to identify historical developments or events that could support those claims. They could then compare those claims in a discussion or in an Exit Ticket/formative assessment.

What resources would you recommend to teachers to better prepare their students for the content and skill(s) required on this question?

Consider taking advantage of the following resources to help students prepare for the content and skills required in this question:

- In AP Classroom teachers will find a rich collection of resources. These resources include formative and summative assessment items for every unit of the course, including practice SAQs for teachers to use as formative assessment pieces. The formative items are scaffolded so that early items represent what students are ready for at the beginning of the school year and later items become increasingly challenging as teachers progress through the course.
- AP Classroom includes the Teaching and Assessing Modules on Period 3: 1754–1800, which address the content related to this question.
- The optional activity for Topic 3.9 in the [AP U.S. History Course and Exam Description](#) offers students an opportunity to practice utilizing evidence to support claims, an important skill for this question.
- Teachers may utilize some of the optional sources for Topics 3.6 and 3.8 in the [AP U.S. History Course and Exam Description](#)—such as freedom petitions in Massachusetts courts and “An Act for the Gradual Abolition of Slavery” and “John Jay’s “An Address to the People of the State of New York”—to examine differing views of the expansion of American democracy.
- The online AP Teacher Community includes a library of resources that can be found at: <https://apcommunity.collegeboard.org/group/apushhistory/resource-library/>.

Short Answer Question 2

Task: Short Answer Question

Topic: Politics and Regional Interests 1820 to 1865

| | Max Points: | Mean Score: |
|--------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Part A | 1 | 0.58 |
| Part B | 1 | 0.45 |
| Part C | 1 | 0.41 |
| Overall Mean Score: 1.43 | | |

What were the responses to this question expected to demonstrate?

- Responses were expected to describe one purpose of political leaders in promoting the ideas in Daniel Webster’s speech.
- Responses were expected to explain one development from 1820 to 1848 that contributed to the political ideas in Daniel Webster’s speech.
- Responses were expected to explain how one political debate between 1848 and 1865 was similar to the ideas debated in Daniel Webster’s speech.
- The questions primarily address Topics 4.3, 4.5, 4.7, 4.8, 4.10, 4.11, 4.14, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4, 5.5, 5.6, 5.7, and 5.9.

How well did the responses address the course content related to this question? How well did the responses integrate the skill(s) required on this question?

- Many responses successfully described the ways that sectional differences challenged the unity of the country.
- Responses often demonstrated an understanding of how political debates over slavery and secession resulted in the Civil War.
- Many responses explained the ways that continued debates over slavery resulted in several political compromises that attempted to maintain national unity.
- Many responses successfully utilized Skill 2: Sourcing and Situation by correctly describing the purpose of political leaders in promoting the ideas in Webster’s speech.

What common student misconceptions or gaps in knowledge were seen in the responses to this question?

| <i>Common Misconceptions/Knowledge Gaps</i> | <i>Responses that Demonstrate Understanding</i> |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The most common misconception was misunderstanding the purpose of Daniel Webster’s speech. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Better responses identified purposes of Webster’s speech that included promoting national unity. “The ideas that Webster promotes come from the increased tensions between the North and South. During the antebellum period in the United States, sectional differences became unbearable eventually leading to war. By expressing the |

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| | <p>need for unity, Webster is trying to decrease or totally eliminate sectional tensions.”</p> <p>“One purpose of political leaders in promoting ideas such as Webster’s was the desire to unify a country divided by the different economic systems and beliefs in slavery exhibited by the North and the South. One could argue that politicians such as Webster were advocating for unity in order to promote and protect a county that desperately needed increased patriotic feelings to end sectionalist ideals.”</p> <p>“One purpose of political leaders in promoting ideas such as Webster’s is to strengthen the unity of the U.S. Webster is giving his opinion on internal improvements. Webster believes that it is important for all of the states to be in agreement.”</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A common misconception was that southern states were widely discussing secession throughout the 1830s. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better responses identified how the debate over secession was a result of states’ continued debates over the issue of slavery and the federal government’s powers. <p>“One political debate from [1848] to 1865 that was similar to the debate in the speech was the debate over the outcome of new territories gained from the Mexican-American War with regard to slavery. Because the United States acquired land from the war, sectional differences over slavery continued to emerge. Because of this debate over the federal government’s ability to regulate slavery grew and discussions about southern secession started. This resulted in the Civil War beginning in 1861.”</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A common misconception was inaccurate understanding of chronological events. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better responses clearly differentiated between debates over slavery from 1820 to 1848 and those from 1848 to 1865. <p>“One political development from 1820 to 1848 that contributed to ideas in the speech were debates over free and slave states. This is shown throughout this time period with rising tensions over slave states and the addition of the Missouri Compromise to try and mend these tensions by establishing a balance between the states.”</p> |

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| | <p>“One political debate from 1848 to 1865 that is similar to the ideas represented in the speech was the debates of the election of 1860 and the ideas expressed during it. One example of this is the idea of popular sovereignty for states which would allow states to choose whether or not they were free or slave states. This is important as this idea relates to the speech in an attempt to lower tensions between states as it puts the power into the peoples hands instead of the federal government.”</p> |
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Based on your experience at the AP[®] Reading with student responses, what advice would you offer teachers to help them improve student performance on the exam?

- Students often struggled to identify key events and developments and how these events and developments contributed to sectional divisions.
 - Teachers could have students develop timelines or cause and effect one-pagers to demonstrate the progression of sectional tensions and divisions leading up to the Civil War.
 - Teachers could conduct a political simulation of Congress debating the issues which contributed to sectional division.
- Students often struggled to understand the ways that compromises over slavery were a result of regional political, social, and economic differences.
 - Teachers could have students rate the success of compromises from 1820 to 1860 and explain how the compromise impacted regional politics, society, and economy.
 - Teachers could have students create a cause-and-effect mind map that demonstrates how compromises from 1820 to 1860 affected regional political, social, and economic differences.
- Student responses sometimes demonstrated difficulty with reading primary sources.
 - Teachers could have students read primary sources with a partner. As a pair, the students can annotate the source and explain what they believe the purpose of the source is.
 - Teachers could use short quotes from primary sources in bellringer activities. Students could practice identifying the author’s point of view, purpose, historical situation, and/or audience.

What resources would you recommend to teachers to better prepare their students for the content and skill(s) required on this question?

Consider taking advantage of the following resources to help students prepare for the content and skills required in this question:

- In AP Classroom teachers will find a rich collection of resources. These resources include formative and summative assessment items for every unit of the course, including practice SAQs for teachers to use as formative assessment pieces. The formative items are scaffolded so that early items represent what students are ready for at the beginning of the school year and later items become increasingly challenging as teachers progress through the course.
- AP Classroom includes the Teaching and Assessing Modules on Period 4: 1800–1848 and Period 5: 1844–1877, which address the content related to this question.
- The optional activity for Topic 4.8 in the [AP U.S. History Course and Exam Description](#) offers students an opportunity to practice identifying the purpose of a primary source through close reading.

- Teachers may utilize some of the optional sources for Topics 4.8 and 5.4 in the [AP U.S. History Course and Exam Description](#)—such as John Quincy Adams’ letter to John McLean on internal improvements, Jane Swisshelm’s newspaper article on the value of compromise and Daniel Webster’s speech on the Compromise of 1850—to discuss ongoing political debates during the period.
- The online AP Teacher Community includes a library of resources that can be found at: <https://apcommunity.collegeboard.org/group/apushhistory/resource-library/>.

Short Answer Question 3

Task: Short Answer Question

Topic: Colonial American Politics

| | Max Points: | Mean Score: |
|---------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Part A | 1 | 0.42 |
| Part B | 1 | 0.73 |
| Part C | 1 | 0.72 |
| Overall Mean Score: 1.80 | | |

What were the responses to this question expected to demonstrate?

- Responses were expected to describe one political development in British North America from 1607 to 1753.
- Responses were expected to describe one effect of the Seven Years' War from 1754 to 1765.
- Responses were expected to explain how one group responded to the debates about the rights of British colonists from 1765 to 1783.
- The questions primarily addressed Topics 2.3, 2.4, 3.2, 3.3, and 3.4.

How well did the responses address the course content related to this question? How well did the responses integrate the skill(s) required on this question?

- Responses often demonstrated a strong understanding of political developments in colonial British North America, such as the Mayflower Compact, the establishment of New England town meetings, and the Virginia House of Burgesses.
- Responses often demonstrated an understanding of political conflicts between British colonists and Native American groups over land, such as Metacom's (King Philip's) War.
- Responses often demonstrated an understanding of the effects of the Seven Years' War, such as the Royal Proclamation of 1763 and the increase in British taxation policies due to the debt incurred from warfare—including the Stamp Act, the Townshend Acts, and the Sugar Act.
- Responses often successfully demonstrated how one group responded to the debates about the rights of British colonists through explaining how Patriot groups (the Sons of Liberty) engaged in public protests against British taxation policies.

What common student misconceptions or gaps in knowledge were seen in the responses to this question?

| <i>Common Misconceptions/Knowledge Gaps</i> | <i>Responses that Demonstrate Understanding</i> |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some responses could not identify a specific form of self-government. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better responses identified colonial autonomy from Great Britain, often identified as “salutary neglect,” as the reason for the development of self-governing institutions in the British North American colonies from 1607 to 1753. <p>“One political development in British North America from 1607 to 1753 is the expansion of colonial democracy. Since Britain was an island an ocean away from the continent of America, and thus it was hard for Britain to manage the colonies, these colonies took their governing in their own hands. This led to the development of colonial self-rule, such as the Virginia House of Burgesses, allowed by Britain's hands-off policy of salutary neglect during this time. The House of Burgesses is but one example of how colonies grew to enjoy self-rule and democracy distant from Britain.”</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some responses frequently did not name a specific group when asked how a group responded to debates about the rights of British colonists. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better responses identified how a specific group responded to debates about the rights of British colonists. <p>“One group that responded about the rights of the British Colonists were the Loyalists, who strongly opposed the war. The Loyalists were characterized by individuals who were strongly in support with Great Britain and did not want to renounce their British citizenship and loyalty under the British crown.”</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some responses sometimes did not place events in the correct time periods. For example, they referenced events that occurred between 1754 and 1783 as a response for the 1607 to 1753 time frame. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better responses identified specific events in the correct time periods. <p>“One political development in British North America from 1607-1753 was the Mayflower Compact. This was the first written government in the colonies. This was established by the Pilgrims, and it laid out the rules and politics for the Massachusetts Colony.”</p> |

Based on your experience at the AP[®] Reading with student responses, what advice would you offer teachers to help them improve student performance on the exam?

- Responses often struggled to distinguish between different types of developments.
 - Teachers could emphasize the difference between political and economic developments.
- Responses had difficulty with periodization.
 - Timelines can be effective in helping to place specific events in the correct time periods.
- Responses often had difficulty identifying specific groups.
 - Teachers could utilize paired charts to address how specific groups of colonists responded to debates about the rights of British colonists. Activities may include a Venn diagram comparing specific groups such as the Sons and Daughters of Liberty, loyalists, Patriots, the Stamp Act Congress, and the Second Continental Congress.
 - Teachers could use a T-Chart with the colonists' responses to the debates on one side of the chart and the British government's responses on the other side of the chart to clarify the ways each group responded to debates about colonists' rights.

What resources would you recommend to teachers to better prepare their students for the content and skill(s) required on this question?

Consider taking advantage of the following resources to help students prepare for the content and skills required in this question:

- In AP Classroom teachers will find a rich collection of resources. These resources include formative and summative assessment items for every unit of the course, including practice SAQs for teachers to use as formative assessment pieces. The formative items are scaffolded so that early items represent what students are ready for at the beginning of the school year and later items become increasingly challenging as teachers progress through the course.
- AP Classroom includes the Teaching and Assessing Modules on Period 2: 1607–1754 and Period 3: 1754–1800, which address the content related to this question.
- The optional activity for Topic 2.4 in the [AP U.S. History Course and Exam Description](#) offers students an opportunity to practice making claims with historical evidence.
- Teachers may utilize some of the optional sources for Topics 2.10 and 3.5 in the [AP U.S. History Course and Exam Description](#)—such as Mercy Otis Warren's letter to Hannah Winthrop, a description of the actions of the Daughters of Liberty in *The Essex Gazette*, Christian Barnes' letter to Elizabeth Inman, and an editorial regarding Dunmore's Proclamation—to discuss varying colonial responses to British policies.
- The online AP Teacher Community includes a library of resources that can be found at: <https://apcommunity.collegeboard.org/group/apushhistory/resource-library/>.

Short Answer Question 4

Task: Short Answer Question

Topic: Reconstruction and Post-Reconstruction Politics

| | Max Points: | Mean Score: |
|---------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Part A | 1 | 0.54 |
| Part B | 1 | 0.47 |
| Part C | 1 | 0.43 |
| Overall Mean Score: 1.43 | | |

What were the responses to this question expected to demonstrate?

- Responses were expected to describe one political development during Reconstruction from 1865 to 1877.
- Responses were expected to describe one effect of the end of Reconstruction from 1877 to 1900.
- Responses were expected to explain how a group responded to debates about the role of the federal government from 1900 to 1945.
- This question primarily addressed Topics 5.10, 5.11, 6.4, 6.12., 6.13, 7.4, 7.6, 7.9, 7.10, and 7.12.

How well did the responses address the course content related to this question? How well did the responses integrate the skill(s) required on this question?

- Responses succeeded in meeting many of the content demands of the question while demonstrating the required Historical Thinking Skills in framing responses describing a political development during Reconstruction. Responses presented accurate content knowledge on the topic of the prompt, commonly referencing developments such as the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments. Responses also included the effect of Black Codes and the intimidation tactics of the Ku Klux Klan (KKK).
- Many responses successfully identified an effect of the end of Reconstruction. Responses discussed the ways that Jim Crow laws, sharecropping, literacy tests, and poll taxes created a racial segregation.
- Responses succeeded in meeting many of the content demands of the question by identifying a debate over federal policy and explaining how a group responded to it.
- Responses explained how women created groups that advocated for the right to vote, ultimately resulting in the Nineteenth Amendment.
- Responses also described the role of the Progressives in achieving more government involvement in bringing about specific social, economic, and political reforms.
- Responses described the role of isolationists and the debate over entrance into both the First World War and/or the Second World War. Most successful responses addressed the growth of the Democratic Party in advocating for more government involvement in response to the Great Depression.
- A skill needed for this question was Skill 1: Developments and Processes, such as identifying a historical development and its effect.
- A skill needed for this question was Skill 5: Making Connections, which involves explaining how a historical development or process relates to another historical development or process.

What common student misconceptions or gaps in knowledge were seen in the responses to this question?

| <i>Common Misconceptions/Knowledge Gaps</i> | <i>Responses that Demonstrate Understanding</i> |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student responses sometimes failed to describe a political development. Responses often made vague references to helping African Americans or rebuilding the South. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better responses provided specific political development such as the Reconstruction Amendments and the creation of the Freedmen’s Bureau. <p>“One political development during Reconstruction from 1865 to 1877 was the development of the Freedman’s Bureau which expanded the newly freed African American rights after the Civil War. The Freedman’s Bureau helped African American’s improve their education, gave them shelter, provided them with food, and helped them obtain jobs.”</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some student responses failed to describe one effect of the end of Reconstruction. Often they offered vague descriptions of industrialization, the Gilded Age, or the Great Migration. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better responses clearly presented the effects of the end of Reconstruction. <p>“After the period of reconstruction which ended due to the Compromise of 1877 which removed federal troops from the south the bigotry returned. New laws were implemented which restricted the rights of African Americans in the south.”</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In Part C, students often failed to identify a specific group. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better responses clearly named a specific group and how they responded to debates about the federal government from 1900 to 1945. <p>“One group responded to debates about the federal government from 1900 to 1945 was the National American Womens Suffrage Association which was a group that was organized many women in favor of extended social, economic, and politcal rights. The NAWSA promoted womens suffrage and argued against the federal government that they should have the right to vote.”</p> |

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> One common knowledge gap in the responses for Part C included the proper identification of the Populists and the Progressives. Student responses often used Populists and Progressives interchangeably. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better responses correctly identified the Progressives in the time frame. “One group that responded to debates about the federal government is labor unions and the overall impact of the Progressive Party. The Progressive Party wanted more reform and change directly from the federal government for many issues like labor laws, regulations on businesses, and suffrage for women and African Americans.” |
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Based on your experience at the AP[®] Reading with student responses, what advice would you offer teachers to help them improve student performance on the exam?

- Teachers could utilize the common “ACE” technique when teaching the short answer questions. First, students answer the prompt with a general complete sentence. Secondly, the student cites specific factual information, and third, the student explains how the pieces of evidence support their answer.
- Teachers could have students develop timelines for each unit, aligning them with the [AP U.S. History Course and Exam Description](#). Students struggle to place historical developments in the correct chronological period.
- Students often identified an economic development during Reconstruction rather than a political development and neglected to connect the economic development to politics. In addition, students often lacked specific factual information to support an accurate description within the time periods.
- Teachers could emphasize the differences between political, social, and economic events.
- Students could create a Venn diagram or graphic organizer comparing Abraham Lincoln’s plan, Andrew Johnson’s plan, and Congressional Reconstruction.
- Students struggled with identifying historically appropriate effects resulting from the end of the Reconstruction Era.
 - Teachers could have students identify key events and developments during Reconstruction, such as the expansion of rights through constitutional amendments and the methods used by groups to oppose these newly acquired rights.
 - Teachers could clarify cause and effect through a T-chart on Reconstruction policies. When asked to identify “one effect of the end of Reconstruction,” students often responded simply by including information about the Gilded Age. Although the chronology was appropriate, responses like this did not develop the cause/effect relationship necessary to earn a point. Additional emphasis not only on the timeline of events but the interrelationships between historical periods would help students with this response.
- Students often failed to support an answer describing how groups reacted to a federal government action within the time period by neglecting to provide supporting evidence appropriate to the prompt.
 - Teachers could emphasize “groups” that are more specific by identifying specific factions rather than making broad statements such as “people campaigned for more government involvement.”
 - Teachers could utilize a graphic organizer that associates a muckraker, a specific group, and a development that addressed a social, economic, and political change brought on by the

Progressive movement. Many students struggled to identify the goals of the Progressive movement and its influence on politics, economics, and society.

- Some students struggled with political ideology and the evolution of party politics between the Civil War and the Second World War.
 - Teachers could use a T-chart to compare the Democrats and the Republicans during Reconstruction. Alternatively (or as a next step), teachers could use a T-chart to compare the Democrats and Republicans during the New Deal. Potential categories to use for comparison of the political parties are as follows: the role of the federal government, tariffs, foreign policy, or socio-economic appeal of the different political groups.

What resources would you recommend to teachers to better prepare their students for the content and skill(s) required on this question?

Consider taking advantage of the following resources to help students prepare for the content and skills required in this question:

- In AP Classroom teachers will find a rich collection of resources. These resources include formative and summative assessment items for every unit of the course, including practice SAQs for teachers to use as formative assessment pieces. The formative items are scaffolded so that early items represent what students are ready for at the beginning of the school year and later items become increasingly challenging as teachers progress through the course.
- AP Classroom includes the Teaching and Assessing Modules on Period 5: 1844–1877, Period 6: 1865–1898, and Period 7: 1890–1948, which address the content related to this question.
- The optional activity for Topic 5.11 in the [AP U.S. History Course and Exam Description](#) offers students an opportunity to do a close reading on a source discussing the end of Reconstruction.
- Teachers may utilize some of the optional sources for Topics 5.10, 6.4, and 9.3 in the [AP U.S. History Course and Exam Description](#)—such as “Call for the end of Segregated Schools,” an untitled article from *The New Orleans Crusade* and “The Conservative Manifesto”—to discuss the content of this question.
- The online AP Teacher Community includes a library of resources that can be found at: <https://apcommunity.collegeboard.org/group/apushhistory/resource-library/>.

Question 1—Document-Based Question

Task: Document-Based Question

Topic: Role of the Federal Government in the Economy, 1932–1980

| | Max Points: | Mean Score: |
|----------------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Thesis/Claim | 1 | 0.79 |
| Contextualization | 1 | 0.62 |
| Evidence from Documents | 2 | 1.34 |
| Evidence Beyond Documents | 1 | 0.47 |
| Sourcing | 1 | 0.39 |
| Complex Understanding | 1 | 0.15 |
| Overall Mean Score: 3.75 | | |

What were the responses to this question expected to demonstrate?

- Responses were expected to demonstrate all six major Historical Thinking Skills within the curriculum framework through the sourcing and analysis of primary source documents, formulating an argument and making connections within and across historical periods.
- Responses were expected to utilize content from Period 7: 1890–1945 and Period 8: 1945–1980 to build a historical argument.

How well did the responses address the course content related to this question? How well did the responses integrate the skill(s) required on this question?

- Responses demonstrated a significant knowledge of the content in the curriculum. This use of content resulted in most responses earning a point for contextualization. Similarly, a large percentage of responses earned the point for Evidence Beyond the Documents, frequently citing, among other things, the New Deal with its various agencies and the Great Society and its programs.
- Most responses demonstrated proficiency with historical argumentation and the ability to develop a historically defensible claim.
- Nearly all responses demonstrated an ability to accurately identify and describe the arguments being made in the primary sources. The more sophisticated responses correctly described more than three documents and used at least four documents to support an argument.
- Responses were most successful at explaining the significance of a document's historical situation to the argument being made in the response. Additionally, responses that failed to earn the point for Sourcing were still often able to identify the purpose, point of view, historical significance, or audience of a document even if the response did not successfully connect at least one of these to a broader argument.
- Higher level responses demonstrated a more complex understanding of the changing historical processes before, during, and after the period of prompt. These responses often used Documents 5 and 7 to modify an argument about the overall growth of liberalism, highlighting the rise of a conservative movement that developed in the 1960s and 1970s and continued into the 1980s with the election of Ronald Reagan. Complex Understanding was also demonstrated through sophisticated argumentation that was supported by sourcing four documents. Responses earning the point for Complex Understanding rarely used all seven documents in support of an argument to earn the point.

What common student misconceptions or gaps in knowledge were seen in the responses to this question?

| <i>Common Misconceptions/Knowledge Gaps</i> | <i>Responses that Demonstrate Understanding</i> |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responses frequently misinterpreted Document 5 from Barry Goldwater because of its reference to not overlooking the needy, often connecting it to John F. Kennedy’s argument in Document 4. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong responses were able to place Goldwater’s remarks about not ignoring the needy within the context of his support for a free and competitive market and a laissez-faire economic system. “The intended audience for this speech is not only big businesses as Goldwater was hoping to gain their support with his laissez-faire style government, but also regular working class citizens due to his reassurance of not abandoning the needy or helpless.” |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responses sometimes credited John F. Kennedy with the creation of Medicare in their attempts to use Document 4 to support an argument. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responses with better understanding of the content were able to identify Lyndon Johnson as promoting the creation of Medicare within his Great Society programs and to connect this to Document 4 as a historical development emerging from the context source. “In this “War on Poverty”, Johnson carried on the legacy of Kennedy by creating Medicare which provided health insurance for individuals over 65. This evidence shows that although Kennedy was not able to intervene in the economy and provide healthcare and government jobs, his predecessor was able to do so.” |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some responses situated the women referenced in Document 1 within the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 60s. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> More sophisticated responses used the Civil Rights movement to demonstrate continued advocacy for equal rights for African Americans in the decades following the Great Depression. “The members of Workers Council of Colored People are frustrated however with the obvious racism that the WPA is concluding, and this plays a significant role in the inclusion of other members of society into a greater development of the middle class. The federal government begins to take action of these cases with the instance of Brown V. Board, Civil rights act of 1964, and many other instances. These developments made by the federal government |

| | |
|---|---|
| | enable the African community to participate in previously blocked opportunities found by systemic bigotry and racism.” |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responses tended to overgeneralize their narrative and documents to make broad arguments about the growth of liberalism or conservatism without placing them in the specific contexts of political and economic change that occurred during the period. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stronger responses effectively placed historical developments within this period in a nuanced, chronological framework that demonstrated the historical progression within the documents and the broader historical context (e.g., the developments within the United States that led to the growth of conservatism in the late 1960s and 1970s). <p>“Goldwater’s speech arguably demonstrates the final years before the shift-towards laissez-faire economics; only a couple years later, Richard Nixon would be elected. He would cut funding for many of the Great Society programs that Lyndon B. Johnson had created. . . . In addition, Marjorie S. Holt’s address towards Congress in 1976 states that many of the government’s programs are wasteful and have done nothing except increase the power of the government. She argues that governance at lower levels, such as the state and local levels, should be used instead (Document 7). This sentiment is echoed in Reagan’s election in 1980, who, through supply-side economics, cut down on regulations for businesses as well as federal spending to boost the economy through less government intervention.”</p> |

Based on your experience at the AP[®] Reading with student responses, what advice would you offer teachers to help them improve student performance on the exam?

- The best responses demonstrated a clear understanding of chronology.
 - Teachers could organize the period after the Second World War by presidential administrations rather than topics
 - Students could identify economic problems faced by presidents and evaluate the effectiveness of their responses.
 - Students could then be given descriptions of presidential policies (e.g., the New Deal or the Great Society) and generate examples of legislation/programs implemented by each administration and then compare/contrast these programs.
- Responses with effective sourcing were able to identify arguments and counterarguments.
 - Teachers could provide students with practice interpreting primary sources.
 - Teachers could present students with primary source documents about the same historical situation but with opposing objectives, audiences, and viewpoints.

- Students would then identify the sourcing (point-of-view, audience, purpose) and then discuss how sources shared perspectives.
- While most responses developed some contextualization, not all examples were relevant to the prompt or time period of the question.
 - Teachers could instruct students on recognizing relevant and irrelevant contextualization.
 - Practice generating examples of context for events/processes that occurred either before or after the time period of the prompt.
- Responses that effectively addressed the prompt understood how the question was framed and the required task.
 - Teachers could use direct instruction and practice with prompts asking students to “evaluate the extent to which” events/processes occurred.
 - Students could practice Venn diagrams to compare/contrast events, processes, and trends.
 - Students could create timelines that evaluate continuity and change in the role of the government in the economy over various periods.

What resources would you recommend to teachers to better prepare their students for the content and skill(s) required on this question?

Consider taking advantage of the following resources to help students prepare for the content and skills required in this question:

- In AP Classroom teachers will find a rich collection of resources.
- These resources include formative and summative assessments items for every unit of the course, including practice DBQs for teachers to use as formative assessment pieces. The formative items are scaffolded so that early items represent what students are ready for at the beginning of the school year and later items become increasingly challenging as teachers progress through the course.
- AP Classroom includes the Teaching and Assessing Modules on Period 7: 1890–1945 and Period 8: 1945–1980.
- The optional activities for Topics 7.12, 8.2 and 8.13 in the [AP U.S. History Course Exam Description](#) offer students an opportunity to practice source analysis and connecting evidence with an argument.
- Teachers may utilize some of the optional sources for Topics 7.10, 8.9 and 8.14 in the [AP U.S. History Course and Exam Description](#), such as “I Got to Do Something to Keep My Family Up,” Lyndon B. Johnson’s “Special Message to Congress,” and William F. Buckley, Jr.’s “National Review: Statement of Intentions.”
- The online AP Teacher Community includes a library of resources that can be found at: <https://apcommunity.collegeboard.org/group/apushhistory/resource-library/>.

Long Essay Question 2

Task: Long Essay Question

Topic: Adaptation of Native American Societies to European Presence

| | Max Points: | Mean Score: |
|--------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Thesis/Claim | 1 | 0.75 |
| Contextualization | 1 | 0.65 |
| Evidence | 2 | 1.06 |
| Analysis and Reasoning | 2 | 0.73 |
| Overall Mean Score: 3.13 | | |

What were the responses to this question expected to demonstrate?

- Responses were expected to demonstrate an understanding of how Native American societies adapted to the presence of European colonists in North America 1500 to 1754. This time frame encompassed the immediate aftermath of contact through the beginning of the Seven Year's War. Responses should demonstrate an understanding of many topics in Units 1 and 2.
- Responses could utilize a range of course content, including Native American societies before European contact, the effects of the Columbian Exchange on Native American and European societies, including diseases, Spain's *encomienda* system and caste system of racial hierarchies, and Native American actions that sought to defend and maintain their political sovereignty, economic prosperity, religious beliefs, and concepts of gender relations.
- This question primarily addressed Topics 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 1.6, 1.7, 2.2, 2.4, and 2.5.

How well did the responses address the course content related to this question? How well did the responses integrate the skill(s) required on this question?

- Responses were most successful when utilizing the Reasoning Processes of Causation and Comparison when making arguments about the ways that Native American societies adapted to the presence of European colonists in North America between 1500 and 1754. Responses rarely utilized the Reasoning Process of Continuity and Change over Time.
- Many responses presented accurate, albeit limited, content knowledge on the topic of the prompt, commonly referring to technology transfer, entrance into global trading networks, conversion to Christianity, threats posed by violence from European colonists, and the desire to expand or defend their communities from other Native American societies as motivations for adaptation.
- The majority of responses crafted a thesis statement that addressed the prompt and offered a relevant line of reasoning concerning various adaptations made by and within Native American societies. Many responses focused on economic success based on geographic characteristics. Some advanced responses noted how adaptations were both reactive and active.
- Many responses contained strong supporting evidence relevant to the time period to support an argument. Commonly used examples were the Columbia Exchange, the *casta* system, the Pueblo Revolt, the fur trade, the *encomienda*, Metacom's (King Philip's) War, and the beginning of the Seven Years' War.
- Most responses demonstrated contextualization by focusing on either the causes of European colonialism, describing the variety of Native American societies prior to contact, describing the effect of Old World disease on Native populations, or the larger Columbian Exchange. Responses that provided contextualization in later periods such as the Trail of Tears were infrequent.
- Responses earned the second Analysis and Reasoning point for demonstrating a complex understanding in a variety of ways. Often, they identified multiple adaptations by Native American

societies across time or geography. Responses also earned the complex understanding point by successfully using four pieces of evidence to support a nuanced argument. Responses often constructed a nuanced argument through their examination of Spanish colonization through a discussion of the *encomienda*, Pueblo Revolt, casta system, and varying models of Christianization.

What common student misconceptions or gaps in knowledge were seen in the responses to this question?

| <i>Common Misconceptions/Knowledge Gaps</i> | <i>Responses that Demonstrate Understanding</i> |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many responses focused on the actions of European colonists and nations towards Native Americans and their societies rather than how Native Americans adapted to Europeans' presence or actions. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stronger responses placed Native Americans as active agents in their adaptations. "Native American societies adapted to the presence of European colonists by being forced to convert or abandon ancestral lands, uprising militarily whenever possible, and allowing for trade and cultural exchange as they were pushed westward." |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many responses used disease (often undifferentiated) as an example of adaptation. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong responses used disease as an incitement to change rather than the change itself. "Diseases like smallpox or chicken pox killed any Native populations, who adapted by moving into the interior of North America away from colonists." |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many responses did not demonstrate geographical awareness, using for instance, the Incas in a discussion of adaptations by North American Native American Societies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong responses understood the relevant geographic positions of Native Americans and European colonists "Native Americans in the modern day New York region adapted by trading with French colonists in the fur trade." |

Based on your experience at the AP[®] Reading with student responses, what advice would you offer teachers to help them improve student performance on the exam?

- Teachers could emphasize chronology of historical events.
 - Consider using timelines that are thematically based to show that interactions with Native Americans changed over time with specific historical events.
 - One model for the classroom is to ask students to collectively write a reverse chronology from a well-known event.
- Teachers could encourage students to carefully read and parse the prompt and then practice that skill throughout the year. Many responses focused on European experiences instead of adaptations made

by Native Americans. The prompt required students to analyze changes made by Native American communities themselves.

What resources would you recommend to teachers to better prepare their students for the content and skill(s) required on this question?

Consider taking advantage of the following resources to help students prepare for the content and skills required in this question:

- In AP Classroom teachers will find a rich collection of resources. These resources include formative and summative assessment items for every unit of the course, including practice LEQs for teachers to use as formative assessment pieces. These formative LEQs gradually increase in complexity as the year progresses.
- AP Classroom includes Teaching and Assessing Modules on Period 1: 1491–1607 and Period 2: 1607–1754, which address the content and skills related to this question.
- The optional activities for Topics 1.1, 1.3 and 1.6 in the [AP U.S. History Course Exam Description](#) offer students an opportunity to practice context and connecting evidence to arguments.
- Teachers may utilize some of the optional sources for Topics 1.4, 1.6 and 2.5 in the [AP U.S. History Course and Exam Description](#), such as “Of Plimoth Plantation,” “Taino Rebellion,” and “Covenant Chain.”
- The optional activity for Topic 1.4 in the [AP U.S. History Course and Exam Description](#) offers students an early opportunity to practice the skill of causation.
- The online AP Teacher Community includes a library of resources that can be found at: <https://apcommunity.collegeboard.org/group/apushistory/resource-library/>.

Long Essay Question 3

Task: Long Essay Question

Topic: Response of Reform Movements to Industrialization

| | Max Points: | Mean Score: |
|--------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Thesis/Claim | 1 | 0.72 |
| Contextualization | 1 | 0.65 |
| Evidence | 2 | 1.11 |
| Analysis and Reasoning | 2 | 0.75 |
| Overall Mean Score: 3.21 | | |

What were the responses to this question expected to demonstrate?

- Responses were expected to evaluate how different reform movements responded to industrialization from 1820 to 1900 with a historically defensible thesis or claim.
- Responses could utilize a wide range of course content, including the market revolution, the Age of Reform, Populism, and labor unions.
- This question primarily addressed Topics 4.3, 4.5, 4.6, 4.9 through 4.13, 5.10 through 5.12, and 6.6 through 5.11.

How well did the responses address the course content related to this question? How well did the responses integrate the skill(s) required on this question?

- Responses demonstrated a broad understanding of industrialization and reform movements throughout the nineteenth century.
- Evidence was frequently described but not sufficiently developed in ways that allowed for responses to explain the ways that the evidence related to an argument. For example, the responses demonstrated some confusion about the causes and effects of industrialization and the corresponding reform movements.
- While responses often demonstrated the historical reasoning of causation using evidence relevant to the prompt, the majority did not show argumentation using two pieces of evidence relevant to the prompt that would earn the second point for Analysis and Reasoning.

What common student misconceptions or gaps in knowledge were seen in the responses to this question?

| <i>Common Misconceptions/Knowledge Gaps</i> | <i>Responses that Demonstrate Understanding</i> |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Some responses struggled to appropriately situate movements, events, people, organizations, and other evidence within the period from 1820 to 1900. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Many responses correctly explained the connections between industrialization and reform movements. “Immigrants were often paid very poorly in factory jobs. Jane Addams was an immigration reformist who directly improved the lives of immigrants. She established settlement houses, like Hull House, in the 1880s for immigrants to stay in as well as |

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| | <p>learn to speak English and find childcare. Jacob Riis photographed tenement conditions and published <i>How the Other Half Lives</i> in the 1900s and showed the problem was still there.”</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many responses relied on vague discussions of industrialization and reform movements. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better responses named a specific piece of evidence about a reform movement and then explained the movement’s purpose and motivation. <p>“The American Federation of Labor led strikes and protests to advocate for better working conditions and higher wages for industrial workers. . . . [They] fought hard for economic reform in order to make industry safe and functional as well as beneficial and more equal for workers.”</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some responses demonstrated confusion between the terms Populism and Progressivism, leading to an emphasis on post-1900 reform, rather than reform between 1820 and 1900. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better responses effectively used discussions of the goals of the Populists to support their arguments. <p>“Many of these groups came together to form the populist party. This party advocated for the power being returned to the people and to battle the corruption of the current economy. They wanted better working conditions and a reasonable minimum wage. Although this party didn’t directly win a major election, it influenced other political figures and parties to advocate for the same rights and reform.”</p> |

Based on your experience at the AP[®] Reading with student responses, what advice would you offer teachers to help them improve student performance on the exam?

- Teachers could have students practice describing accurate context for the topic of the prompt. Often the student's attempt at context was unrelated to the prompt or the relationship was not clear.
- Teachers could encourage students to pay careful attention to the wording of the prompt.
 - Students commonly misidentified the task required of the prompt. On the exam students often listed reform movements instead of making an argument about reform movements’ responses to industrialization.
 - Students often failed to bring the information back to the argument in response to the prompt.
- Teachers could have students practice periodization by matching key terms and time periods.
 - For example, students are given a handout with multiple terms related to a time period. They then create a “Six Degrees of Separation,” using terms correctly and writing justifications for

the connection between the terms. This develops chronological understanding and cause-and-effect reasoning.

What resources would you recommend to teachers to better prepare their students for the content and skill(s) required on this question?

Consider taking advantage of the following resources to help students prepare for the content and skills required in this question:

- In AP Classroom teachers will find a rich collection of resources. These resources include formative and summative assessment items for every unit of the course, including practice LEQs for teachers to use as formative assessment pieces. These formative LEQs gradually increase in complexity as the year progresses.
- AP Classroom includes Teaching and Assessing Modules on Period 4: 1800–1848, Period 5: 1844–1877, Period 6: 1865–1898, and Period 7: 1890–1945, which address the content and skills related to this question.
- The optional activities for Topics 6.1 and 6.7 in the [AP U.S. History Course and Exam Description](#) offer students an opportunity to practice context and connecting evidence to an argument.
- Teachers may utilize some of the optional sources for Topics 4.6, 4.11, 6.7, 6.11 and 7.4 in the [AP U.S. History Course and Exam Description](#), such as “Lowell Female Labor Reform Association,” “Daughters of Temperance,” “Pullman Strike,” “Our Toiling Children,” and “The Danger Threatening Representative Government.”
- The online AP Teacher Community includes a library of resources that can be found at: <https://apcommunity.collegeboard.org/group/apushhistory/resource-library/>.

Long Essay Question 4

Task: Long Essay Question

Topic: Response of Foreign Policy to Changes in the World

| | Max Points: | Mean Score: |
|--------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Thesis/Claim | 1 | 0.81 |
| Contextualization | 1 | 0.76 |
| Evidence | 2 | 1.33 |
| Analysis and Reasoning | 2 | 0.92 |
| Overall Mean Score: 3.81 | | |

What were the responses to this question expected to demonstrate?

- Responses were expected to demonstrate knowledge of how United States foreign policy responded to changes in the world from 1890 to 1930.
- Responses could draw on a wide range of content knowledge from Period 6: 1865–1898 and Period 7: 1890–1945, including reasons for overseas expansion and imperialism, the annexation of Hawaii, the Spanish-American War, annexation of new territories such as Puerto Rico and Guam, the Philippine-American War, the building of the Panama Canal, the Roosevelt Corollary, dollar diplomacy, involvement in the First World War, the First Red Scare, the Treaty of Versailles, the League of Nations, and postwar isolationism.
- Although responses to this question could have included topics on industrialization and migration from Period 6, including Topics 6.8 and 6.9, most focused on Topics 7.2, 7.3, 7.5, 7.6, and 7.11.
- The majority of the responses to this question focused on the historical reasoning processes of Causation and Continuity and Change over time.

How well did the responses address the course content related to this question? How well did the responses integrate the skill(s) required on this question?

- Responses succeeded in meeting many of the content demands of the question while demonstrating the required Historical Thinking Skills to frame responses that made arguments about how United States foreign policy responded to changes in the world from 1890 to 1930.
- The most common content knowledge used in the responses focused on the Spanish-American War and the First World War. Responses often demonstrated accurate content knowledge on the topic of the prompt, commonly referencing developments such as the explosion of the USS *Maine*, yellow journalism, Puerto Rico, Guam, Philippines, President Theodore Roosevelt’s Big Stick policy, the Panama Canal, unrestricted submarine warfare, the Zimmerman telegram, the Fourteen Points, the League of Nations, and the Treaty of Versailles.
- Responses showed a high degree of success in framing an appropriate historical thesis in response to the prompt. The most common incorrect thesis attempts were either restating the prompt without a line of reasoning or failing to address historically relevant policies within the time period of 1890 to 1930.
- Responses showed a high degree of success with contextualization. The most common contextualization focused on George Washington’s Farewell Address. Many others focused on the Monroe Doctrine, the Civil War and Reconstruction, and the industrial revolution.
- Responses most commonly demonstrated historical reasoning through the use of causation to frame an argument that addressed how foreign policy responded to changes in the world by explaining how developments such as European imperialism contributed to United States overseas expansion. A smaller number of responses addressed change by explaining how the United States adopted a policy of neutrality when the First World War began in Europe, then later adopted a policy of intervention

following unrestricted submarine warfare, and finally adopted a policy of isolationism after the conclusion of the war.

- Responses struggled when they overgeneralized the changing policies from imperialism to isolationism, often failing to discuss how those policies were responses to changes in the world. Responses also suffered from the incorrect placement of developments such as the Second World War and the Cold War.
- The point for demonstrating a complex understanding was earned in a variety of ways. The most common way included explaining multiple themes or multiple perspectives concerning two or three distinct policies, such as imperialism, intervention in the First World War, and postwar isolationism. Many responses demonstrated complex understanding by explaining how multiple pieces of specific and relevant evidence support a nuanced argument about foreign policy responses to changes in the world. This approach often included both causes and effects of foreign policies, demonstrating more than one pathway to complex understanding. A smaller number demonstrated complex understanding through insightful connections to the Second World War.

What common student misconceptions or gaps in knowledge were seen in the responses to this question?

| <i>Common Misconceptions/Knowledge Gaps</i> | <i>Responses that Demonstrate Understanding</i> |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many responses described the nature of world events rather than how policies responded to those events. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better responses identified a specific world event and connected it to a United States foreign policy. <p>“When Panama declared its independence from Colombia, the U.S. saw an opportunity to extend its power and eventually intervened, overseeing the completion of the Panama Canal.”</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many responses mistakenly referenced the Big Stick Policy as being responsible for the Spanish-American War. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better responses accurately discussed the Big Stick policy as being articulated by Theodore Roosevelt after the Spanish-American War and correctly applied the policy to situations such as relations with Latin America. <p>“The US significantly changed their foreign policy by increasing their control over other countries in the Western hemisphere. The Big Stick Policy was a policy in which the US aimed to maintain neutrality in foreign conflicts but recognized the need to use force when necessary in Central and South America.”</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many responses correctly identified United States intervention in the First World War but | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better responses correctly discussed the beginning of the Second World War as context after the time period while showing United |

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|---|---|
| <p>mistakenly described events from the Second World War.</p> | <p>States refusal to join the League of Nations contributed to the political climate preceding the Second World War.</p> <p>“After World War I, Germany was left in shambles because of all the guilt that was placed upon them. They owed billions in reparations and their military was cut to a fraction of what it used to be. Germany felt endangered which led to the rise of the Nazi party in Germany. If America had not become isolationist again and instead joined the League of Nations and continued to spread their foreign policy in Europe, this would have not happened.”</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many responses failed to explain foreign policies and focused on domestic policies instead. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better responses analyzed specific foreign policy responses to changes in the world in the time period, such as the imperialist motivations behind the Spanish-American War. <p>“An example of this is when the U.S decided to get involved in a war with Spain known as the Spanish-American War. Because Europe had expanded itself all around the world, the U.S wanted to expand itself outside of the known territory, so it started to build a strong military.”</p> |

Based on your experience at the AP[®] Reading with student responses, what advice would you offer teachers to help them improve student performance on the exam?

- Although most students earned the baseline thesis point, many students would benefit from further practice developing a line of reasoning with analytic categories.
 - When teaching the skill of writing basic thesis statements, teachers could encourage students to take two steps to build a strong thesis. The first step is to use the specific wording of the prompt to start their thesis. This step helps students ensure they address the full prompt. The second step is to explain how or why. This prompt asks students to “Evaluate how United States foreign policy responded to changes in the world from 1890 to 1930.” The “how” becomes their line of reasoning. When they practice explaining with specifics, they are better prepared to make higher-level claims.
- Teachers could work to help students move beyond generalizations while contextualizing the topic of the prompt.
 - Many students would benefit from centering their contextual statements on an explicit event or development, similar to selecting a specific piece of evidence for a body paragraph.
 - For example, instead of writing, “The United States had a long tradition of staying out of other countries’ business,” write, “George Washington’s Farewell Address advised the United States to remain neutral in European conflicts, but that advice was ignored when it came to the First World War.”

- Teachers could work to help students present their evidence explicitly and offer explanations for individual pieces of evidence, rather than simply listing pieces of evidence in a cluster.
 - Encourage students to resist the urge to rely upon “listism,” which is an insufficient substitute for multiple pieces of evidence and instead provide distinguishing details to enable the ability to earn credit across different parts of the rubric.
 - Instead of “The United States gained control of Cuba, the Philippines, Puerto Rico, and Guam as a result of the Spanish American War,” elaborate and explain: “Following the Spanish-American War the United States annexed Guam and Puerto Rico. In order to secure control of the Philippines, it rejected Filipino independence. It could have annexed Cuba, but they did not.”
- Teachers can work to help students present their evidence explicitly and with further explanations. For example, the common use of the Zimmerman telegram can be developed beyond just a description by making a connection to the prompt, which is about how United States foreign policy responded to change. Encourage students to include how the event had an effect, which would improve the response.
 - “Closing the loop” is a commonly used phrase to remind students to clearly support an argument. After choosing a piece of evidence, have them loop it around to a United States response.
 - Instead of merely stating, “The Zimmerman telegram was an intercepted telegram from Germany to Mexico which asked Mexico to attack the United States in exchange for land,” use the evidence to actually support a relevant argument. “The Zimmerman Note sent from Germany to Mexico caused fear among American leaders. It was one of several events that led the United States to abandon neutrality and intervene in WWI in order to defeat Germany.”
- Teachers can work to help students embrace the many pathways to complex understanding. Helping students understand and practice these various ways to earn this point can open their minds to higher-level analysis. Spending time practicing this skill can also help address the incorrect perspective that this point is too difficult to even attempt. The point for complex understanding is achievable. It is earned by going beyond a basic or simple argument.
 - Encourage students to break down an essay prompt by describing the most basic responses to the prompt. Then ask students to identify ways they can go beyond such responses. The basic response to this prompt addresses how United States foreign policy responded to changes in the world. Going beyond that argument might involve also addressing the effects of foreign policies, connecting the policies to earlier or later eras, or providing nuance about the various foreign policies in the time period (i.e., Which policies were more or less historically significant? Why?).
 - “Although intervention in the First World War was historically significant because it was a break from Washington’s advice to stay neutral in European drama, it wasn’t nearly as significant as what happened with the Second World War when the United States completely left Washington’s advice behind them and haven’t looked back. After the first war, the United States went right back to neutrality and isolationism but after the second, the United States became a superpower involved in all sorts of world events.”

What resources would you recommend to teachers to better prepare their students for the content and skill(s) required on this question?

Consider taking advantage of the following resources to help students prepare for the content and skills required in this question:

- In AP Classroom teachers will find a rich collection of resources. These resources include formative and summative assessment items for every unit of the course, including practice LEQs for teachers to use as formative assessment pieces. These formative LEQs gradually increase in complexity as the year progresses.
- AP Classroom includes Teaching and Assessing Modules on Period 6: 1865–1898 and Period 7: 1890–1945, which address the content and skills related to this question.
- The optional activities for Topics 6.8, 6.9, 7.1, and 7.11 in the [AP U.S. History Course Exam Description](#) offer students an opportunity to practice context and connecting evidence to arguments.
- Teachers may utilize some of the optional sources for Topics 7.2 and 7.11 in the [AP U.S. History Course and Exam Description](#), such as “The March of the Flag” “The African Roots of War,” and “The Truth About Haiti.”
- The online AP Teacher Community includes a library of resources that can be found at: <https://apcommunity.collegeboard.org/group/apushhistory/resource-library/>.